**Comparing Ourselves To Others**

It’s common to compare our appearance to others, especially when we’re surrounded by those who we perceive to look ‘better’, stronger, leaner etc. Whilst this is a natural process, it can be damaging to our body image and mood.

It’s often not an accurate comparison either. We tend to focus on the qualities we like least about ourselves and compare these to the best qualities of others.

The following scale will help you to assess your tendencies to make comparisons to others.

#### **The Body, Eating, and Exercise Comparison Orientation Measure-Revised (BEECOM-R)\***

Below you will find a list of statements. Please rate the truth of each statement as it applies to you using the following rating scale. For instance, if you believe that a statement is “Always” true, you would write a 7 next to that statement.



|  | **Number** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. In social situations, I think about how my body “matches up” to the bodies of those around me. |  |
| 1. I notice how I compare with my peers in terms of specific parts of the body (e.g., stomach, legs, arms, breasts or chest, hair, etc.). |  |
| 1. I compare my body shape to that of my peers. |  |
| Total Body Comparison score: add items 1–3 and divide by 3 = |  |
| 1. During meals, I compare what I am eating to what others are eating. |  |
| 1. I find myself thinking about how my food choices compare with the food choices of my peers. |  |
| 1. When I go out to eat, I pay attention to how much I am eating compared to other people. |  |
| Total Eating Comparison score: add items 4–6 and divide by 3 = |  |
| 1. I pay close attention when I hear peers talking about exercise (in order to determine if I am exercising as much as they are). |  |
| 1. I like to know how often my friends are working out so I can figure out if the number of times I work out “matches up.” |  |
| 1. When I exercise (e.g., at the gym, running outdoors), I pay attention to the intensity level of the workouts of those around me. |  |
| Total Exercise Comparison score: add items 7–9 and divide by 3 = |  |

1. **Identify when you make comparisons.**
   1. Who do you compare yourself to?
   2. How are you assessing them? What body parts are you focusing on?
   3. How do the comparisons impact your eating habits when alone and when eating with others (e.g., restricting in advance of eating with others, eating smaller portions or different types of food in front of others, emotional eating when alone)?
   4. How do the comparisons impact your decisions whilst exercising?
   5. What would it be like to redirect your attention from comparison with others to your own experience (e.g., listening to your body throughout your eating experience)?
2. **Are the comparisons biased?**
   1. For example, if they are super athletic, have they just been training longer than you?
   2. Are you looking at social media? Comparing yourself with people portrayed in the media is problematic since their images may well have been manipulated. We all twist and pose to show our good sides!
   3. Remember this: It is not possible to study other people in the same amount of detail as one can study oneself.

Try this exercise instead:

* Compare yourself to every third person you encounter. What you will discover is that people’s bodies vary a great deal and that attractiveness is not directly related to muscularity or leanness.

Consider this too:

* You are comparing yourself with others in terms of a single domain (i.e., appearance) rather than personality, intelligence, aptitudes, etc. It may be worth considering why you neglect these attributes.

What are the consequences of comparison making?

* Do you consider this to be a good use of your time?
* Is it helpful?

Spending a significant amount of time looking at other peoples’ bodies (either in person or in the media) is likely to maintain preoccupation with shape and weight. In addition, it encourages the marginalization of other aspects of life.

It’s likely that you know this deep down, so it’s important to address it head on if you would like to change this.

Try this:

1. Reduce the frequency of comparison-making. Easier said than done, but try to catch yourself when you’re doing it and ask: Is this useful? What am I looking for?
2. Recognise that your comparison making is biased. You compare your worst to someone else’s best.
3. If you do compare yourself, try observing shape-neutral features (e.g., the person’s hair and shoes) and other characteristics (e.g., the person’s behavior, sense of humor).

**Complete the following statement:**

**I intend to shift my focus from comparing myself with others by doing the following...**