

Body Image

Connect!

Body Image

Time

10 minutes

Objective

For each girl to say something positive about her body

Materials

Container or cup

Slips of paper and pencil

Preparation

Write a different letter of the alphabet on separate slips of paper. Fold the slips and place them in the container or cup.

Activity

Everyone stands or sits in a circle. As the container or cup is passed around the circle, each girl picks out a slip of paper. Each girl then describes something positive about her body that begins with the letter written on the paper. For example, for the letter *A*, a girl could say, "I like my arm," or she could use a descriptive adjective such as *adorable*.

Process Questions

- * Did you find this exercise difficult? Explain why or why not.
- * Why do you think it is important for girls to say positive things about themselves?

Beating the Body-Image Blues

RATIONALE

Girls are notorious for making negative remarks and thinking negatively about their bodies. They might say, for example, "I feel fat," "My legs are so huge," "I am so ugly," "I hate my hair," "My nose is so big," and so on. Girls emotionally reason with themselves, believing that how they feel is reality. For example, "If I feel ugly, I AM ugly." In this activity, each girl will learn how to identify underlying feelings when making a negative remark about her body and will challenge the negative thought with an appropriate positive thought.

MATERIALS

A copy of Beating Bad Body Thoughts handout for each girl
Pencils or pens

PROCEDURE

1. Begin by asking the girls how many of them have made the following statements:

"I am SO ugly!"

"I feel FAT!"

"My legs are HUGE!"

"My hair looks SO bad!"

"I have BAD skin!"

"I ate TOO much!"

You may add anything else that may pertain to your particular group.

2. Give each girl a copy of the Beating Bad Body Thoughts handout.
3. In a roundtable format, challenge the girls to think about the last time they had a negative body thought and to describe the setting, their thought process, and what led them to that feeling.

4. For every “bad body thought” they have, they must come up with a “good body thought” to help them combat the negative thought.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- ✿ What are you really feeling when you criticize your body?
- ✿ What are you willing to do to praise your body on a regular basis?
- ✿ How will you use what you have learned today in the future?

Beating Bad Body Thoughts

Directions: Think about all the times you say or think something bad about your body. For each negative statement, you must come up with something positive to say to help you squash those bad body thoughts!

<i>Bad Body Thought</i>	<i>Good Body Thought</i>

From *Girls in Real-Life Situations: Group Counseling Activities for Enhancing Social and Emotional Development—Grades 6–12*
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Mixed Media Messages

RATIONALE

Girls are exposed to thousands of media images that can negatively influence how they feel about themselves. Women portrayed in the media generally have unattainable images that young girls idolize. Advertisements are designed to make young girls believe that their lives will be better if they own a certain product or look like the person selling a particular product. This activity is designed to help girls realize that the media industry is a business and that images are designed, corrected, and perfected to market merchandise.

MATERIALS

Magazines including plenty of advertisements (make sure they are girl-friendly and include popular media)
Scissors and glue
Colored markers
Posterboard

PROCEDURE

1. Have all art materials accessible to the girls upon their arrival.
2. Instruct the girls to go through the magazines and cut out the advertising images they like.
3. When they are finished, have them work together to create a collage on the posterboard. Encourage creativity through use of words, language, and images that are inviting and enticing to the girls.
4. When the collage is finished, have each girl describe to the group what she likes about it and what was attractive about her choices.
5. Ask the girls some of the following questions to help explore the critical and mixed messages that the media project:
 - * What are some of the facial expressions on the collage? Do you think the media want you to believe that you will feel a certain way if you own the product?

- ✿ Have you ever bought something advertised in the media only to be disappointed?
- ✿ How do you feel about yourself after you read a magazine or book with really pretty girls in it?
- ✿ How many mixed messages can you think of that the media send us daily? For example, they constantly present us with fast-food ads and commercials, but at the same time tell us we should not eat fast food.
- ✿ Do magazine and television advertisements tell the truth? Why or why not?
- ✿ What types of things do media companies do to make people look better?
- ✿ If average people were in magazines and television shows, do you think the products they are selling would be as popular as they are now?

Steer the discussion toward the "business" side of the media, meaning that the media exist to make a profit.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- ✿ Are the images the media portray reality?
- ✿ Do you think this activity may change the way you feel about the media?
- ✿ How will you use what you have learned today in the future?

She's All That

RATIONALE

Girls are exposed to thousands of teen celebrities, fashion icons, beauty products, and diet commercials that enforce the notion that their body shape, size, and fashion sense determine success. In addition, girls often judge others solely on their looks and the size of their bodies. In this lesson, the girls will discuss healthy women in their lives and the characteristics, besides beauty, that make them attractive.

MATERIALS

Paper and pencils or pens

Easel pad or posterboard

A copy of the My Standards of Success handout for each girl

PROCEDURE

1. Have the paper and pencils or pens ready to hand out before the girls arrive.
2. Before beginning the session, ask the girls to write down the names of five women they personally know who are either average size (or larger) and whom they look up to or admire.
3. When they are finished, have them turn their papers over.
4. Ask the girls to describe the "perfect girl," a girl that is "all that." Write their responses on the easel pad or posterboard.
5. Ask for a volunteer (or the entire group) to demonstrate the actions of the "perfect girl." How does she act, how does she laugh, how does she sit, and so forth.
6. When they are done, have each girl read aloud the names of the women they wrote down and why they admire them.
7. Ask the girls if the characteristics that they recalled were similar to the characteristics of the girls they believe are "perfect" or think they are "all that."

8. When the girls have discussed this point, give each one a copy of the My Standards of Success handout.
9. Encourage the girls to use interpersonal qualities, as opposed to external features, in their list, as in the qualities of the women they listed.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- ✿ What have you learned about yourself and the judgments you make about other girls?
- ✿ Has this activity changed the way you plan to think about girls and women who don't have perfect bodies?
- ✿ How will you use what you have learned today in the future?

Fill Her Up!

RATIONALE

Girls are very quick to point out what they do not like about their bodies. This activity teaches the girls to literally fill their bodies with positive thoughts.

MATERIALS

- A body-length sheet of paper for each girl
- Magazines and newspapers
- Scissors, glue
- Colored markers, paint, colored paper
- Optional:* Glitter, feathers

PROCEDURE

1. Begin by asking the girls what they like about their bodies—ask them to refrain from saying anything negative.
2. After the discussion, either pair up the girls or ask them to get a partner.
3. Give each girl a long sheet of paper, have her lie down on it, and instruct her partner to trace around her body.
4. When they have completed tracing one another, instruct the girls to use the magazines, newspapers, and art supplies to fill their bodies with positive images, thoughts, colors, and phrases.
5. Encourage them to discuss the meaning of their images they put inside their bodies with their partner while they work.
6. Upon completion, have the girls present their partners project to the group.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- ❁ Was it difficult to fill your entire body with positive things?
- ❁ What did this activity teach you about your body?
- ❁ How will you use what you have learned today in the future?

Talk about It

Body Image

1. What is your definition of *body image*? What are your thoughts and feelings about your body?
2. How did you form your thoughts (positive or negative) about your body?
3. Has anyone ever made a negative remark about your body? How did you respond? What were your afterthoughts or reactions?
4. When you are meeting someone for the first time, what is the first thing you judge?
5. The diet industry is a multibillion-dollar industry with an almost 100 percent failure rate. What are your thoughts about that? Would you buy a car that you thought would not start 98 percent of the time? Would you want a doctor to perform surgery on you who had been unsuccessful on 9 out of 10 patients?
6. Why do you think that girls have a hard time accepting their bodies?
7. What do you think about when you see a model with perfect skin selling an acne product or face wash that promises to make your skin look flawless?
8. Have you ever missed school, a party, or a sporting event because you didn't like how you looked?
9. Have you ever heard a song and thought of it one way and then seen the song portrayed in a music video in another fashion? How did you feel about the song afterward? What messages was the video trying to send?
10. Are you affected by other people's opinions about your body? How do you know what their opinions are?
11. Would you change any part of your body? If so, what would be different if that part was different?
12. What is the reality of the illegal things that happen on television and in the movies? For example, what could the possible consequences be for driving 100 miles per hour down a one-way street with a gun, on your cell phone, while drinking alcohol?
13. Do you think the media make unhealthy habits like drinking alcohol and smoking look "cool"?
14. What parts of your body do you not have any control over changing? Do you think of those parts as attractive or unattractive?
15. How do you feel when you see someone who is really overweight or underweight?
16. What kind of clothes are you most comfortable in? Why?

Body Image (continued)

17. How do you feel in gym class when you must change in front of other people?
18. Do you often compliment other people's looks or their abilities? Why?
19. Do you have a female adult role model in your life you admire, despite her size? What makes her so great?
20. Is it difficult for you to say out loud something you like about your body? Tell the group what you like!

Think about It

Body Image

Directions: Your body is a gift and is the most precious thing you will ever possess. You need to treat it well, nourish it, embrace it, and, most important, accept it! Think about your body and complete the phrases below. Be honest—nobody is looking.

My Body

I like _____

I wish _____

I can change _____

I cannot change _____

I accept _____

I will _____

I am _____

I will try to _____

I will always _____

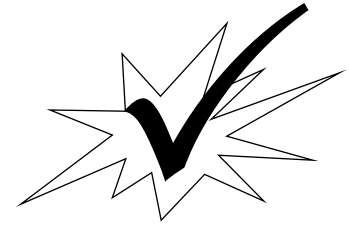
Below, list all of the important, healthy things your body has done for you.

Optional Journaling Questions

- ✿ Were your responses mostly positive or negative?
- ✿ What are you willing to do to keep your body image positive?
- ✿ Who are the people in your life who love and accept you for who you are, not what you look like?

Check It Out

Body Image



Here are some great books for teens. Check them out!

- ✿ *A Hunger So Wide and So Deep: American Women Speak Out on Eating Problems*, by Becky W. Thompson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
- ✿ *Over It: A Teen's Guide to Getting Beyond Obsessions with Food and Weight*, by Carol Emery Normandi and Laurelee Roark (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2001).
- ✿ *Body Talk: The Straight Facts on Fitness, Nutrition, and Feeling Great about Yourself!* by Ann Douglas, Julie Douglas, and Claudia Davila (Ontario, Canada: Maple Tree Press, 2006).
- ✿ *Real Gorgeous: The Truth about Body and Beauty*, by Kaz Cooke (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).
- ✿ *A Look in the Mirror: Freeing Yourself from the Body Image Blues*, by Valerie Rainon McManus (Washington, DC: Child and Family Press, 2004).