THE EMBRACE COLLECTIVE.

A grandparent's guide

to helping your grandchildren feel comfortable in their bodies

As a grandparent, you're one of the most trusted and influential people in a young person's life. And while the world has changed a lot since you were raising kids, one thing has stayed the same: what you say about the way you look — and the way your children and grandchildren look — really matters.

Many of us grew up in a time when talking about bodies and food was just part of everyday conversation, so if some of this feels new, that makes complete sense. Keeping up with the new thinking and advice around health and bodies can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to figure it out alone. So we've put this guide together to make things simple and to help you make the most of the special connection you have with your grandchildren.

When people make comments about kids' bodies, it can really stay with them. Research shows that young people who recall loved ones making comments about their weight and appearance are more likely to carry disordered eating attitudes and behaviours for up to 20 years. That's a long time for a throwaway comment to linger.

Science also tells us that when young people learn to accept and appreciate their bodies, they're more likely to engage in health behaviours (like eating fruits and veggies, moving their bodies and wearing sunscreen) and experience better physical and mental health throughout their lives. So let's all do our part to help the young people we love grow up feeling comfortable in their bodies — they'll be better for it!

> "When I became a grandparent, I thought love and common sense would be enough. But I've learned that the world my grandchildren are growing up in is different to the one I knew! I know I won't always get everything right but I would love to know how I can change what I say to help them be happy, healthy and feel good about themselves."
>
> **Nana Michelle, NSW**

Talking about a child's appearance can feel natural, but even well-intentioned comments about looks can sometimes send the message that appearance is what matters most. Young people need to hear that they are valued for who they are, not just how they look.

Here are some ways to rephrase common comments you might make out of habit. We don't expect you to memorise all of them, but they might just give you some new ideas!

Instead of saying things like...	Try saying things like...
You're getting fat, aren't you?!	Wow, you're growing up so fast!
You're so pretty!	You're so pretty! Now come and tell me everything. What have you been up to lately?
Look at your lovely slim body — it's much nicer than mine	I'm so grateful my body is keeping me going after all these years
You look great, have you lost weight?	You look so well! You seem really happy — what's been going on lately?
Maybe you should go for a run now that you've had all of that cake!	Mmm that was delicious! Shall we save some for later?
You're much fatter/bigger/smaller than your brother/sister	I love how you're both so unique and special
You look so pretty in that dress!	You look so pretty in that dress! Is that your favourite colour to wear?
Don't worry, you'll lose the puppy fat	Your body is changing and growing — it knows what it is doing.

Key things to remember

Instead of making comments about:

- Anyone's weight or height
- Anyone's appearance
- Your own body
- What kids are eating

Try focusing on:

- What our bodies can do
- How nourishing foods make us feel
- The things you appreciate about your own body

And if you forget all of this, here are the basics:

Avoid critique, judgement and commentary on your own or anyone else's appearance

Focus on what bodies can **do**, not what they look like

Supporting your grandchildren's body confidence doesn't mean saying everything perfectly. It means being willing to listen, learn and lead with love.

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Want to keep learning?

Read

Embrace Kids is the essential body image handbook for parents of children and teens by body image experts Taryn Brumfitt and Dr Zali Yager. With chapters for adults about understanding your own journey, appreciating your own body and creating a positive home environment, as well as chapters on supporting kids with diet and fashion trends, friendship issues and social media challenges, 'Embrace Kids' is full of evidence-informed suggestions and supportive, practical advice. Buy here

The free **Embrace magazine** supports parents to build better body image for themselves and their kids, with expert advice for parenting dilemmas, celebrity interviews and more. With two issues to enjoy, there's plenty to get started with. Read here

Watch

The Embrace Kids Parent Masterclass is a free, 5-minute masterclass presented by dad and comedian Nazeem Hussain that teaches families the basics of building better body image at home. Watch here

We've also got films for adults and one you can watch with your grandchildren, and so much more. You can explore all our free resources at **theembracehub.com**