



## Arthur House

# Eva's story: social media and body image

**Eva\* shares her experience with body image and social media, and how the programme at Arthur House has helped her to start to re-focus her thinking when it comes to her appearance and self-worth.**

I have been at Arthur House for the last year and during that time the knowledge and support I have received has greatly benefitted me, especially when it comes to understanding body image, which has been one of the hardest things for me to work on.

Before coming into treatment, I struggled with my body image from a very young age. I would avoid anything which would show any part of me, like mirrors and pictures. Over many years, I only uploaded about three photos of myself to one of my social media accounts, because I always found something to criticise and feel overly self-conscious about.

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I have slowly started to believe that there is more to me as a person, than just my appearance. Because of this, I try and challenge my thoughts and focus on my positive qualities.

I also continually compared myself to a huge number of people I followed on social media. I would compare every part of their body to mine and inevitably, I would always think they were better looking than I was and I would feel that this was the reason they were so much happier than I felt. I felt that in order for me to be happy, to go out and have fun, that I need to be as thin (if not thinner) than the people I saw on social media.





I found it particularly hard to see pictures of girls around my age that were at my school because I could see how they looked in real life, therefore, I told myself that if they could look that way, then there was no reason I couldn't as well. However, I have since learnt that this way of thinking could be very detrimental to my health as every body is unique.

Being at Arthur House has helped me realise how much of social media is fake and portrayed to be 'perfect' when actually, pretty much everything is edited, photoshopped and glazed over with a filter to make everyone look more 'idealistic', but this standard is completely unrealistic. Being here also helped me to escape this trap of getting caught up in hundreds of triggering photos, by helping me to unfollow the people that had a negative impact on my mental health/self-esteem and find positive, sustainable accounts that promote natural bodies and appearances. Sometimes, these accounts also demonstrate the difference between photos we might see in magazines for example, and the original photos before being photoshopped. Thanks to Arthur House, I am now able to tell myself and believe (most of the time) that the photos I see on social media, magazines etc. of others' bodies, are fake and that my standards were/are very unrealistic. Currently, I am following multiple body positive accounts and only one account which has photos I find challenging, but that's because I think it is important not to completely hide away from triggering images.

Whilst I still struggle a lot with my body image, and I can find the body image group sessions to be quite distressing at times, the treatment here at Arthur House has helped me to slowly start to believe that there is more to me as a person than just my appearance. Because of this, I try and challenge my thoughts and

focus on my positive qualities, which has been a learning process in itself, and this has started to help me take the emphasis away from my appearance with a long-term goal of my body image being of much less importance. As well as changing my focus to my qualities, I have also learnt to be able to have gratitude for parts of my body (including areas that I dislike) based on what they provide me with, for example, my legs because they allow me to walk and have independence. Additionally, I have found, thanks to the advice and encouragement of the staff here, that wearing clothes that I would usually avoid, due to high levels of discomfort, has also helped me to build some confidence around my body. The environment at Arthur House has been especially good for this type of exposure as I know that I have full support and no judgement from others.

Based on what I have learnt, I would strongly encourage anyone who's struggling with their body image to be extremely patient with the process as it is one of the hardest aspects of an eating disorder to shift. If it takes a long time, it does not mean it is not working, it just means there is a lot to work on and it will take time. I would really recommend others struggling with negative to body image to try and change their focus of themselves to things such as their personality, qualities and things they can be grateful about, in regard to their body. I can imagine that, like myself, others might feel disheartened at times and want to give up, but it is important to remember that those are the times when it is most important to push through and keep going with the work they have been doing. It is important to remember that if other people have succeeded at becoming, at the very least, neutral around their appearance, then it is definitely possible for anyone else to do the same.

## Find out more

Find out more information about how Arthur House can support you:

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