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# Worried Your BFF Has Body Dysmorphic Disorder? Here are 9 Signs to Watch For

AUGUST 23, 2019 – 3:44 PM – 0 COMMENTS



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We all have days when we're not thrilled with our bodies, but how do you know those self-deprecating comments your BFF is making is just average woman stuff or something deeper? Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is a psychological condition that involves a negative preoccupation with appearance. "Individuals with BDD experience excessive shame and anxiety related to specific areas of their body, and much of their self-worth and identity is associate with their perception of their physical features," says Arie M. Winograd, director of the Los Angeles [Body Dysmorphic Disorder & Body Image Clinic](#).

Uma Thurman, Sarah Michelle Gellar and Brittany Snow have all admitted to struggling with some form of the condition, which affects [1 in 50 people](#) and has become an increasing concern. The rise of smartphone photo-editing applications and social media filters have [catered to the condition](#), creating unattainable looks and leading to what researchers are dubbing "Snapchat dysmorphia."

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Although any area of the body can be the focus of concern, some of the most common body dysmorphic disorder obsessions, according to

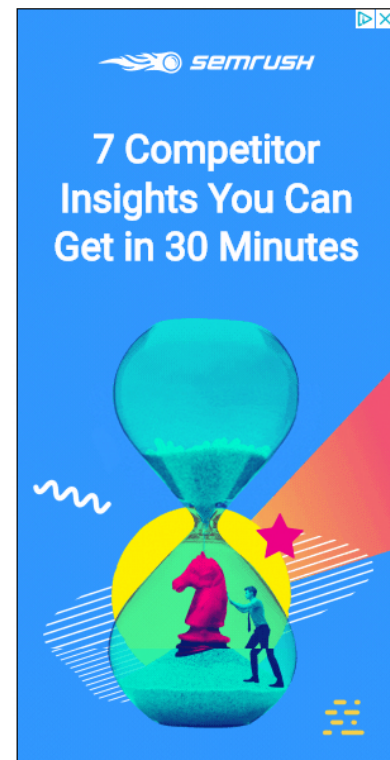


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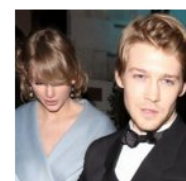
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Winograd, include:

- Nose size, shape or profile
- Head and face symmetry, or size and shape
- Hair perceived as thinning, too thick, too curly or disheveled. The hairline is also a common area of concern.
- Skin tone, complexion, acne, wrinkles, pores, discoloration or scars
- Teeth shape, size and color
- Size, symmetry and shape of the eyes

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Have you noticed that a friend is fixated on a specific body part or seems to have an unhealthy relationship with his or her appearance? There's no body dysmorphic disorder test you can administer, but here are some signs that someone may be dealing with BDD, plus some expert advice on how to encourage them to get help:

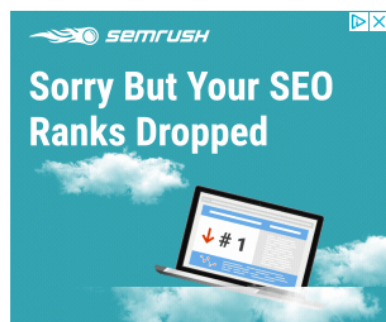
### Constantly mirror checking

If you feel like you have to pull a friend "away from their beloved mirror," it may be a red flag that something is not right," says [Carla Buck](#), a mental health therapist currently working in Dubai. She added that "it doesn't have to take 3 or 4 hours to get ready," and that this extended grooming sessions can also be a symptom of the condition. Winograd explained that when a person's mood is often determined by how they perceive themselves when looking in reflective surfaces and/or when viewing photographs of themselves, that is when this behavior can signify an issue.

### Frequently shaming a body part

This, according to Winograd, manifests as excessive shame associated with an area of their body that a person considers defective. "They often do not talk about this area of their body due to the excessive shame, although they may confide in a family member or close friend," he explains.

### Seeking constant reassurance



People who need to continuously have certain aspects of their appearance validated may be struggling with the condition, explains Dr. Mark B Constantian, author of *Childhood Abuse, Body Shame, and Addictive Plastic Surgery: The Face of Trauma*. He cites the following as a potential warning sign: "A friend is constantly checking her appearance on her cell phone and posting selfies asking her followers if they think she's pretty, or

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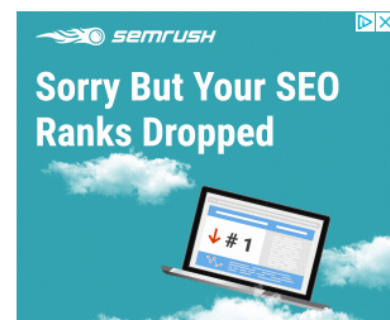
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if her skin looks good, if her hair is all right.”

### **Camouflaging the body part that they consider defective**

Winograd cites the following as examples of such behavior: Using hair to cover their forehead or areas of their face; hats to hide their hair or to shadow their face; using excessive make-up to hide what they believe is defective skin (or not ever using make-up because they believe this will contaminate their skin).

### **Comparing the body area that they consider defective with that of other people**

“For instance, if the individual believes their nose is misshapen, constantly observing and studying other peoples’ noses to compare how it appears in contrast with their nose,” Winograd says.

### **Staying away from mirrors**

A person who is struggling with BDD may limit the time that they spend in front of the mirror or avoid it whenever they can, says Winograd, who noted that if a friend is avoiding reflective surfaces altogether, that is cause for concern.

### **It’s affecting their social life**

People with BDD may avoid situations, especially social situations where they believe other people may observe the supposed aesthetic defect. And when they are around others, they may alter their body posture “so that their perceived body defective will not be observed by others,” reveals Winograd.

### **Frequently touching, picking, or poking at a disliked body part**

“Touching a body part or skin picking is also common as they try to remove a blemish, for instance,” says [Scott M. Granet, LCSW](#), a National Association of Social Workers expert. This behavior can actually exacerbate the problem by causing more skin problems. “Skin picking or pinching, as well grabbing parts of the body to try and make the skin appear differently can sometimes lead to injury or scarring to the skin, however, this is not intentional behavior to harm or injure themselves,” adds Jodi Jaspan, a licensed professional counselor and director of business development for [Seeds of Hope](#), an [eating disorder](#) treatment program.

### **Contemplating a cosmetic or dermatological procedures**

If your friend is obsessive over the idea of getting some sort of cosmetic surgery done, there is a chance that they may have BDD—but that doesn’t mean anyone who has plastic surgery has the condition. “Many individuals with body dysmorphic disorder never receive cosmetic procedures,” he explains. But when they do undergo cosmetic procedures, people with the condition are very rarely satisfied with the outcome. “And in the rare cases that they are satisfied with the outcome, the BDD symptoms usually shift to another body part,” Winograd adds.

[Dr. Kelly Killeen](#), a plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills who sees a great deal of suffering from BDD trickling into his office, says it’s important to take the condition seriously. “Fully half of individuals who suffer from

body dysmorphia are hospitalized at some point in their life,” she says, adding that BDD is “a severe psychiatric disorder with a 25% attempted [suicide rate](#).”

If you have a friend struggling with the condition, let them know that treatment options exist and that they may benefit greatly from seeing an experts who specializes in the condition, says Jaspan. “Mention that you think a mental health treatment program could be helpful and that there is no shame in seeking mental health care.” Buck notes that “there are groups specifically out there to help people correct their unhelpful thinking patterns and ultimately live a much healthier and happier life.”



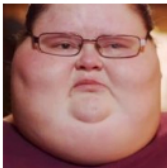
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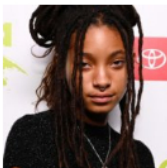
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