Booklist and Conversation Guide on Positive Body Image for Children and Youth

Dear parents, caregivers and educators,

Registered Dietitians at Ottawa Public Health developed this booklist to share stories that help children appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of all bodies, including their own.

Body dissatisfaction among children and youth is an increasing concern and can affect both mental and physical well-being. Although these books are recommended for specific age groups, children both younger and older may still benefit from reading and discussing their messages. The themes they explore can play an important role in shaping how children view themselves and others.

This resource includes a book summary with discussion prompts followed by a conversation guide to support meaningful discussions about body image with children. All the books on this list are available for free at the Ottawa Public Library.

We've also created an equivalent booklist featuring French books. You can access it on our website under Nutrition Resources.

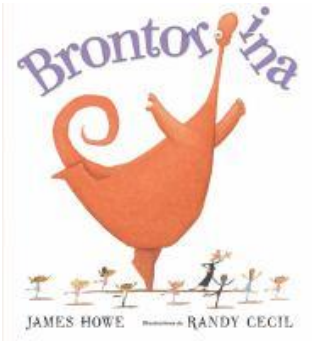
We hope these books inspire positive conversations, celebrate body diversity, and help children build confidence, self-acceptance, and respect for others.

Happy reading!



September 2026

Booklist and Conversation Guide on Body Image for Children and Youth: Book Summaries and Guiding Questions



Brontorina: *by James Howe* *Ages 2+*

Brontorina is a dinosaur who has always wanted to be a ballerina. She joins a ballet school but quickly realizes that she is too big and does not have the right shoes. But what seems to be a problem is merely a bump in the road when everyone helps to make the space inclusive.

- *How do you think Brontorina felt when she was told that she was too big to dance?*
- *Moving the studio outdoors allowed many new people to join the ballet. Why is it good that dinosaurs and cows got to try a new activity that they couldn't participate in before?*
- *How can we make everyone feel included?*

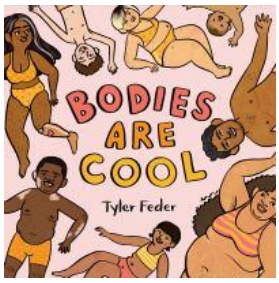
Everybelly: *by Thao Lam* *Ages 2+*



A young girl goes to the pool and because she is shorter than the adults, she is eye to eye with everyone's bellies! She comments on all the things that the bellies around her can do, from being a drum, to carrying a baby and eating food, showing that every belly is different and special.

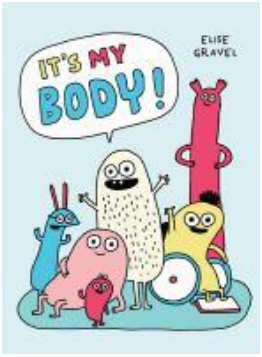
- *Why do you think it is important to celebrate all types of bellies?*
- *What makes your belly special?*

Bodies are cool: *Tyler Feder* *Ages 2+*



This book shows just how different our bodies can be, from varying skin tones to hair colour and type. Children can see all the different ways that bodies are cool.

- *What do you think makes bodies cool?*
- *What are some ways you notice that bodies can be different?*

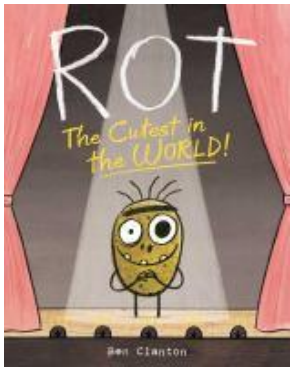


It's my body!: *by Elise Gravel* *Ages 3+*

These funny monsters demonstrate all the ways that bodies can be different. They all have different shapes, sizes, colours and abilities.

- *What differences do you notice in the bodies around you?*
- *How can we show respect for other people's bodies?*
- *What can we do to make others feel included?*

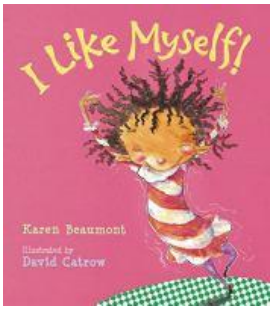
Rot, the cutest in the world: *by Ben Clanton* *Ages 3+*



Rot is a potato who is not conventionally cute. He sees a "cutest in the world contest" and decides to sign up. As he meets his competitors, Rot feels increasingly worried that he is not cute enough to win and tries to change. In the end, Rot decides that he is most comfortable embracing who he is, and the readers learn that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

- *What does it mean to be cute?*
- *Why was everyone so sure that Rot would not win?*
- *Why do you think Rot tried to make himself more like the other contestants?*
- *Why do you think Rot did win? (talk about the different definitions of cute and how everyone has a different opinion)*

I like myself!: *by Karen Beaumont* *Ages 3+*



This book follows a young girl who likes who she is no matter how her appearance changes (even with purple polka-dotted lips or super messy hair).

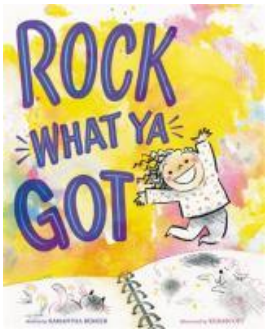
- *What do you like about yourself? Think of the way you look, but also about non-physical attributes like kindness, happiness and creativity.*
- *What characteristics make you YOU?*

Lili macaroni: *by Nicole Testa* *Ages 3+*



Lili macaroni loves every feature she has inherited from a family member, but when she starts kindergarten, she is teased for those very traits. She creates her own tool to help get rid of the sorrows and love herself again.

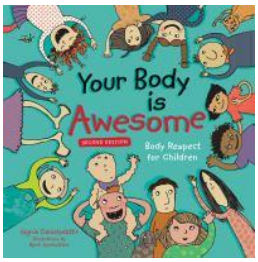
- *Try one of the activities at the back of the book!*



Rock what ya got: *Samantha Berger* *Ages 4+*

The drawing of a little girl comes to life, and she declares that she does not want to change despite the illustrator wanting to give her new hair, new clothes and more. This book speaks about embracing who you are and "rock[ing] what ya got".

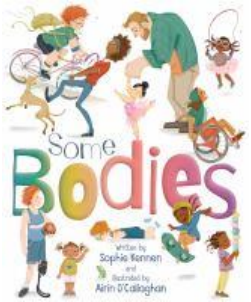
- *Do you think the drawing was happy that the author kept trying to change her?*
- *Why did the little girl keep going back to her original look?*
- *What physical traits make you unique (i.e. what do you rock)?*



Your body is awesome: *by Sigrun Danilsdottir* *Ages 4+*

Our bodies can do so many amazing things! But how can we take care of our bodies? This book explores all the different ways our bodies can communicate with us and just how different everyone's bodies are.

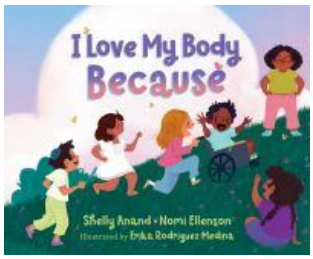
- *Go back into the book and discuss the prompts in depth (example: try closing your eyes and traveling down into your tummy. How does it feel in there?)*



Some bodies: *by Sophie Kennen* *Ages 4+*

This book explores body diversity, ability and accepting everyone through beautiful drawings and fun rhymes.

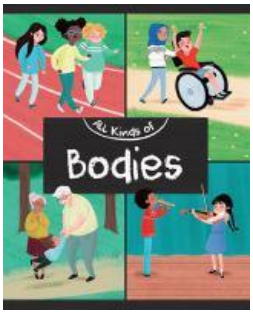
- *Explore the last page of this book and the discussion guide that they provide on how to navigate difficult questions that children may ask.*



I love my body because: *by Shelly Anand* *Ages 4+*

This book is about all the different reasons to love your body. It is your first home and it is different than everyone else's!

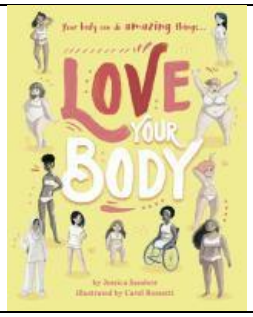
- *What makes your body unique and special?*
- *What do you love about your body?*
- *What can your body do?*



All kinds of bodies: *by Judith Heneghan* *Ages 5+*

Bodies come in different shapes, sizes, colours, and are completely unique. Our bodies grow with us and change over time. They may be better at some things and less good at others, but we can trust our body will tell us what it needs.

- *Read the note to parents, teachers and caregivers at the end of the book and do the activity on page 31.*



Love your body: *by Jessica Sanders* *Ages 7+*

This book encourages young girls to celebrate their bodies for everything they can do, to show them that they are so much more than their bodies.

- *Try some of the exercises listed in the book!*

Body Image Discussion Guide

This discussion guide is for the parents/caregivers/teachers who want to dive a little deeper in the topic of body image with their group. We invite you to use this guide to reflect and to inform your own conversations either after reading one of the books from this list, or in everyday conversations, where the topic of body image comes up. Please note that body image is a sensitive topic and that it's OK for the audience to not want to share how they feel about it.

What is body image?

- Body image is how we think and feel about our bodies.
- Everyone has a body, and every body is special and unique.
- Sometimes we feel happy about our bodies, but sometimes we don't. That's OK.
- Learning how to be kind to ourselves and to celebrate all the wonderful things our bodies can do helps us feel better about our bodies.

ASK:

  - What do you like about yourself?
  - What is something your body helps you do? (Think, play, hug, jump, throw, laugh, walk, run, etc.)

Bodies are all different.

- People come in many different shapes, sizes and abilities.
- Our differences make the world interesting and wonderful. Imagine if we all looked the same and liked the same things…Life would be much less interesting.
- There is not a "right" way for a body to look.
- All bodies deserve kindness and respect.

ASK:

  - What is one thing you notice about yourself that is unique to you?

What can we do to take care of our bodies and to keep them healthy?

- Talk to yourself the way you would talk to a good friend, use kind words and be patient with yourself.
- Focus more on what your body can do than how it looks.
- Spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself.
- Move your body in ways you enjoy (play, dance, sports, walk). Exercise is a celebration of what you can do and a way to take care of your body and mind.

- Get enough sleep – your brain needs rest.
- Eat nourishing foods and listen to your body's signals of hunger and fullness.

  ASK:

  - What fun things do you like to do to move your body?
  - Why is it important to speak to ourselves with kindness?
  - What nice things can you tell yourself today to show your body that you appreciate it?

How can we help our friends feel good in their bodies too?

- Comments about the way others look, even when you mean well, can be interpreted as hurtful to the person receiving them. Instead of commenting on someone's physical appearance, we can notice things like their kindness, creativity, effort or helpfulness.
- It's always recommended to avoid commenting on things that someone cannot change in 5 seconds or less. For example: It's OK to tell someone they have food in their teeth, but it's not OK to tell them that their teeth are crooked. It's OK to tell someone that their shoelaces are untied, but it's not OK to tell them that you don't like their outfit.
- We never know how someone will feel about a comment, so kindness matters.

  ASK:

  - What are some kind things we can say to others that won't hurt their feelings, but will make them feel happy?
  - How do *you* feel when someone says something kind to you?
  - What type of comments are acceptable to make about the way someone looks?

Bodies are so much more than objects to look at – they can do so many amazing things!

- Our bodies help us learn, play, move, and grow.
- Focusing on all the things our bodies can do can help us appreciate our bodies the way that they are, and to focus less on how they look.

For more information:

- Ottawa Public Health: Body Image and Self-Esteem | Ottawa Public Health
- Ontario Dietitians in Public Health: Tips to Help Your Child Have a Positive Relationship with Food and their Body
- National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC): How to nurture positive body image in your child