

••Awareness••

"I am aware of external pressures and expectations"

Background Information:

Internalization of the thin ideal is well recognized as a risk factor for disordered eating, body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders. High rates of body image dissatisfaction have been reported in children, adolescents and adults (see Skemp-Arlt, 2006). The ideal media image of female beauty portrayed by the media is typically tall and thin, with narrow hips. She has flawless skin, a proportioned figure, large eyes and full lips. Such an image is associated with happiness, prosperity, sexuality and health. In reality only a small percentage of US women are genetically capable of attaining such a figure and appearance, and images themselves are heavily manipulated making the result even less obtainable. Additionally, the range of healthy weights, while debatable, is clearly not limited to the exceptionally thin and often emaciated type most commonly portrayed in the media. Students must develop an awareness of 1) the limited and rigid notion of health and beauty put forth in the media 2) the preponderance of images used in advertisement that sell both the ideal image as well as the product/service advertised 3) the magnitude of manipulation images undergo, particularly in print media and 4) the full range of healthy and normal bodies in the population.

Research links the internalization of the thin ideal as a risk factor for body dissatisfaction among adolescent girls (Jones, 2004). Programs that include a focus on increasing resistance to socio-cultural ideals are most effective in reducing body dissatisfaction, disordered eating and eating disorder risk (Stice, Shaw & Marti, 2007) as are interventions that focus on reducing internalization of the thin ideal (Richardson & Paxton, 2009). Dissonance – induction techniques and strategies, based on the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, are most effective as means to reduce the internalization of the thin ideal and to subsequently reduce body dissatisfaction (Yager & O’Dea, 2008). Such interventions are effective with pre-adolescent, adolescent and adult females.

Target audience: 6-7 th grade

Student Learning Goals:

- 1) The student will understand the difference between external versus internal qualities and expectations.
- 2) The student will identify common external, narrow and changing expectations of beauty put forth in the media.
- 3) The student will identify internal personality qualities that are admirable and respectable.

Health Education Standard(s):

Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors.

Materials:

"Cultivating 'A' Healthy Body Image: Promoting Change Through Active Learning"

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- ✓ One age appropriate magazine for every 2-3 students. Magazines will be cut up.
- ✓ Scissors, tape or glue, pens in a variety of colors, colored paper, shoe boxes (one shoe box for every 2-3 students).

Outline:

Opening activity:

Individual brainstorming: each student will brainstorm a short list in response to the following prompt: “What do society, the media and other external sources tell you about what should be important to you and what qualities matter in a person? Write as many qualities as you can think of.”

Main activity:

- 1) Go over the lists students created from above. Have students share the qualities they came up with and write them on the board.
- 2) Hand out magazines – one for every 2 or 3 students who will be working in a group – and have the students cut out images and words that represent the qualities they identified above. Set the cut outs asides and tell them that they will be using the images a little later.
- 3) Have students think about someone they respect and admire and ask them to describe the qualities about that person that they respect/admire in a paragraph (free write).
- 4) Ask for a few students to share what they wrote about the person they admire/respect. Note attributes and personality characteristics that have no relationship to appearance.
- 5) Write common themes and words from the writings on the board that relate to personality characteristics and qualities (ie. “she is smart” or “she is successful” or “he volunteers at the hospital every Monday” etc).
- 6) Have the students write out the inner qualities from the board that they most admire in creative ways using the markers and paper. Tell them that they will be using the words to decorate their shoe box when they are done.
- 7) Talk with the class about how the physical qualities and expectations we internalize are often the result of advertisement and external influences and messages and are typically shallow. The qualities that matter to us when we think about people we admire and love are deeper and more meaningful and aren’t related to appearance.

Closure/Assessment: (10 minutes)

Each group of students create a shoebox decorated on the outside with images of external expectations of beauty and success and decorated on the inside with personality qualities that they have or would want to have that are admired and respected by others. They should use the qualities and attributes from their own stories. Have each group share some of what is on the outside and on the inside of their box with the rest of the class.

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••Acceptance••

"I accept myself and others as the unique people we are"

Background Information:

Social comparison theory states that when objective, non-social evaluation criteria are not available, individuals will evaluate their abilities and attributes using others as comparisons targets (Festinger, 1954). Body comparison, specifically, refers to the tendency for an individual to evaluate his or her appearance based on a comparison with the appearance of another. Those that engage in high levels of body comparison have been shown to be at higher risk for body dissatisfaction (Schutz, Paxton & Wertheim, 2002). This is especially true among adolescent females who compare themselves against peers as well as media images and do so negatively (Jones, Vigfusdottir & Lee, 2004). Interventions that focus on reducing body comparison behaviors while simultaneously promoting the body acceptance of self and others have proven to be effective in reducing body dissatisfaction (Richardson & Paxton, 2010). Reducing body comparison behaviors may also play a critical role in reducing the internalization of the thin ideal, a known risk factor for body image dissatisfaction, disordered eating and eating disorders.

Target audience: 7 – 8 th grade

Student Learning Goals:

- 1) The student will understand how media images are manipulated to achieve an "ideal" image of beauty.
- 2) The student will identify aspects of his or her own appearance or personality that he or she appreciates and is proud of.

Health Education Standard(s):

Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors.

Materials:

- ✓ Video clips demonstrating digital manipulation of images.
- ✓ Each class member's name written on a small scrap of paper, separated into one stack of girls' and one stack of boys' names.

Outline:

Opening activity (5 minutes)

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5 minute writing task or partner discussion to the prompt: What do you think the expression “beauty is only skin deep” means?

Main activity (30 minutes)

- 1) Show video clips that demonstrate media manipulation of images or other side by side images that show before and after shots of models being altered (such as the Dove commercial or others found on U-Tube).
- 2) Have students share their reactions to the videos/clips with a partner or small group. Ask the students: “What surprised you most about what you just saw?” and “Did you know that the media regularly manipulates images like these?” and “How does it make you feel to know that the images you see everyday are fake and do not represent how the models actually look?”
- 3) Share the key talking points with the class (see Talking Points box).
- 4) Have each student draw the name of a (same sex) classmate. Tell the students that they should NOT reveal who they selected and that the entire activity is to remain anonymous.
- 5) Ask each student to write out, as specifically as they can, 5 physical attributes about the person that they think are attractive or desirable. I.e. “big eyes”, “white teeth”, “pretty smile” etc. Then have students write out five positive personality characteristics of the person. I.e. “kind hearted”, “generous”, “good friend” etc.
- 6) Ask each student in the class to contribute one of the attributes they identified about their classmate to the class list. Do NOT reveal the name of the person the attribute belongs to. Write each response on the board. Try to avoid duplications if possible. Keep one list of “female” attributes and one list of “male” attributes.
- 7) Explain to the class how, as a group, they have the same physical attributes normally associated with admired models. Explain to them that media manipulation allows physical features to be mixed and matched (different parts from different people and computer alterations of those features) and new images to be created from parts of different people and those are reasons why it is unhealthy to compare yourself to images in the media – they are simply not real. Explain to them that none of the personality characteristics they identified on their sheets can be seen in the media images but those attributes are the most important ones.

Closure/Assessment: (10 minutes)

Have each student write a one to two paragraph reflection to the prompt: I am beautiful because...

Encourage students to identify both physical features and personality characteristics about themselves when they respond. Evaluate the response on thoughtfulness, writing ability and the clarity and robustness of the student’s sense of self (self concept). Add one more positive attribute to each student’s essay before returning them.

Talking Points

1. The typical model is unusually tall and lean. Female models often have large eyes, full lips, a small nose and flawless skin. She is often very narrow in the hips and has (artificially large) breasts. Male models are often unusually tan with well defined musculature, especially in the abdomen. He often has a 'chiseled' appearance with well defined features. Only 5% of the US population has the genetic ability to come close to this "idealized" body type.
2. Images begin with a team of professionals applying heavy makeup, selecting and adjusting expensive clothing and creating perfect hair, nails etc.
3. Images are airbrushed to remove imperfections, flaws and even freckles from the skin.
4. Images are manipulated in ways that can make the waist skinnier, the hips more narrow, the breasts larger, the muscles more defined etc. No image is untouched by these manipulations.
5. Many images are composites, meaning that features from different individuals are combined into a new 'fake' person. This allows very unrealistic ideals to be formed and creates unhealthy, unrealistic and inaccurate points of comparison.
6. Many models are unhealthy, suffering from eating disorders and addictions (ie. stimulants, cigarettes, hormones or even exercise).

••Attitude••

"I control my attitude and emotions"

Background Information:

One's attitude refers to the manner, disposition, feeling or position one holds with regard to a person or thing. Attitude references a tendency or orientation, especially of the mind. When referencing attitude toward the self the term self-esteem may be used. The relationship between low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction in adolescents is well understood (Thompson & Smolak, 2001). Recent research confirms that the specific relationship between low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction varies to some degree by weight status, race/ethnicity and SES, but that overall it is strong among all groups (van den Berg et al., 2009). It has also been shown that individuals with low self-esteem report being more offended and negatively impacted by other's actions against them than those with higher self-esteem (Nail, Misak & Davis, 2003). In this way, a strong self-esteem may offer a protective effect against the internalization of the thin ideal, body comparisons and appearance-related teasing (Richardson & Paxton, 2010). Programs designed to prevent body dissatisfaction and related behaviors should clearly emphasize educational activities that build self-esteem (Yager & O'Dea, 2008; Stice, Shaw & Marti, 2007). Additionally, research shows that a well defined, coherent and stable sense of self (known as Self Concept Clarity) can provide a protective effect against internalization of societal standards, body image and dieting concerns (Vartanian, L., 2009).

Target audience: 6-7 th grade

Student Learning Goals:

- 1) The learner will understand the concept of global self esteem.
- 2) The learner will identify aspects of him or herself that relate to elements of global self-esteem.
- 3) The learner will understand the concept of SMART goal setting and will demonstrate the ability to set short term goals related to self-esteem.

Health Education Standard(s):

Standard 5 – Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision making skills to enhance health.

Standard 6 – Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal setting skills to enhance health.

Materials:

- ✓ Handouts – one per student

Outline:

Opening activity (5 minutes)

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Partner talk: respond to the following prompt by talking with a partner (or writing if preferred): Describe the last conversation you had that related to either your, or someone else’s appearance, and describe the content and circumstances of the conversation and explain how it felt.

Main activity (30 minutes)

- 1) Provide the class with an introduction to self-esteem. Explain to them that feeling good about yourself and being able to realistically identify personal strengths in many different areas is important to having a healthy self –esteem. This ability is important because it can help provide protection against peer and media pressures that might influence health behaviors (such as smoking or dieting). Explain to them that they will be working on identifying accurate and positive aspects of themselves that aren’t related to appearance and that they will then set goals related to components of self-esteem not related to their appearance.
- 2) Provide each student with a handout and go over the example on the handout. Have the students complete the handout by writing as many aspects about themselves as they can think of that relate to each of the columns.
- 3) Introduce SMART goal setting [see “Chalk Talk” box].
- 4) Have students write two short term goals (for next week) that relate to two different aspects of self-esteem. Make sure that each goal uses all of the SMART guidelines.

Closure/Assessment:

Ask for several volunteers to share their goals. Comment on whether or not all aspects of SMART have been met. Collect handouts and evaluate for effective goal setting.

CHALK TALK
S.M.A.R.T Goals

S = Specific

Consider who, what, when, where, which and why.

M = Measureable

Establish concrete criteria for determining if the goal has been achieved.

A = Attainable

Make sure that the goal is appropriate for your level of interest, investment and time commitment.

R = Realistic

To be realistic the goal must be something you are both able and willing to work at.

T = Time bound

The goal should be bound by a specific time frame.

EXAMPLE:

S = Specific

I will learn how to make a bracelet for my best friend.

M = Measureable

The bracelet will be finished and will fit my friend.

A = Attainable

I can go to the bead store tomorrow and I have some allowance to spend.

R = Realistic

I have done a lot of arts and crafts and have basic skills and creativity and I want to do this for my friend.

T = Time bound

Her birthday is next week so I will have it finished before then.

Name: _____

I CAN!

Things my body can do:	Things my mind can do:	Things I enjoy doing with others:	Qualities that describe me:
<i>Run</i>	<i>Solve math problems</i>	<i>Shop at the mall</i>	<i>Friendly</i>

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My S.M.A.R.T Goals!

GOAL #1:

S = Specific

M = Measureable

A = Attainable

R = Realistic

T = Time bound

GOAL #2:

S = Specific

M = Measureable

A = Attainable

R = Realistic

T = Time bound

••Affirmation••

"I have sincere and kind things to say to myself and others"

Background Information:

Self-affirmation theory's main premise holds that individuals are motivated to restore their basic feelings of self-worth (i.e., the general feeling that one is a good person) after a threat to the self has been experienced. Self-affirmation theory also proposes that cognitive and behavioral processes occur when individuals experience a threat to their self-worth, as with media-induced or peer-induced threats to body image. Affirming non-threatening aspects of the self is one way individuals might go about restoring their sense of self-worth (Bergstrom, Neighbors & Malheim, 2009). When working with body image issues, this process may be accomplished by considering personal attributes such as being a good friend, a good daughter, a good student etc. (Aronson, Blanton, & Cooper, 1995; Tesser, 2000). Thus, when developing affirmation skills in adolescents it becomes important to equip them with a sense of self that expands beyond matters of external appearance. Separating appearance self-worth from overall self-worth (or global self-esteem) is critical (Vartanian, 2009).

Target audience: 8-10 th grade

Student Learning Goals:

- 1) The learner will understand how to reframe common situations that threaten their self-esteem in order to enhance health behaviors and engage in positive, productive and self-enhancing self-talk (affirmations).
- 2) The learner will practice countering negative actions and self-talk by examining and reframing the stories of others.
- 3) The learner will engage in countering and factually disputing his or her own negative actions and thoughts with positive actions and affirmations.

Health Education Standard(s):

Standard 7 – Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce risks.

Materials:

- ✓ If-Then handouts (one per student)

Outline:

Opening activity (5 minutes)

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Write on Target: (have students respond to the prompts in their journals or private writing). When was the last time you remember saying something negative to yourself about something you did (or failed to do)? What was it and what led you to be negative toward yourself? When is the last time you remember saying something positive to yourself about something you achieved or did? What was it and what led you to be positive?

Main activity (30 minutes)

- 1) Explain how the day's lesson will focus on practicing 'countering' and 'affirmations'.
- 2) Read Story #1 and review Countering Box #1.
- 3) Read Story #2 and have students complete Countering Box #2. Once they have finished have them share responses with a partner and then solicit examples from the class.
- 4) Explain to the students that next they will write their own story. They can use the example that they came up with during the beginning of class, or they can write a different one. The story should be true, or should represent a realistic situation they commonly face. Once they complete their story have them complete Countering Box #3.

Closure/Assessment: (10 minutes)

Ask students to share their affirmation statement based on their story and countering box (if they are comfortable doing so). Collect the handouts and evaluate them for appropriate development of positive health behaviors and affirmation statements.

Name: _____

Story #1:

Alisa is 14 and is nervous about her violin performance tonight. She will be performing the most challenging piece in the music in the competition and is a favorite to win. She is confident in her playing ability but has been nervous and upset all week. Alisa feels fat and uncomfortable in the dress her mom picked out for her and she can't get how she feels off her mind. She is worried that everyone in the audience will be staring at her and judging her appearance and that that the judges will score her lower because she is overweight. She is so distracted that she is beginning to make mistakes in her rehearsals.

	IF	THEN
<i>Behavior:</i>	<i>I start to make a mistake in my rehearsal</i>	<i>I will take a deep breath, relax and feel confident that all of my hard work and practice will pay off.</i>
	FROM	TO
<i>Self-talk:</i>	<i>I am so fat...</i>	<i>I am a skilled and accomplished violinist.</i>

Affirmation statement: I am a skilled and accomplished violinist.

Story #2:

Billy is 12 and enjoys hanging out with his friends after school. They sometimes play video games together and Billy almost always wins – especially when the game requires concentration and strategy. If they aren't playing games they do their math and science homework together and Billy spends a lot of time helping his friends out. Most of his friends are athletic and all of them are bigger than he is. Billy feels insecure because he is not growing as fast as they are and on the weekends when they all play pick-up basketball he spends most of the time trying just to stay out of the way and not make a fool of himself. He is feeling so insecure lately that he has been faking being sick on Saturdays so that he won't have to play with them.

	IF	THEN
<i>Behavior:</i>		
	FROM	TO
<i>Self-talk:</i>		

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Story #3: (write your story below)

	IF	THEN
<i>Behavior:</i>		
	FROM	TO
<i>Self-talk:</i>		

••Advocacy••

“I make a positive difference for myself and others”

Background Information:

Teaching activism and advocacy in relation to body image issues allows individuals to transform their social environment as well as to convert individual shame and/or embarrassment into a shared group voice against adverse external pressures. Advocacy based programs such as ‘Go Girls’ have demonstrated improvements to self-acceptance and empowerment, specifically increases in participant’s self confidence in relation to expressing views and opinions (Piran, Levine & Irving, 2000). Advocacy projects should build off of media literacy efforts and must be rooted in strong, factual information and knowledge. Building advocacy skills requires students to declare positive beliefs about health-enhancing behaviors, educate others about health enhancing behaviors, influence the positive health practices of others, promote social norms that are health enhancing and provide support for others (Telljohann, Symons & Pateman, 2006). Students can work to advocate on an individual level (advocating for a friend or peer), a classroom level (supporting policies and rules in their classroom that promote health body image), a school-wide level (promoting a health body environment for all) or on a societal level (most commonly done through media activism projects). It is also suggested that efforts at advocacy specifically address elements related to weight prejudice (McAfee & Stowe, 2010).

With regard to issues of body image and body dissatisfaction, one can promote advocacy in many ways. Projects that provide support for others and that help promote healthy social norms are warranted. Dissonance induction techniques in which students advocate against thin ideal thinking and behaviors, in either written or verbal form, have been shown to be effective in reducing thin ideal internalization (Roehrig, Thompson, Brannick & van den Berg, 2006). Projects in which students ‘take on’ the beliefs of others or of society and advocate for a different perspectives serve to highlight individual discrepancies between the participant’s own health beliefs and his or her health actions, thus achieving the dissonance desired. Often advocating on behalf of a younger group of students effectively achieves this dissonance.

Target audience: 8-10 th grade

Student Learning Goals:

- 1) The student will learn the importance of advocacy and will understand how advocacy can be targeted toward oneself, another individual or individuals, family members and society.

Health Education Standard(s):

Standard 8 – Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family and community health.

Materials:

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- ✓ Poster board (one per student)
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Photos (each student brings a photo or the teacher take photos and prints them out on paper)

Outline:

Opening activity:

Write on target: Students will write a responses to the following prompts: “I am healthy because I...”, “Every body is a good body because...” And “I make the world a better place because I...”.

Main activity:

- 1) Explain to the students that the class will be developing an advocacy project for the local elementary school. Their goal is to promote healthy behaviors and choices and provide realistic examples of health. They will follow two main rules in developing the project: 1) they can not use anything related to physical appearance or weight in their health statements and 2) everyone in the class must use a different example of a health behavior.
- 2) Every student works on their individual small poster that will serve as an advocacy project for the local elementary school. Each poster will have a picture of the student and will include their response to the prompt “I am healthy because I...”. For example, “I am healthy because I don’t smoke” or “I am healthy because I volunteer in the community” or “I am healthy because I can run a mile”. Begin by having each student write his or her healthy behavior on the board – check for duplications and make suggestions as appropriate. Decide as a group if there is a single format or approach to be used for the design of the posters, or if everyone can be creative in their design. Once the health behaviors are assigned and design decisions are made, allow students time to create their poster.
- 3) Have each student hold up their unique and individual poster for the class. Collect the posters for distribution at the elementary school.

Closure/Assessment: (10 minutes)

Have students conduct a content analysis of the health behaviors on the board. Ask them to identify two to three themes that they see and list the appropriate behaviors underneath. For example, a theme might be “exercise” or “proper nutrition” or “social health” etc. Collect the content analysis and check for accuracy.