

# **Body Acceptance Class Manual**

## **Enhanced-Dissonance Version**

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# OVERVIEW

## EVIDENCE BASE

This manual outlines a dissonance-based body acceptance intervention, referred to as the *Body Project*, that has been developed and evaluated at Stanford University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Oregon Research Institute. The *Body Project* is the outgrowth of a 16-year program of research on the risk factors for eating disorders by this research team. This intervention has been delivered to over 1 million young women around the world. The intervention consists of verbal, written, and behavioral exercises in which participants voluntarily critique the thin beauty ideal promoted for females during four weekly sessions. These activities have been shown to result in decreased subscription to the “appearance ideal” and consequent reductions in body dissatisfaction, negative mood, dieting, and eating disorder symptoms, as well as decreased risk for future eating disorders and improved psychosocial functioning when delivered by research clinicians (Stice, Marti, Spoor, Presnell, & Shaw, 2008; Stice, Mazotti, Weibel, & Agras, 2000; Stice, Shaw, Burton, & Wade, 2006) as well as clinicians who work in high schools and colleges (Stice, Butryn, Rohde, Shaw, & Marti, 2013; Stice, Rohde, Gau, & Shaw, 2009; Stice, Rohde, Shaw & Gau, 2011). The most rigorous trial conducted to date found that the intervention prevent 60% of the cases of eating disorders that emerged in the control condition over a 3-year follow-up, suggesting that for every 100 young women who complete this program, there should be 9 fewer young girls who develop eating disorders over the subsequent 3-year period. This intervention also produces superior effects than several alternative interventions. Numerous independent labs have replicated the positive effects for this intervention (Becker, Smith, & Ciao, 2006; Green, Scott, Diyankova, Gasser, & Pederson, 2005; Halliwell & Diedrichs, 2014; Matusek, Wendt, & Wiseman, 2004; Mitchell, Mazzeo, Rausch, & Cooke, 2007; Roehrig, Thompson, Brannick, & van den Berg, 2006).

Consistent with the intervention theory, reductions in appearance-ideal internalization mediate the *Body Project* effects on change in eating disorder symptoms (Seidel et al., 2009; Stice et al., 2007) and participants assigned to high- versus low-dissonance versions of this program showed greater eating disorder symptom reduction (Green et al., 2005; McMillan et al., 2011). The *Body Project* also produced larger symptom reductions for youth with initially elevated appearance-ideal internalization, consistent with the thesis that they experience more dissonance (Stice et al., 2008) and eliminated the negative effect of exposure to thin models on body dissatisfaction in young girls (Halliwell & Diedrichs, 2014). Participant who completed the *Body Project* showed a reduction in brain reward region response to thin models compared to controls (Stice, Yokum, & Waters, 2014), indicating that this body acceptance class reduces neural response to stimuli thought to play a key role in promoting body image and eating disturbances.

No other body acceptance class/eating disorder prevention program has been found to significantly reduce future eating disorder onset, outperformed alternative credible interventions, produce effects that persist through 3-year follow-up, or produced effects that have been replicated by independent research teams.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

According to Festinger (1957), cognitive dissonance occurs when there is a discrepancy between one's beliefs and one's actions. This inconsistency creates psychological discomfort, which then motivates the individual to reduce the cognitive discord by changing their beliefs. In this intervention, adolescent girls and young women who subscribe to the appearance ideal are subtly encouraged to critique the appearance ideal through a series of verbal, written, and behavioral exercises. These activities are theorized to produce cognitive dissonance, which reduces the extent to which they subscribe to the appearance ideal, which in turn is thought to result in improvements in body dissatisfaction, negative affect, and eating disorder symptoms. Thus, the overarching goal of this intervention is to have the participants speak, write, or act in a way that is contrary to the appearance ideal. It is vital for the participants to generate the costs of the appearance ideal, rather than the group leaders, because the latter would not produce cognitive dissonance. In addition, participants should never focus on any benefits of the appearance ideal, because this will only undermine the effects of the intervention. The present manual is for a second generation high-dissonance version of this intervention, in which we have incorporated a number of components that should maximize the dissonance that putatively accounts for intervention effects. This high-dissonance version of this intervention draws from procedures used in the Green and associates trial (2005).

It is important that group leaders not embellish this intervention in any way (e.g., discuss a past history of an eating disorder) because this may undermine the effects of the intervention that have been observed in past trials. However, if leaders have ideas about ways to potentially improve the intervention, please contact Eric Stice, at [estice@ori.org](mailto:estice@ori.org), as we welcome this type of input and have incorporated suggestions from dozens of clinicians regarding ways to improve the intervention script.

## **STRUCTURE**

Groups are led by a facilitator or two, who can be school counselors, psychologists, nurses, or teachers. It is often useful to include a co-leader, who can be a participant from a previous group, to help run the sessions (e.g., pass out material and write participant responses on a whiteboard). Experience suggests that the optimal group size is approximately 6 to 8 participants, as this ensures that all group members will be able to participate verbally. The group meets for four consecutive weeks in 1-hour sessions.

## **COMMON PROBLEMS**

Homework assignments can pose difficulties, especially those that seem “school-like.” Participants' adherence to between-session assignments depends on whether leaders emphasize the importance of completing these exercises and how well leaders track the assignments in subsequent session. Contacting participants via email or phone a day before the scheduled session can help prompt participants to complete their assignments and bring them to their next session. Additionally, all home exercise forms should be placed in participants' folders, which should be kept in the possession of the facilitator.

Participants often are extremely invested in the appearance ideal and may have difficulty letting go of this pursuit. However, it is important not to allow *participants* to argue for the

appearance ideal, as this will only solidify their position further. Always keep in mind that the primary goal of the intervention is to get the *participants* to criticize and challenge the appearance ideal. Group leaders should try to get other group members to speak out against the appearance ideal or pose counter arguments to pro appearance ideal statements voiced by participants. Experience indicates that the program does not work if *participants* do not critique the appearance ideal. It may be helpful for facilitators to say that they are simply trying to follow the script when they ask participants to discuss the costs rather than the benefits of pursuing the appearance ideal. Leaders can simply ask a reluctant participant to just give the activities their best shot, telling them that they are free to revert back to their old opinions after the group if over. It is also crucial for group leaders to keep self-disclosure to a minimum to make sure that participants can maximize the time spent critiquing the appearance ideal.

It is useful to make a distinction between the appearance ideal and the healthy ideal. The appearance ideal is often about appearing ultra-slender. People often engage in very unhealthy behaviors to attain this slenderness, including laxative abuse, and go to extreme ends, such as cosmetic surgery, to attain this slender look. In contrast, the healthy ideal is about striving for a healthy body, which is typically nowhere near as slender as the appearance ideal, in part because it is healthy to have muscles. Further, individuals pursuing the healthy ideal do not engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors, such as fasting and laxative abuse.

It is also important to engage all participants during the group sessions. Although it is crucial to follow the manual closely, participants often get bored if group leaders just read directly from the script. Thus, we recommend becoming familiar with the main points so that you can minimize the extent to which you read from the script. Maintaining eye contact with participants during the entire session and using first names helps encourage discussion as well. Be sure to look at each participant and try to draw her in to the discussions, paying special attention to those who are less talkative or reluctant to speak up. If one or two participants tend to dominate the discussion, call on other participants to share their opinions. We recommend going around the entire group so that *each* group member participates in each main activity (change the order so the same person does not always have to go first). Try to use humor when possible, be relaxed, smile and laugh when appropriate, and listen carefully to what participants are saying. When a participant shares personal information or discusses difficulties they have with body image, make empathetic statements (“Wow, it sounds like you’re really struggling with this”, “That must have been hurtful when your father made that comment to you about your weight”).

It is also important to manage the time carefully during the sessions. In order for participants to get maximal benefit from the intervention, you should cover *each activity* and allot the recommended time to each activity. Spending too much time processing activities that occur early in the session will result in insufficient time for the activities that occur latter in the session and can result in a rushed feeling. It is sometimes necessary to tactfully interrupt particularly talkative individuals so that the group leader can move the group onto the next exercise in the manual. If you find that you are consistently running out of time before completing all the activities in the session, consider using the 6 50-minute version of the *Body Project*, which provides a little more time or activities.

## **THERAPIST TRAINING**

This manual has been developed for school counselors, psychologists, nurses, or teachers. For optimal delivery of this intervention, we strongly recommend that group leaders carefully read this manual and practice each activity (i.e., role play) before leading a group. Experience indicates that participants quickly lose interest if the group leaders are not familiar with the activities and the flow of the sessions.

## **MANUAL GUIDELINES**

The curriculum contained in this manual has been demonstrated in dozens of randomized trials to be an effective prevention program for individuals at risk for eating disorders. Adherence to the manual protocol is critical in obtaining positive outcome results.

If a participant misses a session, try to schedule a brief 15-minute mini-session that covers the important points and exercises with them. We often do this over the phone a few days before the next session or right before the next session begins. Although this represents extra work for the facilitators, it helps to minimize missed sessions, communicates that each participant is important, and maximizes intervention effects.

The manual describes each of the 4 intervention sessions. For each session, information is provided on (a) materials used for the session, (b) a listing of topic areas to be covered, (c) main procedural elements for group leaders to follow, and (d) assigned home exercises for the participants to complete between sessions. Throughout the manual all handouts are distinguished by **underlined bold print**. Instructions to group leaders are presented in regular typeface. Verbal instructions that group leaders should say, or paraphrase, to participants are presented in *italics*.

# The Body Project: Facilitator Fact Sheet

## 1. **Fashion Magazines** (According to *former fashion magazine editor*; International Conference on Eating Disorders)

- **Function of a fashion magazine:** To convince women that something is wrong with them (e.g., hair, body, sex life, etc.) so that they can sell their product (i.e., the content of the magazine) to fix it. The more anxious they make you, the more likely you will buy the magazine and the larger their readership, which increases advertising sales.
- How they convince you something is wrong
  - **Lead articles:** Pulitzer Prize winning article on eating disorders or cancer not going to win author a big bonus. However, writing an article which produces the following title will: “You never knew what your butt looked like from the rear! Strategies for a better behind.”
  - **Idealized images:** Digital enhancement, make-up, clothes pinning etc.
- At this editor’s magazine, many of the key staff had eating disorders due to a culture of disordered eating and weight/shape attitudes.
  - Couldn’t bring food onto the floor, because it was too upsetting for some staff
  - One woman brought scale to work and moved scale around bathroom floor until she got an acceptable weight.

## 2. **Advertising Strategies**

### A. Physical Tactics

- Bras are stuffed with pads to fill out the front of a dress that is too loose.
- Padded underwear is also used to fill out the back of a dress.
- Duct-tape is often used to tape breasts together to create cleavage.
- Girdles are used to squeeze the flesh of models into a dress sample size that is too small.
- Excess flesh is duct-taped in the back for a front angle photograph depicting a taut, streamlined, wrinkle-free body. Models can be taped from the front for a rear or side angle photograph showing tight, firm hips, bottoms, legs, and arms.
- Heavy clamps are used to cinch clothing in and weigh it down to create an illusion of the perfect fit.

### B. Computer Tactics

- Once a photo shoot is complete, images are altered even further through a process called re-imaging. By scanning the photograph into a computer, the image can be altered in thousands of ways. Almost every magazine uses computer re-imaging.
  - Complexion is cleaned up, eye lines are softened, chins, thighs and stomachs are trimmed, and neck lines are removed.
  - Some pictures of models in magazines are not real. The pictures are computer-modified compilations of different body parts.
  - 20/20 aired a story of a photo shoot of supermodel Cindy Crawford. How much time was spent digitally editing and airbrushing her face and body? **2 hours.**

3. The average American woman is 5'4" tall and weighs 140 pounds. The average American model is 5'11" tall and weighs 117 pounds.
  - The average American woman wears a size 12 to 14.
  - **Marilyn Monroe**, Hollywood goddess, wore a size 12.
4. Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women (Smolak, 1996).
  - Twenty years ago, models weighed 8 percent less than the average woman. Today they weigh 23 percent less and many fall into an anorexic weight range.
  - Kate Moss is 5'7" and weighs 95 pounds. That is 30% below ideal body weight. Supermodels Niki Taylor and Elle Macpherson also meet the Body Mass Index criteria for anorexia.
  - Many of the models shown on television, advertisements, and in other forms of popular media are approximately 20% below ideal body weight, thus meeting the diagnostic criteria for anorexia nervosa (Dittmar & Howard, 2004).
5. Only 5% of women have the body type (tall, genetically thin, broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped, long-legged and usually small-breasted) seen in almost all advertising. (When the models have large breasts, they've almost always had breast implants.)
6. Americans spend over \$60 billion on dieting and diet-related products each year (Marketdata Enterprises, 2010).
  - A study of mass media magazines discovered that women's magazines had 10.5 times more advertisements and articles promoting weight loss than men's magazines did (Guillen & Barr, 1994).
  - 95% of enrollees in weight loss programs are women although the sexes are overweight in equal proportions.
  - Women who have a history of chronic yo-yo dieting can decrease their overall lifespan of up to 20%!
7. In 1995, before television was first introduced to Fiji, there were no cases of eating disorder. Sixty-five adolescent school girls were followed over 3 years...
  - After the introduction of British and American television, **12.7%** of the girls had developed high eating disorder symptoms after 1 month and **29.2%** after 3 years.
  - Self-induced vomiting as weight control went from **0% in 1995** to **11.3% by 1998**.
8. Often, body doubles are used in films, TV commercials and advertising.
9. Celebrity work-outs ranging from 90 minutes to up to 6-7 hours A DAY at times.
  - P. Diddy has a personal trainer that makes \$500,000 a year on Puffy alone (VH-1).
  - Usher does 1000 crunches per day plus daily "forty minutes funk" (stretching & cardio) and strength training.
  - Hilary Swank for *Million Dollar Baby*: 4.5 hours per day, six days per week (from Oprah on line).



10. A study in 1995 found that after just three minutes spent looking at models in a fashion magazine, 70% of women reported feeling depressed, guilty, and ashamed of their bodies (Stice & Shaw, 1995).
11. A 1996 study found that the amount of time an adolescent watches soaps, movies and music videos is associated with their degree of body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996).
12. If shop mannequins were real women, they would be too thin to menstruate and bear children.
  - **Could Mannequins Menstruate?** (British Medical Journal; Rintala, Mustajoki, 1992)  
Store mannequins do not have enough body fat to menstruate. The researchers visited clothes stores and based on measurements of their mannequins calculated the percentage body fat that a woman the shape of a mannequin would carry. In direct contradiction to the slim, healthy and fertile physique that mannequins seek to portray and inflict on women, the finding of the study was that, overwhelmingly, shop mannequins, if they were people, would be infertile!
  - Clothing on mannequins is pinned, so clothes would never look the same on a real person unless it was pinned exactly perfect.
13. Women naturally carry fat on their hips and thighs - it is vital for fertility, prevention of osteoporosis, healthy skin, eyes, hair and teeth.
14. The National Weight Loss Registry, which tracks those that have achieved significant, long-term weight loss and is run by the Universities of Pittsburgh and Colorado, has documented that not one person has been successful by eliminating or severely restricting one of the macronutrients (protein, carbohydrate and fat).
  - Long term weight loss typically associated with low-fat, low calorie maintenance diet along with 1 hour of moderate exercise most days per week.
15. In the study, *Exposure to the Mass Media and Weight Concerns Among Girls*, the authors use a cross-sectional survey of 548 girls in 5th grade through 12th grade to assess influence of the media on weight concerns, weight control behaviors and perceptions of body weight and shape.
  - A majority of girls (59%) reported dissatisfaction with their body shape, and 66% expressed the desire to lose weight; the prevalence of overweight in this study was 29%.
  - Girls were asked about their frequency of reading women's fashion magazines. Some 69% reported that appearance of models in the magazines influenced their image of a perfect female body, and 47% desired to lose weight because of the magazine pictures.

# SESSION 1

**Materials:** Pictures of models from fashion magazines  
Flip chart (or whiteboard) and markers  
(handouts should be placed in participants' folders)  
Video camera  
Nametags

**Topic Areas:**

- I. Introduction
- II. Voluntary Commitment and Overview
- III. Definition and Origin of the Appearance ideal
- IV. Costs Associated with the Appearance ideal
- V. Home Exercises

**Session Overview:** The focus of Session 1 is to provide an overview and introduce participants to the rules and expectations of the group. The session is largely interactive with discussions of the definition and origins of the appearance ideal, and costs associated with pursuing the appearance ideal. The importance of attendance and completing the home exercises is also stressed.

## I. INTRODUCTION (8 MINS)

Turn on video camera now. If anyone is concerned about being filmed, they can have the option of sitting outside of the field of view. Although we do not require that all sessions are video-recorded, it increases accountability for anti-appearance ideal statements, which theoretically maximizes intervention effects.

*Thanks for coming. All of you decided to take part in this group because of your body image concerns—a common issue among women/girls.*

*Research shows that when women/girls talk about the “appearance ideal” shown in the mass media, and how to challenge pressures to be thin, it makes them feel better about their bodies. This has been found to be the best class for improving body image and for reducing unhealthy weight gain and eating problems.*

*That’s also why I’ll be referring to this script throughout the class. What we do here is based on scientific research, so I want to be sure to cover everything we know to be helpful.*

The group leader begins by introducing herself to the group. Introductions include name, professional status, and personal information (e.g., something interesting or unique about

themselves). The group leader asks the co-leader (if available) and group members to introduce themselves.

*Let's start by getting to know each other better. Can each of you tell us your name and something unique or interesting about you? I will go first.*

Group leaders should spend a few moments with each participant to elicit specific information and show interest (e.g., How long have you been horseback riding? What kind of paintings do you do?).

## II. VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT AND OVERVIEW (3 MINS)

Soliciting voluntary commitment to participating in the class

*Participants get the most out of these groups if they attend all four meetings, participate verbally, and complete all of the between-meeting exercises. It is important to clearly note that participation is voluntary.*

*Is each of you willing to volunteer to actively participate in the group?*

Go around the room and have each participant **say** they are willing to actively participate.

*During the four sessions we will:*

1. *Define the appearance ideal and explore its origin*
2. *Examine the costs of pursuing this ideal*
3. *Explore ways to resist pressures to conform to an appearance ideal*
4. *Learn how to challenge our body-related concerns and cultural pressures for thinness*
5. *Learn new ways to talk more positively about our bodies*

### Attendance

*It is important that everyone attends all four meetings. If you absolutely must miss a session, please let (co-facilitator) or me know as soon as you know that you are going to be gone. We will schedule a make-up session with you before the next regular group session so you will be caught up with everyone else.*

Group leaders should **call or e-mail participants** the day before each session to remind participants of the session and to bring any assignments they should have completed. If a participant must miss a session for any reason, please schedule a brief (15-minute) individual make-up session to discuss key points from the session and get the participant “caught up” before the next session. Ask them to complete the home exercises before the next session too.

### III. DEFINITION AND ORIGIN OF THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (20 MINS)

The group leader should spread out pictures of models from magazines (e.g., Vogue, Shape) on the table (there should be about three pictures for each participant).

*First, I would like each of you to choose two pictures.*

Do not tell participants the purpose of the exercise—just ask them to pick one that appeals to them.

*Now that you've selected pictures, can you tell me what caught your eye?*

Seek a response from each participant. Encourage participants to focus on appearance related themes (e.g., “Is there something about her appearance that appealed to you?”). If a participant says something like “I really like handbags, so I picked this one,” you might say “Yes, but was there something about the model holding the handbag that attracted you?” If a participant says something like “I really like her hair,” ask for more details (e.g., “What does this photo say that a woman’s hair should look like?”).

Write physical feature from each participant on the whiteboard/posterboard, and write the participant’s first name next to it. Leave this on the board for the entire session.

*Now that you said what you like about these super-models, what do these pictures say about what the “perfect woman” looks like?*

Pose questions to the group and promote participation and collaboration on their responses. Promoting discussion is key—let participants talk, not group leaders.

Thin and attractive, have a perfect body, toned, fit-looking, large-chested, round buttocks with thin legs. tall, look like a super-model. Focus the discussion on the thin, unrealistic part of the appearance ideal, though it is fine to note other aspects, such as clear complexion, white teeth. Note seemingly incompatible features, such as ultra-slenderness and large breasts.

Underline features participants said appealed to them. Add new features below that list (without names).

*We call this “look” – this thin, toned, busty woman – “the appearance ideal.”*

*The appearance ideal is not the same as the healthy ideal. With the appearance ideal, people go to extreme measures to look ultra-thin, (like a super model) including some very unhealthy weight control behaviors and excessive exercise. The goal of the appearance ideal is to attain thinness that is neither realistic nor healthy. With the healthy ideal, the goal is health, fitness and longevity. A healthy body has both muscles and adequate fat tissue. The healthy ideal involves feeling good about how our body both works and feels.*

*Has this “appearance ideal” always been the ideal for feminine attractiveness? Has there ever been a time in history when the “perfect woman” looked different?*

No, differs with differing times.

Solicit examples of different beauty standards over time (e.g., Marilyn Monroe, figures in the Renaissance period, Twiggy, super-models of today).

*Is this ideal the same for all ethnic groups and cultures?*

Give participants a chance to discuss differences of the appearance ideal (physical characteristics, including the appearance ideal) for various ethnic groups and cultures. Summarize discussion to acknowledge that, just as the ideal has not been consistent over time, it also varies across ethnic and cultural groups.

*Where did this ideal come from?*

Media, fashion industry.

*How is this ideal promoted to us?*

Media: television shows, magazines; diet/weight loss industry.

*Have any of you ever been the recipient of a negative comment about your weight or shape from your friends, family, or dating partners?*

*How did that make you feel?*

Discuss participant’s personal experiences in these areas and the impact on their emotions and self-worth (i.e., emphasize the personal costs of society’s focus on the appearance ideal for women).

*How do appearance ideal messages from the media impact the way you feel about your body?*

Feeling inadequate because they do not look like a model, dislike of their own bodies, negative mood.

MAKE SURE ALL PARTICIPANTS RESPOND.

*What does our culture tell us will happen if we are able to look like the appearance ideal?*

We will be accepted, loved, happy, successful, wealth.

Differentiate the appearance ideal from the healthy ideal if they say you are healthier if you conform to the appearance ideal.

*Do you really think all of these good things happen if you meet the ideal?*

No, they will likely have little impact.

Do not describe (or allow participants to discuss) the benefits of thinness in general or give the impression that the appearance ideal is close to the healthy ideal (i.e., it is possible to be well within the healthy weight range, but not meet the cultural standards for the ultra appearance ideal).

#### **IV. COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PURSUING THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (20 MINS)**

*We've discussed the appearance ideal and where it comes from—now let's think about the costs involved with this ideal.*

Get participation from group.

*What are the costs of trying to look like the appearance ideal for the individual person?*

Decreased self-worth; expensive; physically and mentally exhausting; can hurt themselves, health problems, often negatively encourages unhealthy weight management techniques, depression, anxiety.

*If so many women are dealing with these issues, then what are the costs for society?*

Increased mental health care costs, promotes a culture of discontent.

*Who benefits from the appearance ideal?*

Diet industry; media; fashion industry, fitness industry.

*Are you one of the people who benefit from the appearance ideal? In other words, are you getting rich from the appearance ideal?*

No.

*Given all these costs, does it make sense to try to look like the appearance ideal?*

No

Make sure that each participant makes a public statement against the appearance ideal at this stage (and anywhere else possible).

## V. Home Exercises (5 mins)

Group participants are reminded of the home-based assignment for next session:

*Now that we have begun discussing costs of the appearance ideal, would you be willing to write a letter to a teenage girl who is struggling with her body image about the costs associated with trying to look like the appearance ideal? Think of as many costs as you can, and feel free to work with others to come up with ideas.*

*Please bring this letter to our next meeting so you can read it and we can discuss your feelings about writing it.*

Refer to the **Letter to Adolescent Girl Form** (Exercise #1).

*Second, we would like to ask you to stand in front of a mirror with as little clothing as possible and write down 10 positive qualities. This includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities. For instance, you may like the shape of your arms, the strength of your legs, your long dark hair, the sound of your laugh, or the fact that you are a good friend.*

*Please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list. It may be difficult at first, but we really want you to do this because it is important to recognize each of these areas about yourself. Past students have found this exercise to be very helpful and empowering.*

*Please bring your list of positive qualities to group next week so you can share them with the group.*

Refer to the **Mirror Exercise Form** (Exercise #2).

*Third, please privately complete the brief checklist of appearance ideal behaviors. It is designed to increase awareness of behaviors that perpetuate the appearance ideal*

Refer to the **Appearance ideal Perpetuation Form** (Exercise #3).

*Does everyone understand what we are asking you to do between sessions? Can someone tell me what the home exercises are for this week in their own words?*

1. Write a letter to a younger girl about the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal.
2. Do the self-affirmation mirror exercise.

3. Complete the appearance ideal perpetuation form.

*Experience shows that students get the most out of this class when they do the exercises the best they can. Does everyone feel that they can do this?*

Get some form of public commitment from each participant.

*Please include your full name and signature on your home exercises. I will be collecting all home exercises.*

*We want these exercises to be fun as well as thought-provoking, so please feel free to talk about them with others between group sessions.*

Time permitting:

*Can everyone tell me something that “worked for you” in this session, or “hit home”?*

*That’s all for today. Thanks for coming. We are looking forward to seeing you next week!*



## SESSION 2

**Prep:** Email/call each participant before this class to remind them to complete each home exercise.

**Materials:** Video camera  
Digital camera/cell phone  
Nametags

**Topic Areas:**

- I. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment
- II. Letter to Adolescent Girl Exercise Debriefing
- III. Mirror Exercise Debriefing
- IV. Role Play: Discourage Pursuit of the Appearance ideal
- V. Home Exercises

**Session Overview:** The focus of Session 2 is to review the materials discussed in the previous session and discuss reactions to the two home assignments. Additionally, this session involves role-plays to elicit verbal statements against the appearance ideal.

### **I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (2 MINS)**

Turn on video camera now.

*Thanks for coming to Session 2. Is each of you willing to actively participate in today's session?*

Go around the room and get a verbal affirmation that they are willing to actively participate.

### **II. LETTER RECORDING AND DEBRIEFING (20 MINS)**

*Last week we asked if you would be willing to write a letter to a teenage girl about the costs of trying to look like the appearance ideal.*

*I would like to get a video-clip of you reading your letter so you can post it on our group website.*

*Who would like to read their letter first?*

Have each participant read her letter. Emphasize to the group members that for confidentiality we are unable to post a video if the participant says their full name or the full name of another individual on the recording. Record with a separate camera or their cell phones so you can generate short individual video clips for participants. After each participant concludes reading her letter, respond by thanking her and/or making a positive comment about her letter.

NOTE: For confidentiality purposes, it is important to make sure that the participant reading the letter is the ONLY person in the video.

NOTE: If a participant is unwilling to read her letter, ask her if she is willing to summarize it or choose an excerpt to read.

*Everyone clearly spent a lot of time writing these letters and did a great job on them. Please hand them in - be sure your name and signature are on them!*

Collect the **Letter to Adolescent Girl Form** (Exercise #1). Make sure each participant has written and signed their name on the form.

*We have been impressed by the letters from participants and feel that they could help other young women who are struggling with body image concerns. So, we'd like to post your written letter or the recording of you reading the letter, along with your name, on a website maintained by the Body Project.*

### **III. MIRROR EXERCISE DEBRIEFING (12 MINS)**

*The other exercise we asked you to do was to look in a mirror and list some of your positive qualities.*

*How did you feel when you did this exercise?*

*Why do so many of us find it difficult to compliment ourselves?*

*How can we teach young girls that there is a difference between confidence and arrogance, and that being confident is good?*

*Now that you have gone through this, we'd like to have you share your lists with the group. Remember that thinking positively about your bodies requires practice, and this exercise will give you practice in reminding yourselves of all of the aspects of yourselves that you're happy with!*

*What are at least three aspects of yourself that you are satisfied with, including at least two physical features?*

Have each participant share positive qualities they listed. Discourage “qualified” statements (e.g., “I guess my stomach is not too horrible”). If you get “qualified” statements, accept them and ask the participant for an additional statement that is completely positive (e.g., “Okay, can you give me one more statement you had that was completely positive?”).

Collect the **Mirror Exercise Form** (Exercise #2). Make sure each participant has written and signed their name on the form.

*Hopefully, you recognize the positive things about yourselves and will remember them, particularly as the pressures of the appearance ideal surround you. Given that these are potent pressures—let’s discuss ways to resist them.*

#### **IV. ROLE PLAYS TO DISCOURAGE PURSUIT OF THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (20 MINS)**

Leaders take the role of either a severe dieter or eating disordered individual for each participant. Let each participant spend approximately two minutes attempting to dissuade the character from pursuing the appearance ideal (do two role plays if necessary). Make sure each participant tries to talk you out of pursuing the appearance ideal.

Tips on being “in character:”

- Parrot, or echo back, any pro appearance ideal comments previously made by participants while you are playing a appearance ideal role.
- Focus on the unrealistic benefits of the appearance ideal (“I’ll be happy all of the time if I’m thin,” “Everyone will like me,” “I’ll have the perfect partner,” “All my problems will be solved.”)
- Make statements that hint at the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal (“It will take time away from my schoolwork and friends, but I’ll find a way to do it,” or “I really don’t think dieting like this is that dangerous”) so that the participant can point out those costs to you.
- Be difficult to persuade (you and the participants should volley the role play back and forth several times), but it is OK to be playful with this exercise. Feel free to go over the top a bit with the more resilient participants.

*Now I would like to go through some examples of appearance ideal statements, and practice how one could respond to them. I will play a person that is obsessed with the appearance ideal and your job will be to convince me that I shouldn’t be. Feel free to use any of the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal that we identified in our earlier discussions.*

The facilitators should model the role-play before having participants do them. Then select group members to participate, making sure each participant has a turn. Start with the most gregarious participant, or if no one volunteers, start with the person next to you and go around the room.

Sample statements for leaders appear below:

- *“I really want to be able to wear that new bikini for spring break, so I will start skipping breakfasts to take off some extra weight.”*
- *“I’m sure that I’d be popular if I could lose a little more weight.”*

- *“I just saw an ad for this new weight loss pill, I’m going to order it right away. I can finally be as thin as I want.”*
- *“I can’t meet you for dinner tonight because I have to go spend a few hours at the gym. I only went for two hours yesterday.”*
- *“I feel a little dizzy lately, which may be from these diet pills and laxatives I’ve been taking, but I don’t care because I have already lost 10 pounds.”*
- *“I’m thinking of going on a gluten-free vegan diet. It’s so much more healthy and I’m sure it’ll help me finally lose that weight I’ve wanted to get rid of!”*
- *“To be the best runner, I have to be down to my lightest weight. I am only doing this for my health—this will help me avoid injuries.”*
- *“I have to be thin or my life is ruined.”*
- *“Anyone could have the body of a supermodel if they really wanted it.”*
- *“No guy is ever going to ask me out unless I drop some of this weight.”*
- *“I am never going to be selected by a sorority unless I lose 10 pounds.”*
- *“I want to make sure I don’t gain that freshman 15 this year, so I am going to only eat a banana for breakfast and an apple for lunch every day.”*
- *“I am training for a marathon right now, so have to get in at least two three hour runs this weekend.”*
- *“My trainer says that if I cut out breakfast, I could be a better athlete.”*
- *“My schedule is packed so I never have time to eat. I know I could probably make time, but I like how much weight I’m losing”*
- *“I just got an app on my phone that helps me budget my calories. It says that in order to lose 10 pounds by next month, I can only have half of what I usually eat.”*
- *“If I want to go out tonight, I’ll have to skip lunch and dinner today.*
- *“To get closer to that thigh gap I’ve been striving for, I think I’ll spend an hour on inner thigh exercises each day this week”.*
- *“Do you think smoking will make me skinny? I’ve heard it’s a great way to suppress your appetite.”*

Leaders should generate additional statements as needed and may tailor the statements to be appropriate for their group members.

### **Role-play debriefing**

*How did it feel to do these role plays?*

Let participants reflect on how it felt to argue against someone who is fixated on pursuing the appearance ideal.

*Do you think it might be beneficial for you to challenge people when they make appearance ideal statements?*

Promote discussion on why it is helpful to speak out against pressure to conform to the appearance ideal. Please let participants come up with the arguments.

## **V. HOME EXERCISES (5 MINS)**

Home-based assignment for next session:

*Great. Now we would like to describe two home exercises for you to do before the next session. The first is to write a letter to someone in your life who pressured you to conform to the appearance ideal, such as a parent, sibling, dating partner, or friend. Please tell them how this affected you and indicate how you would respond now, in light of what you have learned in these groups.*

*If no one has pressured you to be thin, please make up an example or use an example you have heard from others in the group or a friend.*

Pull the **Rewind Response Letter Form** from your packet (Home Exercise #4).

*The second exercise is to come up with a top-10 list of things girls/women can do to resist the appearance ideal. The goal of this exercise is to do something that will actually change your environment/the world, at least a little bit, in a way that will benefit other young women. Think of yourself as a social activist who is combating the appearance ideal. Please write your top 10-list and bring it to the next group.*

*Does anyone have some ideas for this right now? I'd like to get a couple of examples in case anyone is confused.*

Refer to the **Top-10 List Form** (Exercise #5) Elicit one or two examples.

Examples:

1. Invite friends to join you in a boycott of a fashion magazine that promotes the appearance ideal.
2. Put out a pail with sidewalk chalk on campus and a sign instructing people to write down something they like about their bodies on the sidewalk.
3. Make a pact with friends to stop pro-appearance ideal talk for a week (or more).
4. Identify a younger female friend or relative and commit to helping her fight the appearance ideal as she grows up.
5. Cover all of the mirrors in your sorority house for a week so that other women can be freed from the pressure of looking perfect every day.

6. Put post-its on mirrors in women's bathrooms saying "love your body."
7. Write a Facebook, Twitter, or blog post that critiques the appearance ideal and share it with family and friends.
8. Challenge a male or group of males to not talk about women in a way that supports the appearance ideal.
9. Start a Facebook page aimed at challenging the appearance ideal and invite your friends to join.
10. Throw a "Take Back our Bodies" party with friends (male and female) that challenges the appearance ideal pressures created by the media and other external sources.
11. Put post-its that say, "You look great the way you are" into weight-loss books at a library or bookstore.
12. Put up a "love your body" poster in the girls' restrooms or on cars at school
13. Hang body acceptance fliers around campus.
14. Write "accept your body" in white shoe polish on your car window.
15. Make a "stuff people say" about body image concerns video, and post it on Youtube.

*Can someone tell me what the home exercises are for this week?*

1. Write rewind response letter.
2. Generate top 10-list of ways to challenge the appearance ideal at a societal level.

Time permitting:

*Can everyone tell me something that "worked for you" in this session, or "hit home"?*

*During the next meeting, we will talk more about resisting the appearance ideal and how to challenge our personal body concerns. Does anyone have any questions before we leave today?*

*Thanks again for coming. We are looking forward to seeing you next week!*

## SESSION 3

**Prep:** Email/call each participant before this class to remind them to complete each home exercise.

**Materials:** Video camera  
Nametags

**Topic Areas:**

- I. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment
- II. Rewind Response Letter Exercise Debriefing
- III. Role-Play: Quick Comebacks to Appearance ideal Statements
- IV. Reasons for Signing Up
- V. Behavioral Challenge
- VI. Top 10 List Debriefing
- VII. Home Exercises

**Session Overview:** The focus of Session 3 is to further discuss how to resist the appearance ideal, how to challenge personal body-related concerns, and how to respond to future pressures to be thin. Role-plays are also used so participants can practice making statements that counter the appearance ideal.

Turn on video camera now.

### **I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (2 MINS)**

*Again, it is important to note that participation is voluntary. Is each of you willing to actively participate in today's session?*

Make sure everyone at least gives you a head-nod in response.

### **II. REWIND RESPONSE LETTER DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)**

*Last week we asked you to write a letter to someone in your life who has pressured you to conform to the appearance ideal. We asked you to tell them how this affected you. We also asked you to indicate how you would respond now, in light of what you have learned from these groups.*

*Is each of you willing to read your letter out loud?*

*How did it feel to write this letter?*

*Please turn in your rewind response letter form and please make sure you signed it. Thanks!*

Collect Home Exercise #4. Make sure participants write their name on it and sign it.

### III. QUICK COMEBACKS TO APPEARANCE IDEAL STATEMENTS ROLE PLAY (10 MINS)

*We often do not notice some of the more subtle ways the appearance ideal is perpetuated.*

*Can any of you think of some ways that you or others might promote the appearance ideal without even knowing it?*

Possible responses include complimenting others' weight loss, commenting on what or how much you are eating, devoting a lot of time to thinking about how you can cut calories by becoming gluten-free or vegan, complaining about your body, and talking about celebrities who are either very thin or look as though they have gained weight.

*Last week we asked you to talk someone out of pursuing the appearance ideal in an extended role-play. This week we are going to do something a little different—we would like each of you to briefly challenge “appearance ideal” statements with a quick comeback. Your goal is simply to derail the fat talk. I would like each of you to counter two appearance ideal statements I make.*

*For example, if I say: “Does this shirt make me look fat?” You could say: “I think it’s best if we don’t dwell on appearance issues.”*

Role-play using counter appearance ideal statements to resist pressure from peers. Ask each participant to generate a counter appearance ideal statements in response to two statements that leaders generate. Go around the circle twice. If participants provide a lengthy answer, gently interrupt them and ask them to provide a response in just a sentence or two.

Sample statements:

- *Wow, look at the size of that girl!*
- *Lindsay has really gained weight over the holidays.*
- *I think if I cut out dairy and gluten I can really lose a lot of weight.*
- *I’m thinking of going on a diet, do you want to join me?*
- *Don’t you think that girl is a cow?*
- *I would never be friends with someone that heavy.*
- *My trainer says I need to stop eating breakfast if I want to get to my ideal weight.*
- *My brother says I look too fat, what do you think?*
- *I love listening to Adele, but she’s hard to look at with all that excess weight.*



- *I think it'd be really cool if we could both achieve a thigh gap.*
- *If I don't lose some weight, I may be dropped from the track team.*
- *I hate my body so much—I wish I could just wake up in a different one.*
- *You know if you just stopped eating cheese, you would lose enough weight to look attractive.*
- *Only skinny girls get asked out by guys.*
- *She really doesn't have the body to be wearing that outfit.*
- *I really wish I had the body of a model*
- *I was thinking of getting a tummy-tuck*
- *My trainer is working with me so that I lose enough weight to go to a size 2.*
- *Does this dress make me look fat?*
- *Do I look fat in this?*
- *I'm way too fat to be eating this.*
- *You are so thin, how do you do it?*
- *I'm thinking of becoming vegan because I hear it helps you lose weight.*
- *You are so thin, you have nothing to worry about.*
- *If I don't lose some weight, I know he's going to cheat on me.*
- *Let's start doing hot yoga, I heard you burn almost 1000 calories per class.*
- *Spring break is coming up, do you really think you should be eating that?*
- *Coach says only to eat salads for lunch.*
- *I'm trying a new juice cleanse, you should do it too!*
- *He told me he only dates girls with a thigh gap*
- *I can't believe such a whale showed up in that dress.*
- *No one wants to date a fatty.*

### **Role-play debriefing**

*How did it feel to do these role-plays? Do you think you could challenge your friend and family if they make appearance ideal statements?*

Encourage discussion with additional questions as necessary (e.g., “Which statements were more challenging to respond to?” or “What would it be like in real life to indicate that you don't support the appearance ideal?”).

### **IV. REASONS FOR SIGNING UP FOR THIS CLASS (10 MINS)**

*At this point, it is helpful for students to share the main reasons they signed up for this body acceptance class so that they can get some feedback from the group. I hope everyone will honestly share why they signed up for this group. What body image concerns prompted you to sign up for this class?*

Facilitators can give examples of their own body dissatisfactions and model supportive comebacks if the group seems hesitant. It is best to start with the most outgoing student.

Have participants discuss as much as they are comfortable sharing. The purpose is to allow participants to share specific body image concerns and have the group challenge the thoughts and feelings that participants have about specific body parts.

If necessary, ask “*Would you be willing to say what body image concerns you have? Almost everyone has some type of concern!*” If participants give vague answers (e.g., interest in the topic, financial incentive) push them further with a response such as “The money is a great incentive, but to join the group, participants had to report that they had some body image concerns.”

*Listening to you, it sounds like it would be helpful to some of you to challenge some of your fears and concerns related to your body image.*

## **V. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE (10 MINS)**

*What types of things do you not do because of body image concerns?*

(e.g., wearing certain clothes, going specific places, etc.)

*Are you willing to do an experiment to help you feel better about your bodies? We would like to challenge you to do things that you currently do not do because of body image concerns. Doing this should increase your confidence and disprove your fears.*

*Examples include:*

- *Wearing shorts to school if your legs are an area of concern for you*
- *Going to the pool in a swimsuit if you're usually scared to*
- *Exercising in public*
- *Eating in public*
- *Wearing a form-fitting shirt or a tank top to the mall/dinner/library*
- *Wearing your hair up if you are self-conscious about what you look like with it up*
- *Wearing a sports bra with nothing over it or tight yoga pants when working out*
- *Not wearing make-up*
- *Going to the Rec center if you usually avoid it because of body image concerns*
- *Revealing a part of your body, such as your feet, that you tend to cover up (like wear sandals)*

*Are you willing to do two behavioral challenges in the next week or the same challenge twice? We would like to hear how it went next week. Please take a moment to think of two things you would like to do but haven't done yet. Now let's go around the share the two things that you will do this week.*

Note that the purpose of this exercise is not to simply have participants do something they would not normally do (e.g., wear a tight shirt because it just isn't their style preference), but that it needs to be something they would otherwise do if they did not have body image concerns (e.g., would like to wear a tight shirt, but do not because they think it makes their stomach look too fat).

Have each participant share with the group two behavioral challenges that they will do in the next week.

Refer to the **Behavioral Exercise Form** (Exercise #6). Have them record their plan on the form.

Group leaders should help participants select challenges that are appropriate and that they will be able to do in the next week (e.g., do not select wearing a bathing suit to the pool if it is winter). As needed, push participants to be specific in their plan (e.g., who will they do the activity with [if anyone], when will they do it, where will they do it, and how will they do it).

## **VI. TOP 10 LIST DEBRIEFING (15 MINS)**

*The second exercise from last session asked you to list 10 things that girls/women could do to resist the appearance ideal—what you can avoid, say, do, or learn to fight this social pressure. This might be referred to as “body activism.”*

*Can each of you share three items on your list?*

Refer to the **Top-10 List Form** (Exercise #5).

Examples:

1. Share an anti-appearance ideal video on Facebook.
2. You could make a “stuff people say” about body image concerns video, put on YouTube.
3. Write to a magazine or advertising company about a particular ad that is pro-appearance ideal and explain why you have a problem with this. Or you could suggest a more positive advertising campaign.
4. Go to the MissRepresentation website, sign up to take their pledge and then be an activist for their campaign; e.g., you can help out with their twitter not buying it campaign. They have other campaigns as well.
5. Enlist a group of friends to make a pact to only give out complements related to accomplishments and achievement, not appearance.
6. Ask a group of friends to go join you in a group fitness activity that is geared toward fun and health, not losing weight (e.g., play tennis or ping pong, go on a walk, etc.).

7. Make a “fat talk” jar to put in your house so every time someone makes a pro-appearance ideal statement, they have to put money in the jar.
8. Put post-its that saying “you look great the way you are” into weight loss books at a bookstore.
9. Put up a “love your body” poster in the girls’ restrooms at school.
10. Hang body acceptance fliers around campus.
11. Put out a pail with sidewalk chalk on campus and a sign instructing people to write down something they like about their bodies on the sidewalk.
12. Put “love your body” fliers on cars.
13. Use white shoe polish to write “accept your body” on your own car window.
14. Ask a group of friends (can be male, too) to write a letter to someone in their past who had pressured them to be thin.

*We would like each of you to do at least two acts of body activism this week and then let us know how they go at the next session. Take a moment to choose the two forms of body activism that you will do. Now let’s go around the share the two things that you will do this week.*

Refer to the **Body Activism Form** (Exercise #7).

Have each participant choose two behaviors from their list to do during the next week. As needed, push participants to be specific in their plan (e.g., who will they do the activity with [if anyone], when will they do it, where will they do it, and how will they do it). As needed, also remind participants that body activism is intended to have an impact beyond the individual level (e.g., among friends, on the college campus, in the community, etc.).

Collect the **Top-10 List Form (Exercise #5)**. Make sure each participant has written and signed their name on the form.

## **VII. HOME EXERCISES (3 MINS)**

*Again, we would like each of you to do two behavioral challenges relating to your personal body image concerns, and engage in two body activism exercises.*

*We would also like you to do a third exercise. Would you be willing to write a letter to your younger self, describing how to avoid developing body image concerns? Draw from what you have learned in these sessions. The goal is to give yourself advise on things you can do, say, avoid, or learn to help yourself develop a positive body image.*

Refer to the **Letter to a Younger Self Form** (Exercise #8).

*Please include your full name and signature on your home exercises. I will be collecting all home exercises after we talk about how each went next week.*

Ask one participant to paraphrase home exercises in her own words to make sure they are clear.

Time permitting:

*Can everyone tell me something that “worked for you” in this session, or “hit home”?*

*Once again, thanks for coming. See you next week for the final session!*

## SESSION 4

**Prep:** Email/call each participant before this class to remind them to complete each home exercise.

**Materials:** Video camera  
Nametags

**Topic Areas:**

- I. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment
- II. Behavioral Challenge Debriefing
- III. Body Activism Debriefing
- IV. Letter to a Younger Self Debriefing
- V. Benefits of the Group/Closure Discussion
- VI. Self-Affirmation Exercise
- VII. Home Exercises
- VIII. Closure

**Session 1 Overview:** The focus of Session 4 is to discuss participants' experiences with the behavioral challenge and body activism exercises, and to discuss how the ways in which we talk about our bodies may promote the appearance ideal. This final session focuses on having participants come up with more positive alternative ways of talking about their bodies and encouraging participants to continue to challenge their body image issues in the future.

### I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (2 MINS)

Turn on video camera now.

*Are each of you willing to participate verbally in today's session?*

Make sure everyone at least gives you a head-nod in response.

### II. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

*Last week we asked you to do something that you do not normally do because of concerns about your body.*

*Let's go around the room and describe what each of you did and how it turned out.*

*Did you find this exercise useful? What did you learn?*

Have each participant discuss her experiences.

If they did not do the exercise, ask about the barriers to doing it. How can they overcome them? Is there something they can do that might be easier to try out first? Encourage participants to continue to challenge their body-related concerns.

*We appreciate that you were willing to try something new. Hopefully you will continue to challenge yourselves and your body image concerns in the future in a similar way.*

Collect the **Behavioral Exercise Form** (Exercise #6). Make sure each participant has written and signed her name on the form.

### **III. BODY ACTIVISM DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)**

*Last time we also asked you to do two body activism exercises. Let's go around the room so we can hear what each of you did and how it went.*

Go around the room so that each participant describes what they did and what happened. As needed, ask questions to prompt additional discussion (e.g., “X, it sounds like you enjoyed doing this exercise. Tell me more about what made it enjoyable” or “X, what aspects of this exercise were challenging?”).

*How do you think this type of exercise could make a difference?*

*Is anyone willing to do more body activism in the future? If so, what would you do?*

Give participants an opportunity to talk themselves into doing more body activism activities in the future.

*Please turn in your body activism forms and please sign them.*

Collect the **Body Activism Form** (Exercise #7). Make sure each participant has written and signed her name on the form.

### **IV. LETTER TO YOUNGER SELF DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)**

*Last week we asked if you would be willing to write a letter to your younger self, instructing yourself on how to avoid developing body image concerns.*

*I would like to get a video-clip of you reading your letter so you can post it on our group website.*

Have each participant read her letter. Emphasize to the group members that for confidentiality reasons we are unable to post a video if the participant says their full name or the full name of another individual on the recording. Record with a separate camera or their cell phones so you can generate short individual video clips for participants. After each participant concludes reading her letter, respond by thanking her and/or making a positive comment about her letter.

NOTE: For confidentiality purposes, it is important to make sure that the participant reading the letter is the ONLY person in the video.

NOTE: If a participant is unwilling to read her letter, ask her if she is willing to summarize it or choose an excerpt to read.

*Everyone clearly spent a lot of time writing these letters and did a great job on them. Please hand them in - be sure your name and signature are on them! We will mail these letters to you in 6 months to remind you of all the wisdom regarding body acceptance that you have gained from this group.*

Collect the **Letter to a Younger Self Form** (Exercise #8). Make sure each participant has written and signed their name on the form.

## **V. DISCUSSION OF BENEFITS OF THE GROUP AND CLOSURE (10 MINS)**

*Given that this is our last group, I wanted to talk about things you may have learned from participating in this group.*

*Can you tell me some of the benefits of body acceptance?*

*Did any particular activity really stand out as helpful to you?*

*How has this experience changed the way you think and feel about your own body?*

*How has your participation in The Body Project changed what you do, or will do in the future, to promote your own body acceptance?*

*How has this group changed how you interact with friends, romantic partners or any other people in your life? As empowered and capable women, how can you “pay it forward” and empower others?*

*What have you gotten out of this class?*

Try to get all participants to reflect on any growth they have shown or insights they have learned. The idea is for them to consolidate what they have learned.

## **VI. SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISE (10 MINS)**

*As we come to the end of our sessions, we would like to encourage you to continue to challenge some of your body-related concerns. Part of doing this is talking about*



*our bodies in a positive, rather than a negative, way. Here are some ideas to get you started:*

- 1. Choose one friend or family member and discuss one thing you like about yourselves.*
- 2. Keep a journal of all the good things your body allows you to do (e.g., do a long hike, play tennis well etc.).*
- 3. Pick one friend to make a pact with to avoid negative body talk. When you catch your friend talking negatively about their body, remind them of the pact.*
- 4. Make a pledge to end complaints about your body, such as “I’m so flat chested” or “I hate my legs.” When you catch yourself doing this, make a correction by saying something positive about that body part, such as, “I’m so glad my legs got me through soccer practice today.”*
- 5. The next time someone gives you a compliment, rather than objecting (“No, I’m so fat”), practice taking a deep breath and saying “Thank you.”*

*Can each of you choose some form of self-affirmation exercise to do next week and email us about how it goes?*

*Consider this an “exit exercise.” Doing these kinds of things makes it more likely that you will talk about yourself in a more positive way. Think of which specific exercise you can do. I’d like to go around the room and ask each of you to share.*

Refer to the **Self-Affirmation Exercise Form** (Exercise #8).

Have each participant state which affirmation exercise they are willing to do during the next week.

## **VII. OTHER HOME EXERCISE (5 MINS)**

\*\*If school IS continuing Body Project groups and recruitment, have participants complete the recruitment home exercise:

*Second, we wanted to see if you would be willing to encourage at least 3 of your friends to give the Body Project body acceptance class a try, based on your positive experience with this class. Please give them one of the recruitment fliers that are at the end of your binder or simply have your friends text me at: \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_.*

*So, we would like each of you to do one self-affirmation exercise during the next week and email us about how it went. Second, we would like you to encourage three friends to attend a future Body Project group and to send us their contact information so we can get them scheduled.*

\*\*If school IS NOT continuing Body Project groups, have participants complete the body activism exercise instead of the recruitment exercise:

*Second, we would like you to do one more form of “body activism” and email us about what you did. Are you willing to do a form “body activism” as a group? This could consist of writing a letter that you all sign and sending it to a magazine or company that promotes the appearance ideal. You decide what you want to do and check in with one another about it by email or text messages. Are there any ideas about what could be done? Would someone be willing to be the leader of this and make sure it happens? [Select one or two group members to be leader.] We’d like to hear what you decide to do as a group.*

Make a note of potential Group-Based Body Activism exercise.

Refer to the **Group Body Activism Exercise Form** (Exercise #10)

*So, we would like each of you to do one self-affirmation exercise during the next week and email us about how it went. Second, we would like you as a group to do one additional form of “body activism.”*

### **VIII. CLOSURE (3 MIN)**

*Once again, thanks again for deciding to be a part of this group. We have been very impressed with your thoughtful comments and participation—they are much appreciated!*

# Body Project Group Materials

## **Session One:**

Home Exercise #1: Letter to Adolescent Girl

Home Exercise #2: Mirror Exercise Form

Home Exercise #3: Appearance ideal Perpetuation Behavior Checklist

## **Session Two:**

Home Exercise #4: Rewind Response Letter

Home Exercise #5: Top-10 List Form

## **Session Three:**

Home Exercise #6: Behavioral Exercise Form

Home Exercise #7: Body Activism Form

Home Exercise #8: Letter to a Younger Self

## **Session Four:**

Home Exercise #9: Self-Affirmation Exercise Form

Home Exercise #10: Group Body Activism





## Session One, Exercise #2: Mirror Exercise Form

Please stand in front of a mirror and look at yourself and write down all your positive qualities. Please list at least 10. This includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities. For instance, you may like the shape of your arms, the strength of your legs, your long dark hair, the sound of your laugh, or the fact that you are a good friend. Please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list.



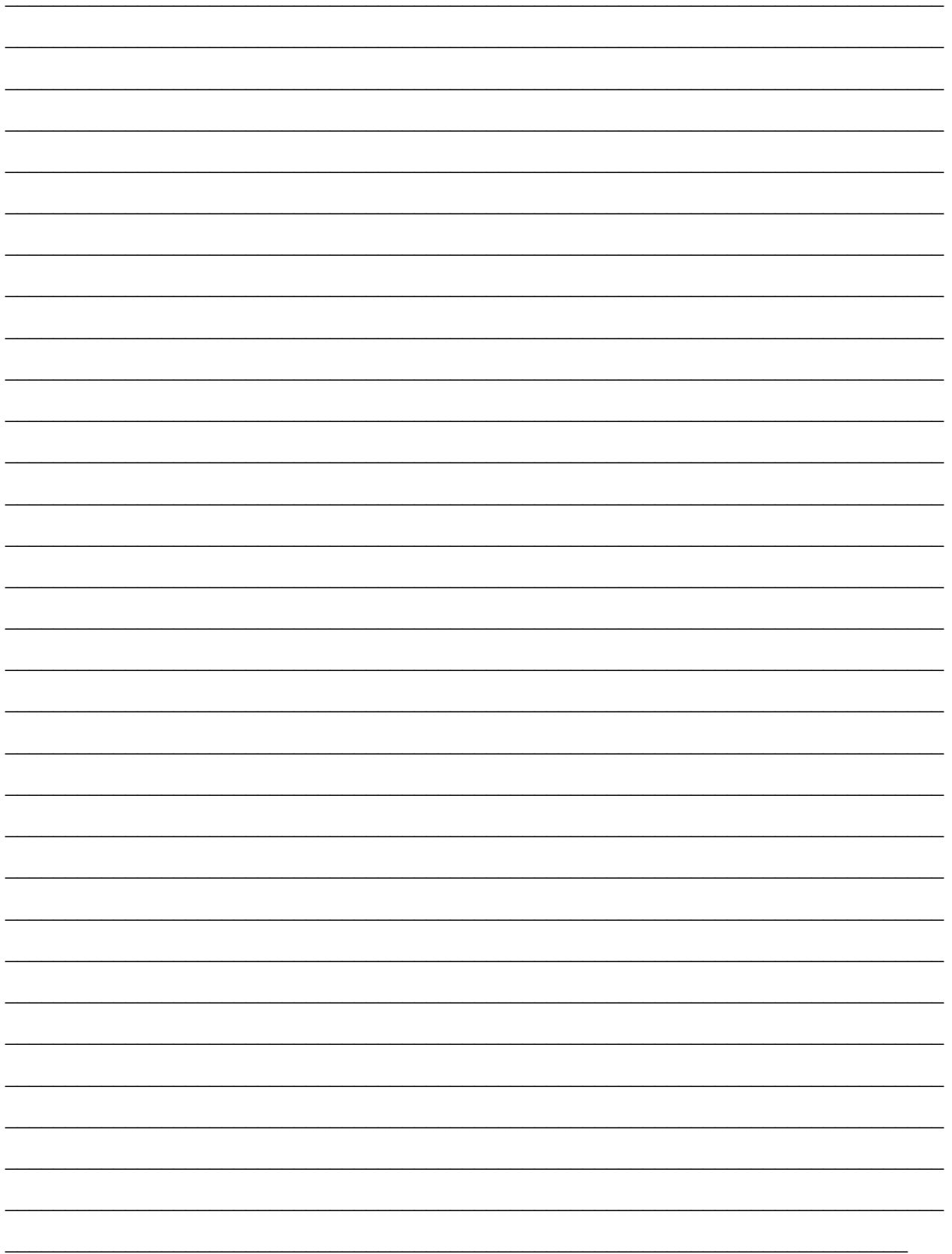
## Session One, Home Exercise #3: Appearance Ideal Perpetuation Behavior Checklist

This checklist is designed to increase awareness of behaviors that serve to perpetuate the appearance ideal in our culture. Please record which of these behaviors you have engaged in over the last few years.

Purchased a fashion or beauty magazine	yes
Subscribed to a fashion or beauty magazine	yes
Gone to a fashion show with a runway and live models	yes
Watched a TV show focused on the appearance ideal (America's Top Models)	yes
Complimented someone because they lost weight	yes
Made a negative comment about someone's appearance	yes
Made a negative comment about someone's weight	yes
Made a critical comment about the weight of an actor, musician, or model	yes
Instantly judged someone negatively because of their weight or appearance	yes
Made a negative comment about my own weight or appearance that was contrived	yes
Asked someone if they have lost weight	yes
Encouraged someone to try a weight-loss diet	yes
Given a sibling a hard time about his/her weight	yes
Decided not to talk with or befriend someone because they were overweight	yes
Purchased products that promote the appearance ideal in their ads (e.g., Victoria's Secret)	yes
Dined at an establishment that promotes the appearance ideal (e.g., Hooters)	yes
Covered up parts of my body that I was embarrassed about	yes
Weighed myself multiple times a day	yes
Considered or got plastic surgery (e.g., a nose job, a boob job, or liposuction)	yes







Name:

Signature:

## **Session Two, Exercise #5: Top-10 List Form**

Please generate a top-10 list of things girls/women can do to resist the appearance ideal. What can you avoid, say, do, or learn to battle this beauty ideal? Please write your top-10 list down and bring it to the next group.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

Name:

Signature:

## **Session Three, Exercise #6: Behavioral Exercise Form**

We would like to challenge each of you to do two things that you currently do not do because of body image concerns to increase your confidence. For example, wearing shorts to school, going to the pool in a swimsuit, exercising in public. We would like each of you to do two behavioral challenges next week (or the same one twice) and then let us know how it turned out during the next session. Please take a moment to think of something you would like to do but haven't done yet. Please write your behavioral goal down on this page to remind yourself of it.

Name:

Signature:

## **Session Three, Exercise #7: Body Activism Form**

The second exercise from last session asked you to list 10 things that girls/women could do to resist the appearance ideal – what you can avoid, say, do, or learn to combat this social pressure. This might be referred to as “body activism.”

Please choose two behaviors from your list to do during the next week. You may want to write your body activism goal on this sheet to remind yourself of it.





**Name:**

**Signature:**

## **Session Four, Exit Exercise #9: Self-Affirmation Exercise Form**

Part of challenging body-related concerns involves talking about our bodies in a positive, rather than negative, way. We discussed some examples of this in the group, for instance, making a pledge to end complaints about your body or accepting compliments rather than objecting to them. Please choose three ideas that we talked about, or one of your own, to practice over the next week, and let us know how it goes via email.

## Session Four, Exit Exercise #10: Group Body Activism

We would like you, as a group, to do one additional form of “body activism.” As a reminder, “body activism” is something you could avoid, say, do, or learn to resist the thin ideal. This could consist of writing a letter that you all sign and sending it to a magazine or company that promotes the appearance ideal. You decide what you want to do and check in with one another about it by email or text messages. Please list some ideas you may have below, and then one person can email us about what you did as a group.



### Group members:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name: