

Creating positive training environments about food, weight, and shape



Positive fuelling practices

Encourage participants to arrive at training well fuelled, hydrated and rested, and likewise encourage them to bring a snack to eat for after training.

If participants routinely turn up to training hungry or poorly hydrated, then it may be worth exploring further to understand why this might be the case.



Positive language around weight and shape

Think carefully about the language that both you and your participants use, in relation to weight and body shape.

Are participants using self-deprecating language about their bodies, or comparing themselves to one another?

Can you instead encourage a focus on fuelling for health and performance, and try to avoid endorsing certain 'ideal' or stereotypical body sizes/shapes?



Avoid monitoring of weight/body composition unless essential

Weight monitoring and body composition assessments may be used in elite environments to maximise performance at certain times of the year. These assessments have the potential to be distressing for some individuals, and are not recommended for sub-elite, and younger participants. If it is essential then think carefully about who is conducting those assessments, who has access to that information, and how these assessments can be conducted privately, sensitively and with full consent of participants.



Flexibility in clothing

Try to encourage flexibility towards training kits and clothing.

Tight fitting clothing requirements may encourage body comparisons between participants, heightening body dissatisfaction and potential disordered eating behaviours.

Focus on practicality and encourage participants to make their own decisions about what they feel comfortable wearing.



Promote, and be good, role models

Consider seeking out good role models in the sports community promoting positive body image and fuelling.

Bringing in an expert (e.g. sport nutritionist, sport psychologist) to address your team/group may be helpful in promoting a positive training environment in relation to food, weight and shape.

If you have any concerns about a participant then seek advice from a club welfare officer, talk directly to the participant or parent or carer, and if appropriate, encourage them to seek support from their GP.

Our thanks to Dr Carolyn Plateau from Loughborough University for her help in producing this resource.

