

# Boys' Body Image and Online Exposure

1. Overview
2. Examples of looksmaxxing content
3. Tipsheet
4. Video discussion guide

## What is “Looksmaxxing?”

**Looksmaxxing** refers to trying to change or optimize one's physical appearance, especially among young men, to become more attractive or “manly.” Looksmaxxing is promoted by online influencers and communities. While Looksmaxxing content can at first appear positive (“How to care for your health!”), influencers highlight the insecurities of boys and sell them false solutions to make a profit.

## Where is Looksmaxxing Content?

and

Looksmaxxing says you'll only be seen as attractive if you're ultra-muscular. [Studies say kindness and support](#) are more important for attraction.

## Types of Looksmaxxing



Looksmaxxing says there is a crisis of low-testosterone men. But does taking testosterone supplements help everyone? [Research says no.](#)



Looksmaxxing says you need to have a strong jawline to be successful. But does “mewing” (jawline-enhancement) work? [Research says no.](#) Another technique for a strong jawline that gets mentioned is [bone breaking](#), which can result in serious injury.



Looksmaxxing tells boys they need to be extremely lean (yet muscular) to be attractive. It promotes severe calorie restriction, fasting challenges, or cutting out entire food groups which can lead to serious [medical risks](#).



## How is it harmful?

- » Creates anxiety around appearance and negative body image, that can sometimes lead to eating disorders
- » Links self-worth to looks, while fostering obsession and low self esteem
- » Promotes harmful stereotypes about what it means to be a man
- » Sells false “quick fixes” that don't work, can be expensive, and sometimes contain unregulated ingredients or cause physical harm

If you are concerned about immediate harm to a youth's physical or mental wellbeing, please reach out to a professional using [these resources](#)!

# Examples of Looksmaxxing Content

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11K Likes

338K+ Views

**Looksmaxxing influencers** often try to relate to young boys or men by saying: "Hey! I used to be like you," "I used to be bullied," "I was a loser," "I couldn't get any girls..." "**...But look at me now and here is how you can become like me.**" In this way these influencers become seen as relatable, authentic, role models.



130K Likes

3.9M+ Views

Looksmaxxing influencers are profiting off of young men and boys insecurities. This influencer is telling boys how to increase their penile length by promoting products that he is getting paid to advertise.



8.6K Likes

158K+ Views

Others do not directly sell products, but sell programs or subscriptions to their content such as the Self Improvement Program featured in the video description.



50K Likes

1M+ Views

The idea of maxxing out various physical features is being explicitly marketed to teens. This influencer has a general looksmax guide, as well as a [specific guide for 13-18 year olds](#).

# Tipsheet

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## 1

### Be curious, not judgmental.

Ask open-ended questions instead of mocking or dismissing... If they follow looksmaxxing influencers or buy the products they promote, explore what is appealing about the influencer or what pressures they felt that led them to make the purchase:

- “What do you like about this video?”
- “What does this video make you feel?”
- “What do you hope the product (i.e. supplements) you ordered will do?”
- “What leads you to feel like you need to change your appearance (i.e. height)?”

## 2

### Encourage critical thinking

Help them to analyze and question online content. Encourage reflection questions like:

- “Who benefits from me believing this?”
- “Are they trying to sell me something?”
- “Is this evidence-based or just an opinion?”
- “Are they making me feel bad about myself or like I am not enough?”
- “How does this content align with my values?”

## 3

### Expand their view of what it means to be a man

Show that there are many ways to be a man. Kindness, honesty, self-awareness and emotional openness are real strengths. Point out examples of positive male role models who reflect these qualities.

## 4

### Be mindful of your comments about bodies

Youth internalize how you talk about appearance (whether it's about your own body, theirs or others). Avoid comments that promote judgement, shame, or unhealthy pressures. Remember, that just like girls, boys also feel immense pressure around the way they look.

## 5

### Support positive habits for health, not appearance

Encourage sleep, exercise, healthy food, and play for how they make us feel (physically and mentally), not for chasing an “ideal” body.



# “The Truth About Looksmaxxing”

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## Questions to Spark Reflection and Dialogue with Youth



To watch the video, click the thumbnail or head to:  
[amaze.org/video/the-truth-about-looksmaxxing/](https://amaze.org/video/the-truth-about-looksmaxxing/)

1. What led Liam to start taking the “TestoBlast MAX” gummies?
2. What pressures do you feel/have you felt around your appearance? What role does the content you consume online (in video games, social media, etc) play in these pressures?
3. Have you ever come across scams online like those in the Lookmaxxing Hallway? What makes them so convincing?
4. How can you tell if a product, influencer, or “solution” is trying to take advantage of your insecurities or is actually helpful and healthy?
5. Agent M calls out the false idea that there is one mold and one way to be a man. How can limiting ideas about what it means to “be a man” affect people’s mental health or self-esteem?
6. What are some ways you take care of your body that actually help you feel better, not just look better?
7. Liam learns that qualities like loyalty, kindness, and being emotionally open matter more than the way you look. What are some qualities you value in yourself or others that go beyond appearance?
8. What are some things we can do to actually build real confidence in our authentic selves?

## Wrap Up Points

- 1 Online messages about how you “should” look or be are often unrealistic and profit-driven. A lot of what we see online is designed to make us feel “not enough” so we’ll spend money. If something makes you feel worse about yourself, question it.
- 2 Take care of your body to feel good (not just to look good). As Agent M said, exercising, eating healthy foods, and getting enough sleep are all healthy habits that help us feel better. It’s healthy to care for your body, but not if it becomes stressful or feels rooted in shame.
- 3 You are so much more than your looks. Your worth doesn’t come from your jawline, height or any physical feature. It comes from your values and how you treat others.

