

## Body image concerns in young children

Harper is eight years old and in Grade 3, she is the middle child of Brandon (44) and Kelly (42). Harper has an older brother Mason (10) and a younger sister Zoe (6). Brandon is a full-time real estate agent and Kelly works part-time in fashion retail. The family live in a metropolitan suburb not far from Sydney, NSW and the children attend a public school near the family home.

For both Brandon and Kelly, being physically fit and healthy is important and both maintain a workout routine at their local gym four times per week. Each Saturday morning, Kelly wakes up early to go jogging with her three friends. After running, Kelly and her friends have a coffee at a nearby café and Kelly sees this as her only personal time out. For Brandon, personal time out means going to the local pub with his mates for a weekly pool competition and spending extra time at the gym as a part of his routine when preparing for local body building competitions. The family regularly partake in fundraising runs and walks and are proud of their family achievements at these events.

Brandon and Kelly share a lot of the household chores between themselves – on the days that Kelly is working, Brandon takes over the preparation of the kids' school lunches.

Recently, Harper said to her dad, "I don't want a sandwich in my lunch anymore. Can you please just give me vegetables and an apple?". Harper also asked her dad not to pack a pop top juice anymore because she only wants to drink water, Brandon responded by saying, "sure honey, I can do that for you. It's a good habit to eat healthy foods".

For Kelly, it's commonplace to diet and her most recent diet was a 'cleansing juice fast'. Kelly spends a lot of time using social media and is often posting videos and photos of herself running with her friends; her gym goals and achievements; and herself modelling the latest collection of clothes that have arrived at her workplace. Kelly is very conscious of how she looks and often makes comments to Harper and Zoe about the importance of looking after yourself. As Kelly's workplace sells fashion suitable for the whole family, at times Kelly brings her kids into the store to model clothing and do photos to share on social media. Many of Kelly's friends who are also mums of Harper's friends make comments on the posts and although these comments tend to be positive, Harper's friends have begun teasing her at school for being in the photos.

## Body image concerns in young children

Harper's friends have suggested that the clothes don't suit her and that she looks fat, with one friend saying to Harper directly, "you shouldn't be a model because you aren't skinny enough".

These recent comments have stuck with Harper and have led to her feeling apprehensive and anxious when her mum asks her to come to the store for more photos. In one of these instances, Harper said to her mum, "I'm not feeling well in my tummy today, can I do it another day?". Kelly replied by saying, "oh, okay that's alright let's do it when you feel a bit better, and I'll ring the doctor so we can see why you aren't feeling well." Although Harper tried to reassure her mum that she would be better tomorrow, Kelly insisted on taking Harper to their family GP later that afternoon. At the appointment, the GP explored why Harper might not be feeling well and asked if she had eaten anything differently that day that may have upset her tummy. Harper replied to the GP by saying she'd mostly been eating healthy food 'like mum and dad do'.