

# 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?**

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

- 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.<sup>1</sup>
- Fitness instructors are more susceptible to “body appearance pressure”, which can negatively affect mental health (it impacts you too!).<sup>2</sup>
- Your participants and clients look up to you!

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

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

- 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?**

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

- 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?**

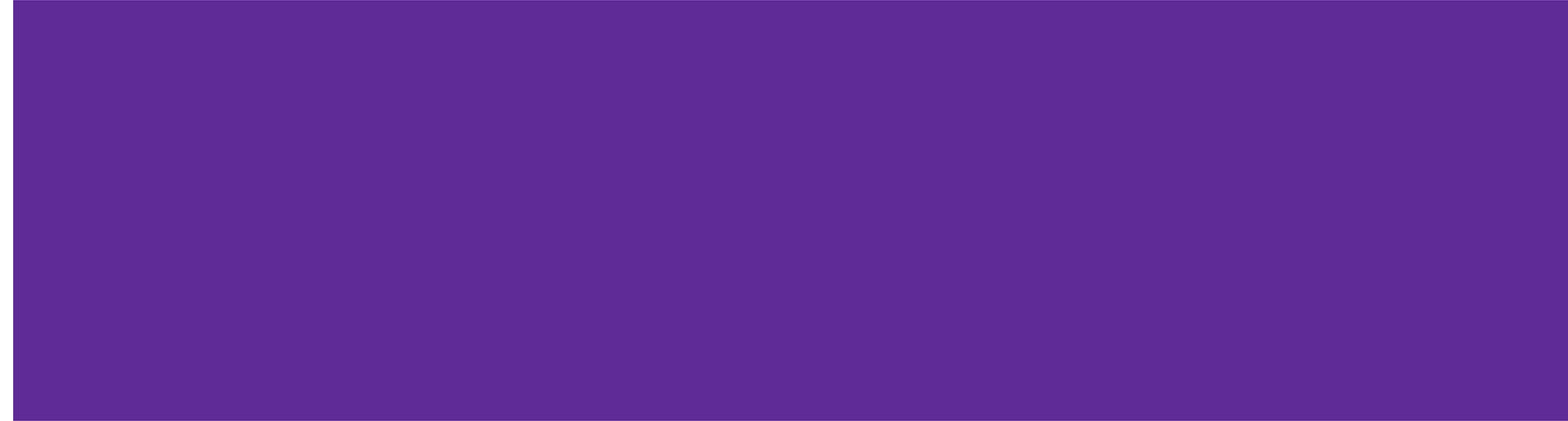
# What are some warning signs that a participant may be struggling with body image?

- 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.<sup>1</sup>

# 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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