SESSION 1

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

Materials: Pictures of models from fashion magazines
Whiteboard or flip chart
Markers
Video camera

Topic Areas: I. Introduction
II. Group Rules and Expectations
III. Definition of the Thin-ideal
IV. Costs of Pursuing the Thin-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 thin-ideal, and costs associated with pursuing the thin-ideal. The importance of attendance and completing the home exercises is also stressed.

I. INTRODUCTION (5 MINS)

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 “beauty-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 to reduce unhealthy weight gain and eating problems.

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

Turn on video camera now. If anyone does not want to be filmed, have them sit outside the field of view.

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’ll go first...

Group leaders should spend a few moments with each participant to elicit specific information and show interest (e.g., What kind of paintings do you do?).
II. VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT AND OVERVIEW (2 MINS)

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. Are 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 sessions we will:*

1. **Define the thin-ideal**
2. Examine the costs of pursuing this ideal
3. Explore ways to resist pressures to be thin
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 be thin

**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 THIN-IDEAL (15 MINS)

Spread out pictures of models from magazines on the table. (There should be about three pictures for each participant.)

*I would like each of you to choose two pictures that appeal to you.*

*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?).

*Write down* physical features from each participant on the whiteboard/posterboard. Leave this on the board for the entire session.

*What do these pictures tell us about what society thinks a beautiful women looks like?*

Pose questions to the group and promote participation and collaboration on their responses. Promoting discussion is key—let participants do the talking. (Thin and attractive, have a perfect...
body, toned, large-chested, tall, look like a super-model.) Focus the discussion on the thin part of the thin-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 new features to the list on the whiteboard or posterboard.

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

The thin-ideal is not the same as the healthy-ideal. With the thin-ideal, people use extreme measures to look like a supermodel, including some very unhealthy weight control behaviors. The goal of the thin-ideal is to achieve thinness that is neither realistic or 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 feels and works.

Where did the thin ideal come from?

Media, fashion industry, diet/weight loss industry.

How do we learn about the thin-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 thin-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 thin-ideal?

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

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

Do you really think these good things happen if you get thinner?

No, they will likely have little impact.
Please do not describe (or allow participants to discuss) the benefits of thinness in general or give the impression that the thin-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 thin-ideal).

IV. COSTS OF PURSING THE THIN-IDEAL (20 MINS)

We’ve discussed the thin-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 thin-ideal for women/girls?

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 costs for society?

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

Who benefits from the thin-ideal?

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

Are you one of the people who benefit from the thin-ideal?

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

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

No!

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

V. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT (5 MINS)

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 thin 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. We are going to record you reading the letter, and then, if you want, we can post your video on our group website (read web address: www.ori.org/bodyacceptanceletters) or you can post it yourself on YouTube, Facebook, Myspace, etc. We will have a digital camera to record the readings, but you can bring your own camera/phone to record your reading if you prefer.
Pull the **Letter to A Younger Girl Form: Costs of the Thin-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.

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 their own words?

Write letter to younger girl about costs of pursing the thin idea; 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.

*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
Digital camera/cell phone

Topic Areas:
I. Letter to a Younger Girl Exercise Debriefing
II. Self-Affirmation 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 thin-ideal.

Start video camera.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

*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 thin-ideal.*

*I would like to get a video clip of you reading your letter so you can post it either on our group website or on your personal YouTube, Facebook, Myspace, etc accounts.*

Have each participant read her letter. Record with a separate camera or their cell phones so you can generate short individual video clips for participants. NOTE: For confidentiality purposes, it is important to make sure that the participant reading the letter is the ONLY person in the video.

*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 post your written letter and the recording of you reading the letter, along with your name, on a website maintained by the research team (web address: www.ori.org/bodyacceptanceletters). Allowing your name, letter,
and video to be posted to the website is completely optional. You are also encouraged to post it on your personal YouTube, Facebook, Myspace, etc. accounts.

Record the name of anyone who does not want their letter or video posted. Post the rest after the session.

III. SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISE DEBRIEFSING (10 MINS)

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

What are two aspects of yourself that you are satisfied with, including a physical feature?

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 thin-ideal surrounds you. Given that these are potent pressures – let’s discuss ways to resist them.

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

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 thin ideal (do two role plays if necessary). Parrot, or echo back, any pro thin-ideal comments previously made by participants while you are playing a thin-ideal role. Focus on the unrealistic benefits of the thin-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 thin-ideal. Be difficult to persuade, but it is OK to be playful with this exercise.

Now let’s review some examples of thin ideal statements and practice how one could respond to them. I will play a person that is obsessed with the thin-ideal and your job will be to convince me that I shouldn’t be. Use any of the costs of pursuing the thin ideal that we identified 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.”
- An anorexic 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 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 talk like this.”
• “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.”

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 thin-ideal statements?

Promote discussion on why it is helpful to speak out against pressure to conform to the thin-ideal. Let participants come up with the arguments.

**V. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT (4 MINS)**

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 be thin. Then, we would like you to come up with a verbal challenge to each pressure, just like we did in the role-plays.

*Let’s 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 thin-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 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 thin-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 thin-ideal. So unlike the verbal challenge form in which you challenge the thin-ideal at the individual level, we are asking how you can challenge the thin-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 thin-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”
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 thin-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

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 thin-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 thin-ideal.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

Start video camera.

Thanks for coming. Are 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 MIN)

The first exercise asked you to provide examples from your life of pressures to be thin 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.

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 THIN-IDEAL STATEMENTS (12 MIN)

Last week we asked you to talk someone out of pursuing the thin-ideal in an extended role-play. This week we are going to practice a different strategy – to challenge “thin-ideal” statements with a quick comeback. Your goal is simply to derail the fat talk. You might do this by pointing out a cost of pursuing the “thin-ideal”, or you might just end the fat talk all together.
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 ruminate about appearance issues like that.”

Role-play using counter thin-ideal statements to resist pressure from peers. Ask each participant to generate counter thin-ideal statements in response to statements that leaders generate. Go around the circle twice. Sample statements:

- Lindsay has really gained weight over the holidays.
- Spring break is coming up so I’m going on a diet, do you want to join me?
- Don’t you think Jennifer Lopez is a little too heavy?
- She’s too fat to be wearing those pants.
- 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.
- Only skinny girls get asked out by boys.
- She really doesn’t have the body to be wearing that outfit.
- I really wish I had the body of a supermodel
- I wish I could get a tummy-tuck.
- Does this dress make me look fat?
- I am thinking of becoming vegan because I hear it helps you lose weight.
- You are so thin, how do you do it?
- I don’t want anyone to see me without my make-up on.
- You think you’re fat? Look at me!
- Do I look fat in this?
- I’m way to fat to be eating this.
- I’m so fat.

Role play debriefing

Do you think you could challenge your friend and family if they make thin-ideal statements?

Encourage discussion.

V. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE (10 MINS)

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
• Wearing a jog bra without a top over it during workouts
• Not wearing make-up
• Going to the gym
● Revealing a part of your body, such as your feet, 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)

The second exercise from last session asked you to list 10 things that girls/women could do to resist the thin-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 saying “you look great the way you are” into weight loss books at a bookstore.
2. Put up a “love your body” poster in the girls’ restrooms at school.
3. Hang body acceptance fliers around campus.
4. 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.
5. Put “love your body” fliers on cars
6. Use white shoe polish to write “accept your body” on your car window.
7. Make and give away “you are beautiful” buttons or stickers.
8. Share an anti-thin-ideal video on Facebook
9. You could make a “stuff people say” about body image concerns video, put on YouTube

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

Topic Areas:
I. Behavioral Challenge Debriefing
II. Body Activism Debriefing
III. Challenging Fat 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 thin-ideal.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

Start video camera now.

*Thanks for coming. Are each of you willing to participate verbally in today’s session?*

II. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE DEBRIEFING (15 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 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 (15 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.

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

**Would you consider doing another act of body activism?**

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 FAT TALK ROLE PLAY (10 MINS)**

*We’ve discussed obvious pressures to be thin 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 thin-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 thin-ideal without knowing it?**

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

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

**How do these statements keep the thin-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?**

Now we’d just 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-thin-ideal statement.

Role-play so that each participant responds to a comment that signals her disapproval of one pro-thin-ideal statement 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)**

*For your first home exercise, we would like to ask you to do a one-minute report on various ways in which the mass media promotes the thin-ideal. Please spend some time researching this topic on the Internet and write a “news flash” report 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 do one form of “body activism” as a group. This could consist of writing a letter that you all sign and send it to a magazine or company that promotes the thin-ideal. Alternatively, you could all make a pledge to not watch a show that glorifies thinness (e.g., *Sex in the City*) and send a co-signed note to the producers stating this. Are there any ideas about what could be done?

*Which activity sounds best to the group?*

Would someone be willing to be the leader of this and make sure it happens? We’d like to hear what you decide to do as a group.

Select one or two group members to be leaders.

*Pull the Group Body Activism Form from your packet (exercise #8).*

Identify a tentative group-based activity and a leader for this group exercise.

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

Do a news flash report on media misrepresentation; do a group act of body activism.

*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

Topic Areas:
I. Thin-Ideal News Flash Debriefing
II. Group Body Activism Debriefing
III. Group Body Activism at Your School
IV. Future Pressures to be Thin
V. Home Exercise Assignment

Session 1 Overview: The focus of Session 5 is to discuss participants’ experiences with the thin-ideal news flash and group body activism exercises. It focuses on how to respond to future pressures to be thin and assigns the group body activism at your school exercise and the eating disorder news flash exercise.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (1 MIN)

Start video camera.

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

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

Last week we asked you to write a news flash regarding the various ways in which the mass media promotes the thin-ideal. We would like to ask each of you to read these news flashes 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. GROUP BODY ACTIVISM DEBRIEFING (5 MINS)

Last time we also asked you to do group body activism exercise. How did that go?

Ask the group to present on what they did collectively.

How did it feel to act together to challenge the thin-ideal?

Collect home exercise #8. Make sure participants write name on form and sign.
IV. GROUP BODY ACTIVISM AT YOUR SCHOOL (10 MINS)

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 in the bathroom.
- 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.
- Hang up signs about the damaging effects of appearance-related teasing.
- Make a commitment with your broader social group to have a “fat-talk free week.”

V. FUTURE PRESSURES TO BE THIN (10 MINS)

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

Can each of you think of two examples of future pressure to be thin 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 anticipated pressures to be thin and how you might respond.

VI. HOME EXERCISE ASSIGNMENT (5 MINS)

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. 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).

For your second home exercise, we would like to ask you to do a “new flash” report on the negative effects of eating disorders. Please write up a one-minute presentation that highlights a few negative effects of having an eating disorder. You can choose anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, or another eating disorder.
Does anyone know what the symptoms are for anorexia nervosa?

How about bulimia nervosa?

And what about binge eating disorder?

Pull the Consequences of Eating Disorder New Flash 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 a new flash report on a negative consequence of an eating disorder.

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

Topic Areas: I. Letter to Young Girl Debriefing
II. Consequences of Eating Disorders 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 consequences of eating disorders news flash 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)

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 your 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. CONSEQUENCES OF EATING DISORDER NEWS FLASH DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked you to write a news flash regarding negative consequences of eating disorders. We would like to ask each of you to read these news flashes to the group.
Make separate recordings of each so that they can post if they wish.

Were you surprised at what you learned? Has this exercise changed how you feel about eating disorders?

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)

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?

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.

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., do a long hike, play tennis well, 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.

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

We also 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.

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.
Session One, Exercise #1
Letter to a Younger Girl

Please write a two page letter to a younger girl who is struggling with body image concerns about the costs associated with pursuing the thin ideal. Think of as many costs as you can. Feel free to work with a friend or family member in generating ideas or use any of the ones we discussed in the group. Please bring this letter to our next meeting so we can discuss your responses and feelings about this assignment.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Self-Affirmation 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 Two, Exercise #3:  
Verbal Challenge Form

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

Here are some examples of thin-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 thin-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 thin-ideal.

1) Situation:

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Verbal Response:

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2) Situation:

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Verbal Response:

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
3) Situation:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Verbal Response:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4) Situation:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Verbal Response:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5) Situation:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Verbal Response:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Session Two, Exercise #4: Top-10 List Form

Please generate a top-10 list of things girls/women can do to resist the thin-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.
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.
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 thin-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:  
Fat Talk List

We’ve discussed obvious pressures to be thin that we encounter on a regular basis from the media, friends, and family members. However, the thin-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 thin-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!
Session Four, Exercise #7:  
Media Misrepresentation News Flash

Please work on a 1-minute report on various ways in which the mass media promotes the thin-ideal. Please spend some time doing research on this topic on the Internet and write a “news flash” report 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.
Session Four, Exit Exercise #8:  
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 thin-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:
Session Five, Exercise #9:
Letter to a Younger Girl

Please write another letter to a younger girl (approx. three pages) telling her how to avoid developing body image concerns. Use any of the information you have learned in these session, and any additional ways you may think of on your own. The goal is to help her understand the different things she can do, say, avoid, or learn that will help her develop or maintain a positive body image.
Session Five, Exercise #10: Consequences of Eating Disorder News Flash

Please write another “news flash” report on the negative effects of eating disorders. Please write up a 1-minute presentation that highlights a few negative effects of having an eating disorder. You can choose anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, or another eating disorder.
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 email.
Female students are invited to participate in a program designed to improve body image and promote body acceptance!

Be happy with your body

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email: Phone:

Female students are invited to participate in a program designed to improve body image and promote body acceptance!

Be happy with your body

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email: Phone: