

# Guiding Values for Creating a Body Care Culture



Gymnastics  
Australia

**Every  
body is  
unique**

**Our bodies  
deserve to  
experience  
the joy of  
movement**

**Our bodies  
deserve  
nourishment  
and nurturing**

**Our bodies  
change and  
develop as  
a part of  
growing up**

**Our bodies  
hear what  
we think  
and say**

# Every body is unique

## **EVERY BODY SHOULD FEEL SAFE, WELCOME AND EMPOWERED IN GYMNASTICS IN AUSTRALIA.**

Gymnastics in Australia is a place where children and young people grow, learn and play through movement. From our youngest participants to our senior athletes, we want every body in our sport to feel supported, encouraged and empowered to explore and experience movement in a fun, engaging and safe way. Our Guiding Values for creating a Body Care Culture are designed to educate and empower our community to approach all bodies from a place of care, kindness and respect.

## **DIFFERENT BODIES ARE UNIQUE BODIES.**

We are human beings. We are not 'objects' or 'things.' Just like each of our fingerprints are different, every body is also unique in the way it is built, what it looks like, and the wonderful things it can do. From our beating heart and breathing lungs, to learning skills in gymnastics, our bodies complete incredible tasks for us everyday, sometimes without us knowing! Sometimes, our bodies allow us to do things that other people find difficult. Other times, there are things which our body can't try and we feel disappointed. This is ok. We only get one body, and it is important for us to know how we can nurture our bodies and those around us with care, support and understanding.

Every body involved in gymnastics has different motivations, goals and aspirations. What are your goals?

## **LET'S CREATE A BODY CARE CULTURE, TOGETHER.**

Finding ways to like, accept, love or even feel positive about our bodies can be challenging in the world we live in today, but we can all try to treat our bodies with a care and kindness. Creating a Body Care culture is all about how we nourish, nurture and move our bodies. It's also about the language we use out loud, online and in our heads — to ourselves and others. Gymnastics Australia and the Butterfly Foundation are working together

to build a Body Care Culture in gymnastics in Australia, and each of us have an important role to play. We need everyone's help to make sure every body who experiences gymnastics in Australia is safe, welcome and empowered to achieve their personal goals.

Every body deserves to be celebrated.  
Every body deserves to be cared for.  
Every body, all the time.

## **CARE TIP:**

***Remember — Being unique is about more than just your body.***

Our body can sometimes be how we think of ourselves — it is how we see ourselves every day in the mirror and what other people see when they look at us. But, being unique is not just about how we look, it is also about how we think, what we care about, and the relationships we build throughout our lives. Being unique is what makes you, YOU!

***Avoid — making unhelpful comparisons.***

In the days of social media, it can be easy to compare your body to the bodies of the people around you or those you see online. The more we compare our appearance to siblings, friends, influencers, sport stars or people online, the more unhappy we may feel. It's ok to admire beauty in others, but avoid devaluing your own body if you do.

It is important to remember there are people who can help you if you feel you are being critical of yourself or your body.

# Our bodies deserve to experience the joy of movement

## FINDING MOVEMENT OR ACTIVITIES WE ENJOY IS JUST ONE OF THE WAYS WE CAN RESPECT OUR BODY.

There are lots of different ways we can move our body, and it is important to remember that we find movement and physical activity that we enjoy and makes us feel good about ourselves. Some people like movement that makes them huff and puff, like running or playing a competitive sport like basketball. Other people prefer movement that is slow and controlled, like walking or yoga. Gymnastics is a type of movement where we can experience both; whether you are holding a stretch or moving through the air, there are lots and lots of ways to move your body in gymnastics. When we move our body in a way that we enjoy, we can often feel more confident and motivated, as well as the added bonus of meeting people and making new friends.

## IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE DO MOVEMENT THAT MAKES US HAPPY AND HELPS US FEEL ENERGISED.

Finding ways of moving your body which make us feel happy, energised and motivated is one of the ways we can look after our mind and our body. Moving our body is also good for our brains, as we are often more focused, more engaged and more motivated to learn when we move our body regularly. If you are doing movement or physical activity which you don't enjoy or doesn't make you feel good, it is important to talk about why you feel this way.

Who is someone you can talk to if movement or physical activity doesn't make you feel good?

## REST IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS MOVEMENT.

When we live busy lives, we can sometimes forget that slowing down and resting, is just as important as engaging regularly in movement and physical activity. Our bodies send us signals everyday — from feeling hungry for breakfast, to feeling the need to put on a jumper when it's cold — it is important that we listen to our bodies when it

comes to doing movement and physical activity, too. If we feel sore or tired, it is our body's way of telling us that we need to rest and recuperate, to give our body the chance to recover. Resting can look different for everyone, from taking a hot bath, to a gentle walk, to seeking professional help from someone like a physiotherapist it is important we recognise the signs our body needs rest and do what feels right for our body.

### CARE TIP:

**Remember — Every body is unique, and every body will find joy in different types of movement.**

It is important to remember that you are the decision maker for how you move your body, and that movement should be something you enjoy and that makes you feel confident and energised. There are many health benefits to moving our bodies, however it is important to listen to what our body needs — it might not be what you think!

**Avoid — Making activity choices that are driven by emotions or a desire to change your weight, shape or build.**

You should never feel like you 'have to' move your body or use physical activity as a way to make changes to your body. Our weight, body shape, muscles, hair and skin colour, complexion and height changes naturally throughout our lives, and it is important to view movement as a way to live a healthy life, not to cause or prevent change.

Gymnastics is just one way to move your body. What other ways do you enjoy moving your body?

# Our bodies deserve nourishment and nurturing

## **OUR BODIES NEED FOOD TO THRIVE, AND IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO HONOUR WHAT OUR BODIES NEED.**

Food provides us with the energy that powers our bodies throughout our day to day lives. From having a shower to moving throughout the day to sleeping soundly, our bodies also need food to give our brain, muscles, bones and organs the energy they need to allow us to live healthy and happy lives. Our bodies have a biological need to eat, and it is important we honour this need by eating foods which make us feel energised and ready to tackle the day ahead. You can visit Gymnastics Australia's website or the Butterfly Foundation's resource page to learn more.

## **OUR BODIES ARE TALKING – ARE YOU LISTENING?**

Just like our bodies send us signals about rest and recuperation, our bodies are also sending us messages to ensure we have enough energy to go about our day to day lives. This could be after physical activity or movement, or during a time when our bodies' needs are changing, such as throughout a menstrual cycle. Signals such as rumbling tummies, or lacking concentration are often our bodies' way of telling us that we need to eat. Our bodies know how much they need to eat, so it is important to listen to your body and its hunger and fullness cues — what is your body telling you?

## **ALL FOOD HAS A PURPOSE - WHETHER IT'S TO PROVIDE NUTRIENTS, ENERGY OR SIMPLY ENJOYMENT.**

Eating a wide range of foods throughout the day will provide your body with the energy it needs to grow, learn and play. Many families and cultures across the world also share food as a way of celebrating special events throughout the year. Sometimes, people can give different foods unhelpful and confusing labels, such as 'good/bad,'

'healthy / unhealthy,' and 'clean / toxic / junk.' It's important to call food by its name — an apple is an apple. We don't need to call it anything else.

If you feel worried about how you feel about food, or what you might eat at a celebration, it is important to know there are people that can help to manage these feelings. Gymnastics Australia and the Butterfly Foundation are here to help.

### **CARE TIP:**

**Remember — Be flexible and experiment with your choices in food.**

Our bodies are designed to gain energy from a whole range of foods, so it's important to give your body the opportunity to discover new tastes, flavours and textures. Experiencing new foods can also give you the opportunity to learn about new cultures and how food is used throughout the world.

**Avoid — Making food choices that are driven by emotions or a desire to change your weight, shape or build.**

Social media, marketing campaigns and advertisements can sometimes make us feel like we need to improve the way our bodies look and function. Modifying the food we are eating because of a desire to look a certain way can cause us to develop habits and beliefs about food and our bodies which are untrue, and can be harmful to our health and wellbeing.

It's ok to have questions about food. What questions do you have about providing your body with the energy it needs?

# Our bodies change and develop as a part of growing up

## **IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER AS WE GROW, OUR BODY WILL CHANGE, TOO.**

Throughout our lives, our bodies go through different stages of growth. Whilst these stages usually occur at typical ages, everyone's body grows on its own unique timeline. As we grow, our bodies also change in weight, size and shape. Sometimes we don't notice these changes, like our bones and muscles growing big and strong. Bodies are complicated machines, and while it is important for us to understand some of the basic functions of our bodies, there is too much for us to know about each change we observe. Changes to our body can feel uncomfortable, foreign or confusing, as we don't always understand why they are happening. Luckily, there is lots of information out there to help us learn about and accept these changes when they happen. You can visit Gymnastics Australia's website or the Butterfly Foundation's resource page to learn more.

## **WHAT IS 'BODY IMAGE'?**

'Body Image' is the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes we have about our bodies and how we look. Our body image influences our behaviours; both positively and negatively. A positive body image supports physical and mental health and can protect us from behaviours which may be damaging to our body. A negative body image can impact negatively on studies, relationships, exercise behaviours, self-esteem and risk-taking behaviours, and can lead us to believe we need to make changes to our body. Body image can be influenced by individual and environmental factors, including the people in our lives and society's messages around appearance.

## **CHANGE IS NORMAL, NOT NECESSARY.**

It is important to be aware of the influences which may impact our own body image or the ways in which we view, talk and interact with bodies in our everyday lives. Influences such as social media present us with highly stylised and stereotypical bodies whilst also promoting narrow beauty ideals. These factors can drive comparisons between

what we see and what we think, feel and believe about your body which can result in the desire to change our appearance. It's ok to take pride in your appearance and have fun with fashion and styling if that's what interests you. However spending time, money and energy on changing our appearance may lead to the development of a negative body image and harm to your health and wellbeing.

## **CARE TIP:**

### ***Remember: Bodies are meant to change.***

It is important to remember that your body knows what it needs to do. While these changes may feel confusing or scary, your body has programmed these changes so that it can keep up with the fun and exciting things you do every day.

### ***Avoid: Have fun with your appearance, but don't let it rule your life.***

Changing your appearance to fit in won't make you a better, more loveable person. If a person or group doesn't like YOU for who YOU are, then it's time to find some new people to spend time with. You are enough just as you are.

It's ok to feel confused about your body changing and growing. Can you think of someone you can talk to about these changes?

# Our bodies hear what we think and say

## OUR BODIES AND OUR MIND TALK TO EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME.

Our brains and our bodies send important information to each other all day long. Our brain instructs our bodies every time we move, whether it is to pick up a glass of water or to jump on the trampoline. Our bodies then send important information back to our brain, to let us know how our body is managing that activity. This is called feedback, and it is how the brain registers feelings such as pain and discomfort. The delivery of this information is a normal part of everyday life, and vital for our survival. Our brain can, however, deliver other messages to our body, which is the way we think and talk about ourselves, to ourselves. These messages are called 'self-talk' and can include both helpful and unhelpful comments towards and about our body.

## IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE TALK TO OUR BODIES WITH KINDNESS AND RESPECT.

Our body image — what we think, feel, and believe about our bodies — can be reflected in our self-talk — the way we think about ourselves, to ourselves. Giving non-appearance-based compliments to ourselves about our strengths and qualities can help to re-frame the way we perceive ourselves and our bodies and can help to challenge negative body image. Try using these sentence starters to compliment yourself and see how it feels;

I like \_\_\_\_\_ about myself.

My best quality is \_\_\_\_\_ .

I am grateful for my body because \_\_\_\_\_ .

## SPEAK KINDLY ABOUT ALL BODIES

The words we use to describe bodies can be incredibly powerful — they can build people up or tear them down. Speaking kindly about all bodies, including our own, is a powerful step toward creating a culture where all bodies are encouraged, supported and empowered to achieve their potential. Just as the power of non-appearance-based compliments can build our positive body image, giving compliments to

others about how they make you feel and why they are important to you can help to foster an environment where every body is valued for who they are, beyond their bodies.

### CARE TIP:

#### ***Creating a Body Care culture in Gymnastics***

Every body has a role to play in building a culture of Body Care in Gymnastics. Whether you are a coach, a parent, an individual participating in gymnastics, or a staff member at a club or association, you can help to create environments where every body is encouraged, supported and empowered to achieve their potential. If you or someone around you is having a hard time understanding or respecting their body, Gymnastics Australia and the Butterfly Foundation are here to listen.

#### THE BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION

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