Lesson Fourteen
Exploring Body Image

Objectives

After participating in this lesson students will
• Learn a new meditation practice.
• Define positive and negative body image.
• Identify what influences their perception of a healthy body.
• Identify and express their opinion on body image issues.
• Assess their body image.

Time

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Key Terms

• Body Image

Materials

☐ Notebook paper
☐ Magazine pictures of “perfect” bodies
☐ Body Image Statements (Information Sheet 14.4)
☐ Body Image Assessment (Activity Sheet 14.5)

Teacher Preparation

• Write Plan for the Day and Objectives on chart paper or board.
• Collect magazines (appropriate for teens) that have pictures of people with “perfect” bodies.
• Cut out “perfect” body pictures, 1 per student.
• Make 1 copy of Body Image Statement (Information Sheet 14.4).
• Prepare chart paper with body image questions. (See Activity 14.4.)
• Make copies of Body Image Assessment (Activity Sheet 14.5), 1 for each student, and place in portfolios.

### 14.1 Review and Plan for the Day 3 minutes

**Materials:** Plan for the Day and Objectives

Write the Plan for the Day and Objectives on the board before class, listing all of the activities students will be doing.

Plan for the Day:
- Meditation
- Defining Body Image and Influences
- What Do You Think?
- Closure—Body Image Assessment

Review the previous class. What do students remember from watching the movie *Super Size Me*?

Explain that today they will be learning about body image issues and will be doing some different activities related to this subject.

Review the Objectives with students.

### 14.2 Meditation 10 minutes

**Materials:** Notebook paper for students to free write on.

Explain that today’s meditation practice will involve writing.

- Introduce the concept of reflective journaling as a way of meditating on an issue.
- Tell students to find a place in the room where they will not be distracted by others.
- Explain that in doing this for the first time, they can write on any topic they choose. The important thing is that they continue to write. When they feel they have nothing to write about, tell them to write, “I don’t know what to write.” Eventually something will come to them.
- Explain that no one will be reading this. This practice is personal and can be helpful in resolving a problem or issue they may be having.
• Have students free write for about 6 minutes.

• Once the students have finished writing, have them come back to their seats and ask if any of them have used this practice before as a way to relax or calm themselves. If no one responds, ask if they think they will try using this practice and what the benefits might be.

14.3 Defining Body Image and Influences  20 minutes

Materials: Chart paper and markers, magazines with pictures of “perfect” bodies

Explain that today students are going to discuss what shapes beliefs about what a body should look like.

• Ask students: What is “body image”? (1. How you see your body, 2. How you think others see your body, and 3. How you feel as a result.)

• Make a list of their responses on chart paper. Be sure to include the above definition.

• Ask students what “positive body image” is (seeing and appreciating your body as it really is and feeling comfortable and confident with your body). Record their responses.

• Then ask what “negative body image” is (having a distorted perception of body shape, feeling ashamed and self-conscious about your body or feeling uncomfortable and awkward in your body). Record their responses.

• Ask: What influences our body image? What are some things that influence a person’s idea about what an ideal body should be?

• Record students’ responses. If possible, once students have given enough answers, categorize these ideas under Friends, Family, and Society/Media. If students don’t respond with ideas, begin by writing down some of your own, then ask them leading questions such as “Does your family influence how you think about your body?”

The intention of the activity is for the students to come to an increased awareness of where their influences come from around body image, including the media. If students have not already brought up the media, talk about how the media can play a significant role in our view on body image.

Tell students they are now going to make a list of qualities that make a “perfect” body based on photographs from magazines.
• Pass out magazine pictures of “perfect” bodies, one per student or per pair.

• Have students write down what is “perfect” about the pictured person’s body (e.g., long legs, smooth skin, big lips, white teeth, flat stomach, etc.).

• Once students have made a list, ask some of them to share what they wrote.

• Discuss whether these media images are a realistic portrayal of a healthy body image. The intention is for students to start to understand that everyone’s body is different and that we all can’t look the same or have the type of body often shown in magazines. The important message is to eat healthy food and exercise to develop the body that is perfect for you.

• Discuss the wide usage of digital enhancement software in modern advertising.

• Help students recognize that as long as they are making healthy food choices and being physically active, they are doing what they can to have a healthy body, and that every body is different. A person can be totally fit and healthy and not have the legs of a model.

14.4 What Do You Think? 10 minutes

Materials: Body Image Statements (Information Sheet 14.4), chart paper with body image questions, notebook paper

Explain that this is an activity where students will be expressing their opinions around body image issues. They will line up on a continuum (line) based on their opinion about a statement that will be read to them. Explain that one end of the continuum is “Strongly Agree” and the other end is “Strongly Disagree,” and that the less strongly they feel, the closer they will be to the middle.

• Have students stand in the middle of the room and then read the first statement.

• Tell students to stand somewhere along the continuum, based on their opinion of the statement.

• Ask for volunteers to express why they stood where they did.

• Read 5 of the statements and have students stand on the continuum for each one. Then have students sit down. Thank them for giving their opinions about body image.

Explain that they are now going to answer some questions on their own, silently. These questions are focused on how they support positive body image among their friends and family. Show them the chart paper with the following questions written on it:
• How often do you encourage someone to feel good about his/her body as it is?
• How often do you compliment others on their ideas, actions and character and not just on how they look?
• How often do you recognize and appreciate positive qualities in yourself other than your looks?
• How often do you challenge or voice disapproval of “fat jokes” or negative comments about being “too fat” or “too skinny,” “ugly,” etc?

Remind students that they can be a role model to others and that supporting positive body image is a healthy way to live.

14.5 Closure—Body Image Assessment 7 minutes

Materials: Body Image Assessment (Activity Sheet 14.5)

Explain that students will now think about how they feel about their bodies by answering some questions. Reassure them that this information is for them only—they will not be sharing it with the class or anyone else.

• Point out the Body Image Assessment activity sheet in their portfolios. Explain that they are to pick 3 of their body parts and describe what they like about that body part.

• Have students complete the activity sheet.

• Then have students share with a partner one thing they intend to do to improve their body image.

Resources

TRIBES: A New Way of Learning and Being Together by Jeanne Gibbs.


Body Image Assessment from HealthSmart High School, Nutrition & Physical Activity Lesson 4, Activity 1.
Body Image Statements

1. Body image relates only to how much you weigh.
2. Most U.S. teenagers have a negative body image.
3. Most teens don’t care about body image.
4. You can have a fit body and not look like a supermodel.
5. The media do not influence how we feel about our bodies.
6. How we see our bodies and how others see our bodies affects how we feel about ourselves.
7. Negative body image can lead to people having eating disorders.
8. The media display all types of bodies in advertisements.
Body Image Assessment

Directions:

Choose 3 body parts or attributes from the list. Write a sentence or two describing what you like about each one.

Body Part: _____________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________

Body Part: _____________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________

Body Part: _____________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________

Body Parts
- Hair
- Skin
- Hands
- Nose
- Ears
- Eyes
- Neck
- Legs
- Teeth
- Feet
- Posture
- Eye lashes
- Fingernails
- Face
- Lips
- Muscle tone
- Arms
- Waist
- Shoulders

Adapted with permission from Health Smart High School.
Nutrition and Physical Activity for Lifelong Health
ETR Associates