

# Using ACT and DNA-V to support adolescents

## Case study: Mia - Body image concerns and social media impact

### Background and developmental context

Mia, 14, spends hours on social media comparing herself to others her age and even to influencers. She is critical about her appearance and has started skipping meals in an attempt to lose weight. Her mood is low, and she is preoccupied with negative self-judgements.

### Conceptualisation (DNA-V terms in brackets)

#### Actions and Tracking (Discoverer):

Mia's identity exploration is constrained by her reliance on external validation from social media.

#### Sensory Awareness (Noticer):

She struggles to notice how social media impacts her emotions and fails to connect with her body's hunger cues.

#### Cognitions (Advisor):

Her self-talk is dominated by comparison-based rules, such as, "I'll never be good enough unless I look like them."

Avoidant behaviours, such as skipping meals, temporarily reduced her critical cognitions, but worsen her emotional and physical health over time.

#### Values and Motivation:

Mia values self-expression and connection, but her current behaviours are misaligned with these values.

## **(continued) Mia - Body image concerns and social media impact**

### **Self view:**

Mia's difficulty began in her entanglement with societal beauty standards reinforced by social media, now she has self concepts that she does not meet those standards. This drives much of her behaviour.

### **Social view:**

Mia's social context of internet and phones use image as a primary acceptance or rejection strategy.

## **Recommendations**

- **Social view:** Encourage Mia to engage her friends in how they respond to social media images, with a view to sharing the distress
- **Self view:** Begin experiences to help Mia see herself as more than how she looks.
- **Values-based redirection:** Work with Mia to reconnect with her authentic values, such as creativity and connection. For example, she might explore photography as a way to express herself, shifting her focus from appearance to skill or artistry.
- **Social view:** Practice awareness on social media use: Rather than generic "limit screen time" advice, Mia could practise pausing after viewing posts to notice how they make her feel and choosing to engage with content that aligns with her values.
- **Body compassion practices:** Build her Noticer by introducing gentle body awareness exercises, such as placing a hand on her stomach and noticing its rise and fall without judgement.
- **Challenging societal narratives:** Encourage Mia to use her Advisor to critically evaluate societal beauty standards. For example, she might ask, "Who benefits from me believing I'm not good enough as I am?"