

DISCUSSION GUIDE: BODY IMAGE

Overview

Following the release of Canyon's ['This Rider: Emily Chappell & Jenny Tough' video](#), all three collaborators would like to invite participation in an open and empathetic conversation about how, as an industry and as individuals, we could be more mindful of the language we use and its potential implications for how others feel about their body.

In 2020, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee conducted a [survey into body image](#). The findings show that 61% of adults and 66% of children reported feeling negative or very negative about their body image most of the time. In 2021, [a YouGov study](#) revealed that 51% of Britons report feeling a great deal or somewhat pressured to have a certain body type.

This discussion guide is designed to support conversation about different perceptions of body image. We acknowledge that the work in this field has been done by generations of fat activists and body positivity advocates, many of whom have been marginalised by society or overcome far greater obstacles.



This guide may also be used by organisations who wish to develop language guidelines for releases, copy or content purposes.

What is body image?

Body image is defined as: 'The thoughts, feelings, and perception an individual has about their body.'

It's important to remember that everyone has their own relationship with body image, regardless of how they look.

Points to be aware of

- There are implications to assuming an individual should look a certain way/have a specific body type based on their level of physical activity.
- A person's level of athletic ability and achievement doesn't necessarily correlate with how they feel about their body.
- The way we talk about our own bodies can affect other people's relationship with theirs.
- There can be differing preconceived ideas of an 'ideal' body type.
- Poor body image in cycling/sport can have wide-ranging health implications.
- The words we use to talk about our bodies can make a difference – to ourselves and to others.
- Sport, diet, and exercise can have an impact on how a person feels about their body.
- It is important to avoid assumptions about the 'healthiness' of an individual's diet and exercise routine. One person's healthy regime may be indistinguishable from another person's eating disorder or exercise addiction.
- Social media can have an impact on a person's body image.

Points about Language

Weight, size, and body type are often highly sensitive subjects. One person may be unaffected by a comment; another will find it upsetting or triggering. When talking about yourself or others, here are some points to consider:

- Try to celebrate what your body is capable of, not what it looks like.
- Avoid commenting on the appearance and bodies of others, even if intended as a compliment.
- Consider your unconscious bias, and whether you are talking about other cyclists differently based on your perception of their body.
- Try to minimise thinking about food or exercise as inherently good or bad.
- Be mindful of size privilege. When talking about your weight, consider reframing your language. Avoid statements like, "I feel so fat," and making critical comments about your weight. Instead consider using something like, "I'm struggling with how I feel about my body." This statement is about a subjective feeling, not size or shape.
- When creating content, be mindful of the language you use. Consult guidelines or get an expert opinion.

Discussion points

There were several questions that came up during the project that are worth considering. You may wish to write the answers down or discuss them with someone else. They have been designed for both individual use and for those working within the industry, whether you are an athlete, rider, content creator, journalist or influencer who wishes to further the discussion, or perhaps you're looking for a way to be more body positive.

We hope that, upon reflection, the questions will allow you to think about how you feel about your own body image, the language you use, and the things that people have said to you (good and bad) that have had an impact on the way you feel. We also hope, that by initiating conversation, we can create a more open environment for people to talk about this issue and facilitate change.

- How did the film make you feel?
- In what situations do you feel good about your body? What triggers you to feel bad about it?
- How does your body image impact your life – your sport, your career, and your relationships?
- What are your thoughts on the media's role in the way we feel about our bodies?
- Thinking about your own body image, are there comments you've heard – about you or about other people – that you've internalised?
- How do we create change within cycling to encourage more people to feel better about their bodies?

References and Further Reading:

- Is Fat Talking a Causal Risk Factor for Body Dissatisfaction? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis: https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/endedangeredbodies/pages/630/attachments/original/1429193727/Sharpe_2013_Is_fat_talking_a_causal_risk_factor_for_body_dissatisfaction.pdf?1429193727
- Disordered Eating in Female Athletes Fueled by Body Image Ideals, Coach-Athlete Power Dynamic: <https://sph.umich.edu/news/2021posts/disordered-eating-female-athletes-fueled-by-body-image-ideals-coaching.html>
- The athletic body and beauty: the struggle of eating disorders among female athletes: <https://premiersportpsychology.com/2017/03/02/the-athletic-body-and-beauty-the-struggle-of-eating-disorders-among-female-athletes/>
- Body image issues, a worrying problem in women's cycling? <https://totalwomenscycling.com/lifestyle/body-image-issues-a-worrying-problem-in-womens-cycling>
- All bodies on bikes discussion guide: <https://www.allbodiesonbikes.com/film-discussion-guide>
- Mental Health Foundation, Body image: How we think and feel about our bodies, Implications and recommendations for policy and action: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/body-image-how-we-think-and-feel-about-our-bodies/implications-and-recommendations-policy-and-action>
- Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/5357/documents/53751/default/>
- ASA Social responsibility: Body image: <https://www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/social-responsibility-body-image.html>