

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2016

## Weight Watchers research reveals UK women as a nation of self-critics driven by a 'Hall of Mirrors' era

- *Women criticise themselves at least eight times a day according to new research*
- *89% of women compliment others in ways they would never compliment themselves*
- *Most women asked would like to do more to strengthen the relationship they have with their own body, with over half admitting they would like to be kinder to themselves*

Women in the UK are a nation of self-critics as a result of today's pervading visual culture, a new cultural research report has revealed, with the average woman criticising herself an average of eight times per day despite 81 per cent wanting to strengthen the way they feel about their body.

The study, conducted by Weight Watchers with eight leading experts to explore the result of today's new pressures for modern women on the relationship they have with themselves, discovered a worrying line of inner negativity with one in seven admitting to criticising themselves throughout their day. Over 90 per cent of women said they put others before themselves, with over half of these prioritising the needs of their partners ahead of their own, showing that women and mothers in particular tend to instinctively put others first.

The research found that evolving cultural conditions for women have triggered unkindness to self as a theme that tends to affect the relationship women have with themselves. Image-based criticisms were most prevalent as a result of Instagram and other social platforms being the force behind today's visually-driven culture, with being overweight topping the list.

This was followed by general lifestyle judgements such as not earning enough money or having the 'right' job, described in the study as a result of today's 'Hall of Mirrors Era', in which women are pressured by multiple options while being bombarded with images of perfection and achievement everywhere they look.

While 85 per cent thought they either would or might like to be kinder to themselves, the average woman surveyed only rated her relationship with her body at a five out of ten. A third (34%) need to encourage themselves more, have more self-belief and more motivation. One in four knew they needed to be more positive.

Commenting on the findings, Zoe Griffiths, Head of Public Health and Programme at Weight Watchers, said: "Today's hectic and visually-driven world has meant that we're seeing a rise in women being self-critical, from the way they look to the way they feel at work. Our research has shown that being unkind to ourselves has been an underlying theme for women for many years, but a set of very modern cultural conditions have increased the intensity of this unkindness which are hard to avoid. At Weight Watchers we know that to adopt a healthy lifestyle it is important to build a better relationship with yourself in order to make a positive change."

The findings also showed that women begin berating themselves almost straight away each day, with almost half of those surveyed (46%) admitting to criticising themselves at least once before 9:30am.

Alongside frequent self-criticisms, the study found that almost half of those surveyed (42%) admitted to never complimenting themselves, while the remainder gave themselves a positive thought or 'pat on the back' just once a day. This was described by the study's cultural experts as a form of self-diminishment; evidence has shown that women in particular today use language to minimise themselves and their ideas and apologise

more frequently for their actions.

The research has also shown that the traditional daily structures of 9-5 are a thing of the past and both men and women are now living asynchronous lives with shifting routines. Fitting more and more into every hour of the day is making it much harder to co-ordinate mealtimes with family and to eat healthily yourself.

Bursts of negative thoughts towards themselves are also far more frequent in front of the mirror or when out clothes shopping than in any other area of life, and a worrying 60 per cent of women admitted to having days where they felt they criticised themselves constantly throughout the day.

“We wanted to explore what it truly means to have a strong relationship with yourself. We understand that the way people feel about their body image extends beyond the number on the scale, so our new approach to weight management encourages women to feel empowered to lead healthier lives without focusing purely on weight and to build a better relationship between mind and body,” continued Zoe Griffiths.

This Weight Watchers research has been conducted as part of **#Womankind**, a nationwide campaign that explores why modern women are unkind to themselves and how they can counter this cultural habit, making healthier choices and building better relationships with themselves.

For the full report or more information visit <https://www.weightwatchers.com/uk/womankind>

## **Weight Watchers’ KINDESS HACKS to build kinder a relationship with yourself:**

1. **Raw Vulnerability** - eliminate shame and build stronger relationships with others
2. **Find Your Thing** – confidence in who you are leads to body confidence
3. **Reframe ‘Weaknesses’ As Strengths** – values such as empathy, collaboration and flexibility are now being identified as the key values for success and growth in business
4. **Radical Body Honesty** – normalise the shared female experience and encourage self-acceptance
5. **Find Your People** – minimise negative voices online and offline
6. **Replenish Yourself** – 53% of women sacrifice me-time when they are busy. Take time and space to top up energy and process how you feel

**ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors:**

Weight Watchers’ Mind and Body research surveyed 2,000 women across the UK aged 18-60+ with OnePoll. Cultural intelligence report conducted with 8 cross-disciplinary experts.

## **AREAS A WOMAN IS MOST SELF-CRITICAL**

1. Weight
2. Appearance
3. Career
4. Finances
5. Relationship

## **A WOMAN’S 20 MOST COMMON CRITICISMS OF HERSELF**

1. You're too fat/overweight
2. Your hair is a mess
3. Your belly looks big
4. You don't do enough exercise
5. Feeling scruffy next to other women
6. Not earning enough money
7. You say you are having a 'fat day'
8. Not wearing certain items of clothing because you think you can't pull it off

9. You wish you were as photogenic as other women on social media
10. You deflect compliments by saying something negative about yourself
11. You worry people are talking about you behind your back
12. Feeling underdressed
13. I'm not stylish enough
14. You don't have sex with your partner enough
15. You aren't as creative as other women
16. Your bum looks big
17. You aren't as organised as other women
18. I don't spend as much time with my friends as I should
19. You're not wearing enough make-up
20. You aren't attractive to your partner

## THE TOP 20 MOST POPULAR QUALITIES WOMEN WOULD LIKE TO EMBRACE WITH THEMSELVES

1. Believing in myself
2. Being more confident
3. Encouraging myself
4. Motivating myself
5. Being positive
6. Being patient
7. Being adventurous and trying out new things
8. Not taking myself too seriously
9. Being kind
10. Showing compassion
11. Being honest
12. Being light-hearted
13. Being treated with respect
14. Showing empathy
15. Being passionate
16. Being thoughtful
17. Being reliable
18. Being listened to
19. Being generous
20. Look after my health

**For more information please contact:**

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### **About Weight Watchers International, Inc.**

Weight Watchers International, Inc. is the world's leading commercial provider of weight management services. In the more than 50 years since its founding, the company has helped millions of people across the globe transform their lives through healthy weight loss. Weight Watchers holds more than 36,000 meetings each week, around the world, where members receive group support and learn about healthy eating patterns, behaviour change, wellbeing and physical activity. Weight Watchers provides innovative, digital products through its websites, mobile sites and apps and is the leading provider of online subscription weight management products in the world. Weight Watchers offers a wide range of food products, publications and programmes for those interested in a healthier lifestyle.