

Body Image Considerations for the Fitness Professional

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About me

- I'm a Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist (RD/RDN).
- I graduated from UT Austin in 2017 with a BS in Nutrition.
- I finished my dietetic internship in 2018 and passed the exam to become a RD.
- I work as a RD in a group practice and I specialize in eating disorders/disordered eating. I've been in my current position for about 2 years.
- I finished my MS in nutrition from UT in May 2020.

Zoom Guidelines for this Presentation

- This presentation will be highly interactive. Please utilize the “raise hand” feature on Zoom.

Fitness Professional Nutrition Scope of Practice

Rule of thumb: If it's not in the ACE instructor training manual, it's NOT in your scope of practice.

- ... Even if you read an article about it online
- ... Even if you took a nutrition class
- ... Even if you're an ACE "Fitness Nutrition Specialist"

Campus Nutrition Resources

- The [Mindful Eating Program](#) through CMHC.
- UHS [Nutrition Services](#).
- UT [dining nutrition resources](#).

Why is it important to consider body image as a fitness professional?

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- The language that you use in your classes or personal training sessions can shape how a participant or client looks at movement and their bodies.
- You are setting an example, not only of form and alignment, but also for how fitness can be viewed (i.e. as enjoyment or punishment).
- In a study on adolescents and young adults, there was a significant correlation between self-perception of weight and physical fitness, body image perception, control weight behaviors and eating behaviors.¹
- Fitness instructors are more susceptible to “body appearance pressure”, which can negatively affect mental health (it impacts you too!).²
- Your participants and clients look up to you!

How do you create an environment that is conducive to promoting positive body image?

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- Watch your language.
 - Be aware of self-deprecating humor.
- Listen to your participants or clients.
- Trainers: ditch the scale.

How can we work to prevent eating disorders in the fitness space?

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- Likely, you will have a participant or client that suffers from some form of disordered eating. Your goal should be to not cause more harm.
- Listen to the client or participant.
- Try to minimize food talk in the fitness space. Rule of thumb: if it's not in the instructor training manual, it's outside of your scope of practice.

What are some warning signs that a participant may be struggling with body image?

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- The participant spends a lot of time in the mirror.
- The participant is constantly talking about their body or comparing it to other's.
- The participant seems more focused on how the exercise looks than proper form or alignment.
- Self-weighing and discussing weight.¹

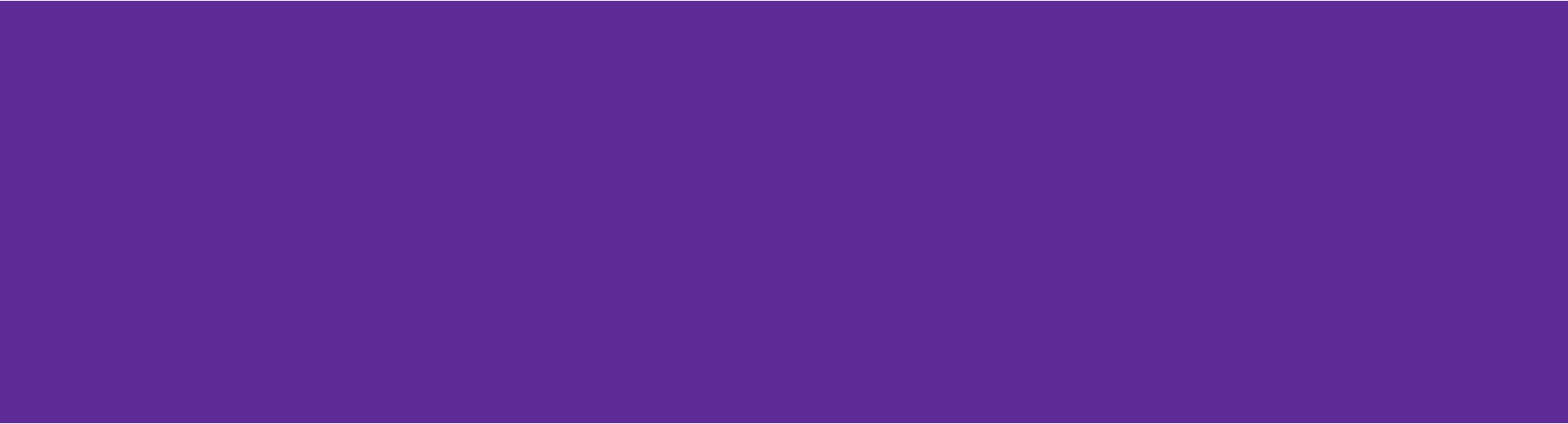
Sources

1. Jáuregui-Lobera I, Iglesias Conde A, Sánchez Rodríguez J, Arispon Cid J, Andrades Ramírez C, Herrero Martín G, Bolaños-Ríos P. Self-perception of weight and physical fitness, body image perception, control weight behaviors and eating behaviors in adolescents. *Nutr Hosp*. 2018 Oct 5;35(5):1115-1123. doi: 10.20960/nh.1726. PMID: 30307295.
2. Mathisen TF, Aambø J, Bratland-Sanda S, Sundgot-Borgen C, Svantorp-Tveiten K, Sundgot-Borgen J. Body Figure Idealization and Body Appearance Pressure in Fitness Instructors. *Front Psychol*. 2020 Dec 11;11:585901. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.585901. PMID: 33424701; PMCID: PMC7793892.
3. Reyes Olavarria D, Delgado Floody PA, Martínez-Salazar C. Hábitos alimentarios, imagen corporal y condición física en escolares chilenos según niveles de actividad física y estatus corporal [Foods habits, body image and physical fitness in Chilean schoolchildren according to physical activity level and weight status]. *Nutr Hosp*. 2020 Jul 13;34(3):443-449. Spanish. doi: 10.20960/nh.02795. PMID: 32379468.

Ask a Dietitian



**“I’m an ACE certified nutrition specialist”.
Are you saying I can’t create customized
meal plans for my clients?**



Can I recommend supplements (i.e. protein powders) to my clients?



What are some ways group fitness instructors can help foster our own positive body image, as well as for our participants?



Connect with me!

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