

The Body Project Manual

Enhanced-Dissonance Version

6 Session Version

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SESSION 1

Prep: Email/call/text each participant before this session to remind them about the time and location of the first group.

Materials: Whiteboard or flip chart
Markers
Video camera or voice recorder

Topic Areas:

- I. Introduction
- II. Group Rules and Expectations
- III. Definition of the Appearance ideal
- IV. Costs of Pursuing the Appearance ideal
- V. Home Exercise Assignment

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 AND ICEBREAKER (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

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

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

We would like to _____ record all sessions for quality assurance purposes. Is this OK?

Turn on voice recorder now.

The group leader begins by introducing herself to the group. Introductions include name, professional status, and biggest body image pet peeve. 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, grade (or age), and your biggest body image pet peeve? Your biggest body

image pet peeve can be with either the media or fashion industry, both of which influence one's body image. For example, someone might say that her biggest pet peeve is the way that clothing sizes for girls/women vary so much according to brand. I'll go first... (name, grade, biggest body image pet peeve)

Group leaders should spend a few moments with each participant to elicit specific information and show interest (e.g., I can totally identify with jeans being difficult to shop for)

II. VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT AND OVERVIEW (2 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Soliciting voluntary commitment to participating in the class

Students get the most out of these groups if they attend all six 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? Let's go around the group. I will start...

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

During the sessions we will:

1. Define the appearance ideal
2. Examine the costs of pursuing this ideal
3. Explore ways to resist pressures to be conform to the appearance ideal
4. Discuss how to challenge our body-related concerns
5. Learn new ways to talk more positively about our bodies, and
6. Talk about how we can best respond to future pressures to conform to the ideal

Attendance

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

Group leaders should **call/e-mail/text participants** the day before each session to remind them 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 (15 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Scribe: _____

Now we are going to define the cultural appearance ideal for women to understand exactly what we are discussing. Imagine what society tells us the “perfect woman” looks like. What are her physical characteristics? Our scribe will create our perfect woman list on the board.

Have participants “shout out” aspects of the “perfect woman.” Scribe writes “Perfect Woman” on the board.

Leave this on the board for the entire session.

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

Add any new features to the list on the whiteboard.

So the “perfect woman” has...

Read back the list on the board playfully highlighting the incompatible features.

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 use extreme measures to look like a supermodel, including some very unhealthy weight control behaviors. The goal of the appearance ideal is to achieve a figure that is neither realistic nor healthy.

The healthy-ideal is the way your unique body looks when you are doing the necessary things to appropriately maximize your physical health, mental health, and overall quality of life. With the healthy-ideal, the goal is health, fitness, functionality and longevity. A healthy body has both muscles and adequate fat tissue. The healthy-ideal involves feeling good about how our body both feels and works.

Where did the appearance ideal come from?

Media, fashion industry, diet/weight loss industry.

How do we learn about the appearance ideal?

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

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

Discuss participants' personal experiences in these areas and the impact on their emotions and self-worth.

How do appearance ideal messages from the media or other people in your life affect how you feel about your body?

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

What does the media suggest will happen if we look like the appearance ideal?

We will be accepted, loved, happy, successful, and wealthy.

Differentiate the appearance ideal from the healthy-ideal if they say you are healthier, more attractive, or happier if you conform to the appearance ideal. Former is about thinness at any cost (including health), whereas latter is about function and health.

Will coming closer to this ideal really make these things happen? Another way to think about this is to ask: do celebrities, who often come the closest to the appearance ideal, have perfect lives?

No, they will likely have little impact and have a plethora of problems like substance addiction, no real friends, etc.

Please 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 appearance ideal).

IV. COSTS OF PURSING THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (20 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Scribe: _____

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 women/girls? Our scribe will make a list for us on the board.

Decreased self-esteem; 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 collective costs for society?

Increased mental health care costs, decreased productivity, promote a culture of discontent.

Who benefits from the appearance ideal? In other words, who makes money from the appearance ideal?

Diet industry; fitness business; mass media; fashion industry; plastic surgeons.

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

Are you the founder of a diet program, a media executive, or a supermodel?

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

No!

Let's go around the room so that each of us can provide one statement about why pursuing the appearance ideal doesn't make sense. This can be as simple as saying "it's impossible to achieve" or "the costs are too high" or whatever part of our discussion fits best with why you think pursuing the appearance ideal (versus the healthy-ideal) is problematic.

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

V. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Would you be willing to write a letter to a younger 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.

Pull the **Letter to A Younger Girl Form: Costs of the Appearance ideal** from your packet (Exercise #1).

We would also like you to stand in front of a mirror with as little clothing as possible and write down 10 positive 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 features. It may be difficult, but it is important to recognize each of these areas about yourself. Students have found this exercise to be very helpful and empowering. When I did this exercise for the first time, I really enjoyed it because (make testimonial statement to encourage participants to complete this exercise). We are also going to do this exercise this week, because it is such a good exercise.

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

Pull the **Mirror Form** from your packet (Exercise #2).

Can someone tell me what the home exercises are for this week in your own words?

Write letter to younger girl about costs of pursuing the appearance ideal; do the self-affirmation mirror exercise.

We will discuss exercises next session. I will be collecting all home exercises.

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 (i.e., head nods).

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

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

SESSION 2

Prep: E-mail/call/text each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials: Video camera or voice recorder
Digital camera/cell phone

Topic Areas:

- I. Letter to a Younger Girl Exercise Debriefing
- II. Mirror Exercise Debriefing
- III. Role Plays
- IV. Home Exercise Assignment

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. This session also involves role-plays to elicit verbal statements against the appearance ideal.

Start video camera.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

On point leader: _____

Thanks for coming to Session 2. Are 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 (15 MINS)

We asked if you would be willing to write a letter to a younger girl about the costs of trying to look like the appearance ideal. We are now going to go around the group so that each of us can share our letter with the rest of the group.

Have each participant read her letter.

Everyone did a great job writing these letters. Please hand them in - be sure your name and signature are on them!

Collect home Exercise #1. Make sure each participant has written and signed their name on the form.

We have been impressed by the letters written by participants and feel that they could help other young women struggling with body image concerns. So we'd like to send your written letter to younger girls attending middle school. Is everyone okay with their letter being sent to younger girls?

Check off who is willing to have their letter sent. Edit and send them after the session.

III. MIRROR EXERCISE DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

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? Let's go around the group on this.

Go around the room for responses.

Now we are going to go around the group so that each of us can state two aspects of ourselves that we are satisfied with. If you can, please try and pick harder aspects versus easier ones. For instance, if you like your eyes and your legs, say "I like my legs" because we'll all get more out of this activity this way. I'll start, I like my....

Give one physical and one emotional quality. Then go around the group.

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 is completely positive?").

Collect home 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 pressure of the appearance ideal surrounds you. Given that these are potent pressures – let's discuss ways to resist them.

IV. ROLE PLAYS TO DISCOURAGE PURSUIT OF THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (15 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Leaders take the role of either a severe dieter or eating disordered individual for each participant. Let each participant spend about two minutes attempting to dissuade your character from pursuing the appearance ideal (do two role plays if necessary). 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 sure each participant tries to talk you out of pursuing the appearance ideal. Be difficult to persuade, but it is OK to be playful with this exercise.

Now let's review 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. Use any of the information brought up in our earlier discussions.

The two facilitators should model the role-play first. Then select group members to participate, making sure each participant has a turn. Start with the most gregarious participant.

Sample statements for leaders appear below:

- *“Swimsuit season is just around the corner, so I think I will start skipping breakfasts to take off the some extra weight.”*
- *A girl suffering from Anorexia says, “I am sure that people will accept me and love me if I only 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.”*
- *An anorexic says to her friend, “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 I'm on, but I don't care because I have already lost 10 pounds.”*
- *“Most people have weak will power and give in to hunger – I will show people how much self-control I have by not eating anything but grapefruit.”*
- *“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've been running 3 miles after breakfast, lunch, and dinner because my boyfriend says he doesn't like girls with fat legs.”*
- *“I will never have any fun on the beach this spring break unless I have a completely flat stomach and toned thighs.”*
- *“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 to the prom 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 weight this year, so I am going to only eat a banana for breakfast and an apple for lunch every day.”*
- *“I will never get any friends unless I have a completely flat stomach”*
- *“I can wear shorts this summer until I get a thigh gap”*

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

Role play debriefing

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. Let participants come up with the arguments.

V. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT (4 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Home-based assignment for next session:

We would like you to do a couple exercises at home before the next session again. The first is to give examples from your real life of pressures to conform to the appearance ideal. Then, we would like you to come up with a verbal challenge to each pressure, just like we did in the role-plays.

Lets practice before you try it on your own.

Example 1: Your mom might comment on how another mom has really let herself go because she gained weight.

How could you respond to this comment to show you do not agree with the appearance ideal and think these sorts of comments are unhealthy?

Ask the group to throw out some verbal challenges, e.g., it seems rude to talk about someone's weight when you don't know what is going on in their life -or- if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

Please come up with at least five examples from your own life. These examples probably won't be how you actually responded to the pressure. Instead, they should be how you might respond now based on what you know about the appearance ideal.

*Pull the **Verbal Challenge Form** from your packet (Exercise #3).*

The second exercise is to come up with a top-10 list of things girls/women can do to resist the appearance ideal. So unlike the verbal challenge form in which you challenge the appearance ideal at the individual level, we are asking how you can challenge the appearance ideal at the societal level. What can you avoid, say, do, or learn to battle this unhealthy beauty ideal in your community? Please write your top-10 list down and bring it to the next group.

*Pull the **Top-10 List Form** from your packet (Exercise #4).*

Elicit one or two examples. Examples:

1. Write letter to fashion magazine editor saying they should include a variety of body sizes in the magazine
2. Write a letter to a company indicating that you are boycotting their product because they promote the appearance ideal in their advertisements
3. Stop subscribing to a fashion magazine
4. Put post-its on mirrors in women/girl's bathrooms saying "love your body" or "your mind makes you beautiful"
5. Stand outside a cosmetic surgeon's office with an "accept yourself the way you are" sign.

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

Complete verbal challenge form; generate the top-10 list women can do to challenge appearance ideal.

We will discuss home exercises next session. I will be collecting all home exercises.

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

SESSION 3

Prep: E-mail/call/text each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials: Video camera or voice recorder

Topic Areas:

- I. Verbal Challenge Exercise Debriefing
- II. Role-Play - Quick Comebacks
- III. Behavioral Challenge
- IV. Top 10 List Debriefing
- V. Home Exercise Assignment

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 conform to the appearance ideal. Role-plays are also used so participants can practice making statements that counter the appearance ideal.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

On point leader: _____

Start video camera.

Thanks for coming. Is each of you willing to actively participate today?

Get a verbal affirmation that each participant is willing to actively participate.

II. VERBAL CHALLENGE EXERCISE DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

The first exercise asked you to provide examples from your life of pressures to conform to the appearance ideal and to come up with how you might verbally challenge these pressures.

We would like each of you to share one example with the group and your verbal challenge or the response you would make now that you've been a part of this group.

Solicit examples from each participant. If they cannot come up with an example, have them generate ideas regarding how to respond to pressures that other participants shared with the group.

Collect home exercise #3. Make sure each participant has written and signed her name on the form.

III. QUICK COMEBACKS TO APPEARANCE IDEAL STATEMENTS (12 MINS)

Last week we asked you to talk someone out of pursuing the appearance ideal in an extended role-play. This week we are doing 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 body talk.

For example, if I say: “Does this shirt make my love handles too visible?” You could say: “I think it best if we don’t concentrate on appearance issues like that.”

Role-play using counter appearance ideal statements to resist pressure from peers. Ask each participant to generate counter appearance ideal statements in response to two statements that leaders generate. Go around the circle twice (i.e., each participant gets 4 statements in total). Sample statements:

- *Lindsay has really gained weight over the holidays.*
- *I am thinking of going on a diet, do you want to join me?*
- *I would never be a friend with someone that heavy.*
- *My brother says I look too fat, what do you think?*
- *Don’t you think Beyoncé is a little too heavy?*
- *If I don’t lose some weight, I may be dropped from the diving 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.*
- *She has gained so much weight since last semester.*
- *Buy it a size smaller; it’ll be good motivation for you.*
- *I’m too fat to wear a swimsuit.*
- *You look so good! Have you lost weight?*
- *She totally shouldn’t be wearing that!*
- *She is such a cow!*
- *No one will ever date me with this body.*
- *He’s just the fat funny guy.*
- *You think you’re out of shape? Look at me!*
- *Only skinny girls get asked out on dates.*
- *She really doesn’t have the body to be wearing that outfit.*
- *I really wish I had the body of a supermodel.*
- *I was thinking of getting a tummy-tuck.*
- *Does this dress make me look fat?*
- *I want to become vegan because I hear it helps you lose weight.*

Role play debriefing

Do you think you could challenge your friends and family if they make appearance ideal statements?

Encourage discussion.

V. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

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

Examples include:

- *Wearing shorts to school*
- *Going to the pool in a swimsuit*
- *Exercising in public*
- *Wearing a form-fitting shirt or a tank top to the mall/dinner/library*
- *Wearing your hair up if you normally wear it down*
- *Wearing a sports bra without a top over it during workouts*
- *Not wearing make-up*
- *Going to the gym if you normally avoid it*
- *Revealing a part of your body, such as your feet or somewhere with a scar, that you tend to cover up*

We would like each of you to do a behavioral challenge twice in the next week and let us know how it went. Please take a moment to think of something you would like to do but haven't done yet. Each of you should have a plan before we leave.

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); 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 fear it makes their stomach look fat).

Have each participant come up with a behavioral challenge that they will do in the next week. 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).

*Pull the **Behavioral Challenge Exercise Form** from your packet (Exercise #5).*

VI. TOP 10 LIST DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Scribe: _____

Scribe should write “Body Activism” on the board.

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?

We would like each of you to do at least two acts of body activism and then let us know how they go. Would you all be willing to do that?

For example, you could:

- 1. Put post-its that say, “you look great the way you are” into weight loss books at a bookstore*
- 2. Put up a “love your body” poster or post-its in the girls’ restrooms at school*
- 3. Hang body acceptance fliers around campus*
- 4. Create a body talk jar that friends and family put change in the jar any time they make a body talk statement*

Have each participant select a behavior from their list to do during the next week.

*Pull the **Body Activism Form** from your packet (Exercise #6).*

Collect home exercise #4. Make sure participants write their name on the form and sign it.

VII. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT RECAP (2 MINS)

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

Do the behavioral challenge relating to your person body image concerns twice; engage in two acts of body activism.

We will talk about how each of these exercises went during the next session. I will be collecting all home exercises.

Thanks for coming. See you next week.

SESSION 4

Prep: E-mail/call/text each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials: Video camera or voice recorder

- Topic Areas:**
- I. Behavioral Challenge Debriefing
 - II. Body Activism Debriefing
 - III. Challenging Body Talk
 - IV. Home Exercises Assignment

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.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

On point leader: _____

Start voice recorder now.

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

Go around the group for verbal commitment from each participant.

II. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE DEBRIEFING (12 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? Let's go around the group so we can all share.

Have each participant discuss her experiences.

If they did not do the exercise, ask them how they can succeed the next time they try. 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 home exercise #5. Make sure participants write their name on it and sign it.

III. BODY ACTIVISM DEBRIEFING (12 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Last time we also asked you to do two body activism exercises. Lets 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.

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

Would you consider doing another act of body activism in the future?

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

Collect home exercise #6. Make sure participants write their name on it and sign it.

IV. CHALLENGING BODY TALK ROLE PLAY (15 MINS)

We've discussed obvious pressures to conform to the appearance ideal that we encounter on a regular basis from the media, friends, and family members. However, we often do not notice some of the more subtle ways the appearance ideal is perpetuated.

For example:

- 1. Complimenting others on weight loss.*
- 2. Joining in when friends complain about their bodies*
- 3. Talking about weight loss diets.*

Can you think of some other ways you or others promote the appearance ideal without knowing it?

*Pull the **Body Talk List** from your packet.*

Here are some common things we might say or hear others say.

How do these statements keep the appearance ideal going?

What can you say to stop this sort of talk? Or, how can you at least change the subject?

How do you think changing the way you talk about your body might impact how you feel about your body and how others respond to you?

On that note, why do you think 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 we'd like to do a little practice with these, so we'll go around the room and have each of you respond to two of the statements in a way that signals you do not approve of the pro-appearance ideal statement.

Role-play so that each participant responds to a comment that signals her disapproval of two pro-appearance ideal statements from the handout.

Help participants become more aware of the ways in which they can begin to promote more healthy attitudes about their bodies.

V. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

For your first home exercise, we would like to ask you to do a mini report on various ways in which the mass media promotes the appearance ideal. Please spend some time researching this topic on the Internet and write a "news flash" report of bullet points to give next session. You can focus on a wide variety of topics, such as photo touch-ups used in magazines, image alternation used in movies, the thin actor bias for TV and movies, and the stereotypes of obese individuals propagated by the mass media.

*Pull the **Media Misrepresentation News Flash Form** from your packet (exercise #7).*

Second, we would like you to recruit 3 friends to participate in the Body Project program. Feel free to tell them a tiny bit about the program, but leaving your description vague enough so that they are able to learn a great deal once they participate in the Body Project groups. Do your best to find 3 friends that would be interested in the groups, could benefit from our discussions and would be willing to sign up.

We will talk about how your recruiting of 3 friends goes next session.

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

Do a news flash report on media misrepresentation; recruit three friends.

Thanks for coming this week. We were very impressed by your level of participation in the group!

SESSION 5

Prep: Email/call/text each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials: Video camera or voice recorder

Topic Areas:

- I. Appearance ideal News Flash Debriefing
- II. Recruitment Debriefing
- III. Group Body Activism at Your School
- III. Future Pressures to be Thin
- IV. Home Exercise Assignment

Session 1 Overview: The focus of Session 5 is to discuss participants' experiences with the appearance ideal news flash and recruitment exercises. It focuses on how to respond to future pressures to conform to the appearance ideal and assigns the group body activism at your school exercise and the mirror exercise round two.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

On point leader: _____

Start video camera.

Thanks for coming. Is each of you willing to actively participate today?

II. MEDIA APPEARANCE IDEAL PROMOTION NEWS FLASH DEBRIEFING (14 MINS)

Last week we asked you to write a bullet notes news flash regarding the various ways in which the mass media promotes the appearance ideal. We would like to ask each of you to read/explain your news flash bullets to the group.

Make separate recordings of each so that they can post if they wish.

Were any of you surprised by what you learned? Did this exercise change how you view the media?

Collect home exercise #7. Make sure participants write their names on it and sign it.

III. RECRUITMENT DEBRIEFING (5 MINS)

Last time we also asked you to recruit 3 friends to sign up and participate in the Body Project groups. How did that go?

Ask the group to present how they recruited three friends and whether they were successful.

How did it feel to ask others to challenge the appearance ideal and participate in these groups?

Collect home exercise #8. Make sure participants write name on form and sign.

IV. GROUP BODY ACTIVISM AT YOUR SCHOOL (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

We would like to ask you to come up with some sort of group body activism activity that you can do to affect people at your school. Social change is a powerful tool to promote broader body acceptance. We suspect that each of you know students at your school with body image concerns who did not sign up for this body acceptance class.

What types of things could you do as a group to promote body acceptance in other students at this school (state name of school)?

Let students brainstorm. Offer suggestions below as necessary.

Here are a few examples:

- *Put up a “love your body” or “beauty comes in all forms” sign or post it notes in the bathrooms.*
- *Make a commitment with your broader social group to compliment others regarding their appearance (e.g., your hair looks great today or I really like that shirt) on a certain day at your school.*
- *Make a commitment to your broader social group to give non-appearance related compliments (e.g., you are such a good friend).*
- *Make an “I Pledge to be Body Positive” banner, hang it in the hallway and have classmates sign the pledge.*
- *Hang up signs about the damaging effects of appearance-related teasing.*
- *Make a commitment with your broader social group to have a “body-talk free week” or a pact to try and end body talk all together.*

V. FUTURE PRESSURES TO CONFORM TO THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (10 MINS)

Can each person think of one example of a future pressure to conform to the appearance ideal that might occur? It is often helpful to think of how to respond to such pressures before they happen.

Have participants discuss ideas of possible future pressures (graduation, spring break, summer)

Can each of you think of two examples of future pressure to conform to the appearance ideal and then generate a way to respond to these pressures? Some examples might be: job hunting, summer vacation, wedding, pregnancy.

We will go around the room to hear your 2 anticipated pressures to conform to the appearance ideal and how you might respond. I'll start...

Have participants identify 2 future pressures to conform to the appearance ideal that are personally relevant, and state one way to respond to each of those future pressures.

VI. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

For your first home exercise, we would like you to write another letter to a younger girl telling her how to avoid developing body image concerns. Use the information you have learned in these sessions, and any additional ways you may think of on your own. The goal is to help her understand the things she can do, say, avoid, or learn that will help her develop or maintain a positive body image. You could send this letter, via regular mail or e-mail, to the actual person if you are willing.

*Pull the **Letter to Younger Girl Form: Avoiding Body Image Concerns** from your packet (Exercise # 9).*

As your second home exercise, we would like you to do the mirror exercise like you did after our first group session. Hopefully, after going through the group sessions, you will recognize more positive things about yourselves. As you did last time, we would like you to stand in front of a mirror with as little clothing as possible and write down at least 15 positive qualities you are satisfied with. Your list should include some physical and some emotional, intellectual, or social qualities.

We know it can be hard, but please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list. We would also like you to list as many qualities as possible that are different than those that you listed last time. Past participants have said that this exercise becomes easier each time you do it. We as leaders are also going to do this exercise again, because it is such a good exercise.

*Pull the **Mirror Exercise Round 2 Form** from your packet (Exercise # 10).*

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

Do a group act of body activism at your school; write a letter to a younger girl about avoiding body image concerns; do the mirror exercise.

Thanks for coming this week. We were very impressed by your level of participation in the group.

SESSION 6

Prep: E-mail/call/text each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials: Video camera or voice recorder

Topic Areas:

- I. Letter to Young Girl Debriefing
- II. Mirror Exercise Round 2 Debriefing
- III. Discussing Benefits of Body Acceptance and Closure
- IV. Exit Self-Affirmation Exercise

Session 1 Overview: The focus of Session 6 is to debrief the letter to younger girl and mirror exercise round 2 home exercises, discuss the benefits of body acceptance and closure of the group, and assign an exit self-affirmation exercise.

I. GROUP ACT OF BODY ACTIVISM AT THEIR SCHOOL DEBRIEFING (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Start video camera.

Thanks for coming to this last session.

How did the group act of body activism at your school go?

Did you talk with people outside the group about this activity?

II. LETTER TO YOUNG GIRL: AVOIDING BODY IMAGE CONCERNS DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked you to write a letter to a younger girl about how to avoid developing body image concerns. How did that go?

Let's go around the room and have each of you read your letter.

Record each student reading letter so they can post if they wish.

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

Are you willing to send this letter to the person to whom you wrote it?

Collect home exercise #9, unless they want to send it to the person. Make sure participants write their names on it and sign it.

III. MIRROR EXERCISE ROUND 2 DEBRIEFING (10 MINS).

Last week we asked you to stand in front of a mirror and list 15 positive qualities. We are going to go around the group so each of us can share 1 physical and 1 emotional quality we are satisfied with. Please choose different qualities than the ones you told us during your first mirror exercise. For instance, if you told us you liked your eyes last time, please tell us another physical quality like your strong legs or your height. Who would like to start?

Each participant shares 1 physical and 1 emotional quality.

How did it feel to do the mirror exercise for a second time?

Did you notice other positive qualities that you didn't recognize during your first attempt?

Collect home exercise #10. Make sure participants write their names on it and sign it.

IV. DISCUSSION OF BENEFITS OF BODY ACCEPTANCE AND GROUP CLOSURE (15 MINS)

On point leader: _____

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?

Have you noticed that you feel differently about your own body?

Do you think this group has affected how you feel when you interact with people?

What do you feel you have gotten out of this class?

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

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.

IX. EXIT SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISE (5 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 a friend or family member and discuss one thing you like about yourself.*
2. *Keep a journal of all the good things your body allows you to do (e.g., sleep well and wake up rested, play tennis, hug the people you love, etc.).*
3. *Pick a 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 one of these ideas (or one of your own) and do it sometime 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.

*Pull the **Self-Affirmation Form** from your packet (Exercise #11).*

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

Time permitting**:

***We like to end sessions by giving everyone a chance to say one last thing. Can everyone tell me something that “worked for you” in these sessions, “hit home” or even something that you just liked**?*

End by saying:

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!

Thanks for your genuine participation in this group. We hope each of you feels like it was worth your time and that perhaps you can share what you got out of this group with your friends.

Name:

Signature:

Session One, Exercise #2: Mirror Exercise Form

Please stand in front of a mirror and look at yourself and write down some of 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.



Name:

Signature:

Session Two, Exercise #3: Verbal Challenge Form

Please provide at least 5 examples from your real life concerning pressures to conform to the appearance ideal that you have encountered and then come up with verbal challenges, like we did in the role-plays.

Here are some examples of appearance ideal statements:

1. A boyfriend might say that he thinks the ideal dress size is a 2.
2. Your mom might comment on how another mom has really let herself go because she gained some weight.
3. A friend could say that she wished she looked like a particular supermodel when looking over a fashion magazine.

How could you respond to these comments to indicate that you do not agree with the appearance- ideal and think these sorts of comments are unhealthy?

Please come up with at least five examples from your life. These examples probably won't be how you actually responded to the pressure. Instead, they should be how you might respond *now* based on what you know about the appearance ideal.

1) *Situation:*

Verbal Response:

2) *Situation:*

Verbal Response:

3) *Situation:*

Verbal Response:

4) *Situation:*

Verbal Response:

5) *Situation:*

Verbal Response:

Name:

Signature:

Session Two, Exercise #4: 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 #5: Behavioral Exercise Form

We would like to challenge each of you to do something 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. Please do this at least once in the next week. We would like each of you to do two behavioral challenges and then let us know during the next session how it turned out. Please take a moment to think of something you would like to do but haven't done yet. You may wish to write your behavioral goal down on this page to remind yourself of it.

Name:

Signature:

Session Three, Exercise #6: 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.

Session Four Handout: Body Talk List

We've discussed obvious pressures to conform to an appearance ideal that we encounter on a regular basis from the media, friends, and family members. However, the appearance ideal is also perpetuated by our everyday conversations.

Below is a list of common things we often say or might hear others say.

1. How does each of these statements keep the appearance ideal going?
 2. What can you do differently?
 3. How do you think changing the way you talk about your body might impact how you feel about your body and how others respond to you?
-
- . 1) I'm so fat.
 - . 2) I need to lose ten pounds.
 - . 3) Do I look fat in this?
 - . 4) You think you're fat? Look at me!
 - . 5) Gee, you look great. Have you lost weight?
 - . 6) I can't eat that - it will make me fat.
 - . 7) I'm way too fat to be eating this.
 - . 8) I'm too fat to get into a bathing suit.
 - . 9) She's too fat to be wearing those pants.
 - . 10) She's a little bit too heavy to be dating that guy.
 - . 11) You're so thin, how do you do it?
 - . 12) Can you believe how much she's let herself go?
 - . 13) I've really been doing well on this diet, you should try it...
 - . 14) You'd be so pretty if you lost weight.
 - . 15) Wow, look at the big butt on that girl!

Name:

Signature:

**Session Six, Exit Exercise #11:
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 text or email.