

# BBC Learning English

## 6 Minute English

### *Men's body image*



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

**Rob:** Hello I'm Rob. Welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm joined today by Finn. Hi Finn.

**Finn:** Hello Rob.

**Rob:** Today we're talking about men's **body image** – that means how men feel about their physical appearance.

**Finn:** So it's not about fashion – the style of clothes they wear – it's about how they look physically and how they think other people view them. So come on Rob, how do you think I look?

**Rob:** Hmm... You want me to be honest?! You're a handsome chap really but you're a little skinny, maybe, you don't look like you '**work out**' – you know, go to the gym – but look at me, I can't talk – I don't look too good either!

**Finn:** Oh come on Rob, I'm sure your wife thinks you look very **handsome**!

**Rob:** You'll have to ask her. Well before we explore this subject more and look at some related vocabulary, let's 'work out' with a question. It's about a survey on men's body image. In a survey by the University of the West of England, what percentage of men said they were unhappy about their body?

- a) 20%
- b) 55%
- c) 80%

**Finn:** Well I think men are quite concerned about their body image so I'm going to say 80%.

**Rob:** We'll find out if you are right or wrong later. So let's talk more about body image. We probably know more about women worrying about things like their weight, size, and body shape.

**Finn:** But men also have bodily expectations – in other words, a view on how they think they should look. But where does this **vanity** come from?

**Rob:** Vanity – a good word, that's when you are too interested in yourself and especially interested in how you look – spending a lot of time in front of a mirror. I suppose it's from pressure or influence from people we see on TV or in magazines. People have a **perception** – or a belief – of what the perfect body should look like.

**Finn:** Yes, TV and magazines are full of pictures of men with perfect **pecs** – that's chest muscles – perfect hair and dazzling white teeth. A bit like Arnold Schwarzenegger?

**Rob:** Not my type! Whilst I like to look fit and healthy, big muscles don't suit me! The biggest thing I have at the moment is my **beer belly** – my stomach is getting a bit too fat – and that's something I'm not too proud of.

**Finn:** It's very impressive, Rob. Well some men cheat to try and achieve the perfect physique. They either take certain drugs or drink protein drinks.

**Rob:** And then there's a **muscle-enhancing** shirt – that's a padded shirt that you wear under your clothes that make you look more of a **hunk** – strong and muscly. Come on Finn, you must have one of those?

**Finn:** I'm wearing one right now, Rob. Not really! And Joe Warner, an author and former editor of Men's Fitness Magazine, thinks they are a waste of time. What word does he use to describe wearing a padded shirt – and what does he suggest men should really be doing to improve body image?

**Joe Warner, author and former editor of Men's Fitness Magazine:**

*A lot of people now are obese, they are overweight – it's a real issue in the UK. And it's another one of these fitness and health gimmicks we see so much of, I think it's just a real shame people still want shortcuts when it doesn't take an awful lot of effort to get to the gym or go for a walk and men do need to take more exercise.*

- Rob:** So Joe says many people in the UK are **obese** – they are too fat and it's dangerous to their health. But he describes trying to pretend to look good by wearing a padded shirt as a 'health and fitness **gimmick**'.
- Finn:** Yes, a gimmick is something that looks good, but is not really useful. And he says these health and fitness gimmicks are shortcuts to looking healthy. What's the real solution Rob?
- Rob:** Easy – do more exercise. Walk, run, cycle or go the gym. Of course body image is about how you think you look and how you think you should look – I think the best approach is to accept how you look: we don't want to all look the same anyway.
- Finn:** Wise words Rob. We shouldn't forget that **beauty is only skin deep**. So your character is much more important than your appearance.
- Rob:** A good idiom, but still men – and women – are concerned about their body image. And earlier I asked you, according to a survey, what percentage of men are worried?
- Finn:** I said c) 80%. Was I right?
- Rob:** You were right. The study by the University of the West of England found that 80% of men who responded, said they regularly had conversations about one another's bodies. And the biggest body issue for them was their beer bellies and lack of muscles. Well before I head off to the pub... I mean gym, could you remind us of some of the vocabulary we've heard today:
- Finn:** Yes, we heard:
- body image
  - workout
  - handsome
  - vanity
  - perception
  - pecs
  - beer belly
  - muscle-enhancing

hunk

obese

gimmick

beauty is only skin deep

**Rob:** Thanks. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again soon for another 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

**Both:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>body image</b>	how you feel about your physical appearance or how you think other people view you
<b>workout</b>	a period of physical exercise
<b>handsome</b>	physically attractive (often used for men)
<b>vanity</b>	being too interested in yourself and your appearance
<b>perception</b>	a particular way of how you think or understand something
<b>pecs</b>	large chest muscles (short for pectoral muscles)
<b>beer belly</b>	slang expression describing a fat stomach, often caused by drinking too much beer over a long period of time
<b>muscle-enhancing</b>	making muscles appear bigger
<b>hunk</b>	strong, muscly and attractive man
<b>obese</b>	being overweight or fat in a way that causes health problems
<b>gimmick</b>	something that is meant to impress but is not very useful
<b>beauty is only skin deep</b>	someone's character is more important than how they look

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## More about body image:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-16430142>