**Body Equity: Self-Esteem in the Balance**

*By Lisa Naylor*

A healthy body image is an important element of mental and physical wellbeing. How we feel *about* our body and how we feel *in* our body impacts our daily choices about how we eat, sleep habits, self-care habits, relationships, sexuality, even our ability to pursue interests or go to work or school.   Yet, one’s body image is more than an individual experience.  In 1996, educators Vanessa Russell and Carla Rice first wrote about the concept of "body equity” which placed our feelings and thoughts about our bodies within a cultural context that factors in race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, mental health and physical ability.

Our sense of our bodies and our sense of self-worth do not develop in isolation, outside the context of our life experiences.  A framework of body equity encourages us to consider all factors and contexts that influence how a person feels about themselves.

We can all promote body equity by treating all people with dignity and respect regardless of their body size, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, skin colour or current level of physical or mental wellness.   Promoting body equity includes speaking up and challenging assumptions that equate fatness or any other attribute with laziness, stupidity or moral inferiority.

For an exciting and rich learning opportunity, we invite you to attend the fourth bi-annual **National Eating Disorder Information Centre’s Body-Image and Self-Esteem Conference: Body Equity: Self-Esteem in the Balance**

This conference is a unique opportunity in Canada to learn more about the current research, evidence-based practices and innovative outreach in a multi-disciplinary, action-oriented environment. Workshops are tailored to meet the needs of Educators, Health Professionals, Fitness or Recreation professionals as well as the general public.  Whether you work with children or adults there is something for everyone and the opportunity to nurture a more peaceful relationship with your own body at the same time.

For more information or to register, visit the conference website: [http://nedic.ca/conference-2015](https://webmail.uhn.ca/OWA/redir.aspx?C=fqdKvDjDTk62fLQ4Ku4uPDu9xkbFB9II9xXyHihsiTNW9e7Tt9V3YwgUVVXju5hs1klKa1PVKR4.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fnedic.ca%2fconference-2015)

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