Being Body Positive/Neutral in Content

📋 Overview

It's important that, while creating content that relates to body image, body enhancements or surgeries, the medical field, or that otherwise promotes products and services that relate to these topics, we be conscious of our chosen images and language to create content with a body-conscious lens while also following Facebook's advertising policies.

Why is this important? 🤔

- Companies are being pushed now more than ever to create advertisements that consider body positivity in their content. Companies that create ads which **body shame** are being held accountable by an audience that is smart and intolerant of such negativity.
- As consumers, the content we see in ads affects us **every day.** We constantly consume media that shapes and reinforces societal standards of beauty, which can be packaged and presented overtly but can also be presented with more nuance. Either way, it's undeniable that this media affects us as humans and how we view our own beauty – especially American children and young adults.
- The images we use and the **sentences we craft matter**. Our customers rely on us to create content that best represents their brand and reputation; some customers may already be conscious of body-positive content, but others may need us to bring that awareness to their posts and ads.

Body Positivity
- Promotes strong self-esteem
- Encourages others to love their body
- Encourages others to care for their body

Body Neutrality
- Emphasizes what your body can do
- Encourages mindfulness
- Focuses on the body as a vessel rather than what it looks like

This is a heated topic that's been ongoing for several years now, and even the term "body positive" is considered to be controversial in some spaces, given how complex the conversation is. Some people say that "body neutrality" is the more modern and mindful term to use.

No matter which phrasing you or a company may align with, it's important to consider these points while creating content.

Guidance ✍️

Below are some things to consider when approaching this content. *Further down, there will be more guidelines and reminders about Facebook's advertising policies relating to these topics.*

Think inclusively ☺️

Facebook's advertising policies say that ads:

> *"…must not discriminate or encourage discrimination against people based on personal attributes such as race, ethnicity, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, disability, medical or genetic condition."*

We always want to create content that does not discriminate, but aside from this textbook rule about inclusivity, we can go a bit further with our content. Body positivity should be thought of with **intersectionality** in mind. Here a few things to think about.

📸 When creating content, consider if you can be more inclusive by using **images with varying body types**, ages, ethnicities, genders, gender expressions, etc., unless your customer explicitly states otherwise.
For example: Incorporating stock images with people of varying skin colors for a spa, using an image of an older person while promoting a product that we usually use images of young people to promote, etc. ⚠️ Keep in mind what your customer's preferences and **audience** is, though. If their intended audience is almost exclusively young women, then the majority of our content should reflect that, but we can still be inclusive in other ways (like showcasing young women of color).

🌈 Consider using **gender-neutral language** like "they/them" when promoting certain products or services that may apply to more than just the gender it's assumed to apply to.
For example: Using "they/them" when talking about customers who may enjoy spa services, massages, manicures, etc. instead of "she/her, the "typical" audience of a spa. 💡 Remember that "they" has been formally recognized as a grammatically acceptable word to reference a singular person in a non-gendered way.

🙍 Remember that the majority of images we see in media, marketing, and online are **heavily altered.** Even ads that claim to have "no filter" have been criticized for using obvious blur effects and other photoshop tools and apps. Stock photos, influencer selfies, and television ads often have been edited, so this is something to keep in mind when talking about body image, beauty, and the products or services that relate to them.

👥 **Remember to be authentic and honest in your language.** No person, especially those who identify with a minority group, wants to be pandered to or advertised an inauthentic message. They also don't want to see their image or identity being used by corporations as a quick way to sell products and pose at being progressive while really not representing or caring for that minority group.
🏳️‍🌈 A good example of this can be seen in "rainbow washing": a term coined to describe companies that "slap a rainbow on top of something" during Pride Month and profit off of Pride while not doing anything tangible or charitable to support LGBT+ individuals any other time of the year.

Write with care ❣️ (Examples included)

The language we use is vital in shaping the message of our body image-related content. Here are some points to consider while crafting your post or ad:

- **Focus on the *human*, not the body part.** Per Facebook's guidelines, we cannot use zoomed-in photos of body parts in ads, which speaks to this point, but we want to write to the human in our copy as well.
    - **Example:** ❌ "Those thunder thighs won't stand a chance against our thigh master!" *(<This focuses on the body part as separate from the person.)*
    - **Example:** ✅ "If you're trying to tone your legs while slimming down, our thigh master is the perfect cardio-strength blend for your fitness journey." *(<This focuses on the human as a whole.)*

⭐ *Savage Fenty has been praised for leading with body-inclusive ads that include women of varying sizes and skin colors, and their ads unabashedly celebrate and show these differences in full-length photos like this one.* ⭐

- **Remember to think about different body types** while crafting your content. A variety of people with different body types will be reading your content, so it's important to keep this in mind while writing.
    - **Steer away from language that contributes to how people "should look"** or how beauty is "supposed to look." Try to avoid tired clichés and phrases that are body shaming in nature.
    - **Example:** ❌ "As we approach summer, we want to ditch the hip dips and get rid of the muffin tops before hitting the beach. Call us today about our skin-sculpting services to be skinny for the summer!" *(<This copy assumes that consumers want to be "skinny for the summer," and it, at the same time, then shames people who* do *have hip dips or muffin tops – both of which are completely natural for many people and body types.)*
    - **Example:** ✅ "There's no better way to enter the summer season than when you feel good in your body and skin. Call us today about our skin-sculpting services to get your summer started!"

The original – Protein World's body-shaming ad via aol.com

❌ *This brand uses the common clichéd question, "Are you beach body ready?" paired with an image of a thin woman in a bikini to promote their weight loss products. As many people have noted in recent years (as a response to this phrase), any body is a beach body and does not need altering to exist in public spaces.* ❌

- **Be factual and non-sensational in your language** when talking about services that "enhance" or change the body. When creating content for med spas and cosmetic-surgery customers, we want to be cautious in how we write about their services and procedures to **avoid sending a message that is incorrect, harmful, or misleading.**
    - This brings us back to those two terms: **body positivity and body neutrality.** Body positivity promotes and encourages others to love their body, but body neutrality encourages mindfulness and health, and it emphasizes what your body can do as a vessel. We can use this lens of body neutrality when creating content for gyms and nutritionists, for example, which may promote services to lose weight and/or get healthy but can do so without body shaming, and instead, being body neutral and focusing on body health and mindfulness.
    - Additionally, don't suggest that a cosmetic procedure **should be done to appease *other people*** in the consumer's life. More and more plastic surgeons are encouraging patients to get work done only for themselves and no one else.
    - **Example:** ❌ "With our dietary supplements, you'll be amazed at how quickly the pounds fall right off you! In a short period of time, you'll be feeling beautiful and slim for your partner. Call to purchase today!" *(<This copy is extreme, but we see sensational and misleading ads all the time.)*
    - **Example:** ✅ "Our dietary supplements contain vitamins that help to curb your appetite and keep you feeling content until your next meal comes around. Need something to ward off the ever-tempting snack cravings at night? Give our evening vitamins a try to ease into your night with relaxation. You'll wake up feeling refreshed and ready to start the day!"

❌ This ad focuses on the idea that you need to get lip injections to please your partner for Valentine's Day – a very toxic message to convey. ❌

- **Be sincere and use language that uplifts the consumer rather than puts them down.** When possible, we want to create content that lifts a person's confidence, focuses on their health (both physical and mental), and that is empowering for their self growth and confidence.
  - Think about the **impact of your message:** Will your language make someone feel worse about themselves or better? Will it *inspire* them into a purchase or *shame* into one?
  - **Example:** ❌ "Is your smile distracting in photos? No one wants to see a photo of themselves with crooked teeth that are pushing into each other and taking away from what could be a great smile. Don't worry: We can fix that with our cosmetic dental services!"
  - **Example:** ✅ "The smile you have is the smile that is unique to your own natural beauty, but if you're looking to enhance the beauty you were born with, then call us to ask about our cosmetic dental services today."

❌ This ad, which was selling a skin product that supposedly reduces cellulite, directly suggests that dimples and cellulite on one's legs – something that nearly all people have and that is completely normal – are unattractive and "not cute." The **impact** of this message could be very harmful – especially to young children seeing this ad. ❌

The bottom line ✍️

Beauty standards are always changing and evolving, and they're often impossible to keep up with and abide by. Different people, communities, and cultures have different beauty standards, and intersectional topics around race, class, gender, and more directly affect conversations around body image.

Remember that there is no ideal or "perfect" body type. Every person's body is a "real body" and deserves to be respected and seen in media and copy. As content creators, we can do our part in positively affecting the marketing space to be more inclusive and body positive.

Facebook's Advertising Guidelines 👤

Many of the ❌ examples above are extreme examples of poorly considered and written content, but several of them also don't follow Facebooks' advertising guidelines. Let's look into that:

- **Facebook's Advertising Policies**
  - This is a larger page that includes several of their general policies around ads.
- **Facebook's Personal Attributes policy**
  - We can't say or suggest statements like, "Do you want to look thin? Lose 10 pounds in 10 days" or ask questions like, "Do you like/hate your body?"
- **Facebook's Personal Health policy**
  - We cannot use "before and after" images of a person's body, face, nose, wrinkles, lips, etc. This means we cannot do before-and-after photos related to acne, skincare, weight loss, injections, etc.
  - "*Ad content must not imply or attempt to generate negative self-perception in order to promote diet, weight loss, or other health related products.*"
- **Facebook's Adult Content policy**
  - We cannot use photos that contain nudity or excessive skin (this one is tricky since a person in a swimsuit could be considered "excessively showing skin," so reach out to your manager if you're unsure or need a second opinion).

Other relevant resources 🗣

- Social Ad Best Practices
  - We cannot zoom in on specific body parts.
- Facebook Boosting and Social Ad Guidelines
  - We cannot include "before and after" images/content.