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The Body Project Script
Peer-Leader, Universal, 2 Session Version

Carolyn Black Becker, Eric Stice, Paul Rohde & Heather Shaw

(Edits by Alan Duffy)

Note: This script was designed for implementation in a universal population, although it can be implemented with selective populations if a university campus wants to use one manual in multiple situations that range from universal to selective. Peers are the planned leaders and they act as coping models in this version of the Body Project. For this version, we recommend three peer leaders lead the group. Please do not implement with peer leaders if you have not received training in how to train peer leaders.

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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: Flip chart (or whiteboard)
Markers
Video camera or audio-recorder
Handouts for
a) Costs Activity
b) Verbal Challenge Form
c) Fat Talk Handout
d) Behavioral Challenge Form
e) Letter to a Younger Girl
f) Mirror Exercise

Topic Areas:

- I. Introduction
- II. Voluntary Commitment and Overview
- III. Definition of the Appearance Ideal
- IV. Costs Associated with the Appearance Ideal
- V. Engage participants in the Verbal Challenge
- VI. Explore Fat Talk
- VII. Behavioral Challenge
- VIII. Home Exercises

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

I. INTRODUCTION AND ICEBREAKER (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Thanks for coming. We thought we would start by introducing ourselves and letting you know who we are and why we signed on as peer leaders to lead this program. I'll start.

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

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

Fill in the blank with video or audio in the script depending on what is being used. Turn on video or audio recorder at this point. If using a video recording and anyone does not want to be filmed, have them sit outside the field of view. Have any waivers required signed by your institution if necessary.

The group leader begins by introducing herself/himself 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? Who would like to start?

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

On point leader: _____

Okay, let's warm up to our topic using an icebreaker that we have. It is called "My Biggest Body Image Pet Peeve." In this icebreaker, each of us will describe our biggest pet peeve with either the media or the 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 women vary so much according to brand. Or someone else might say that her biggest pet peeve is the way editors touch up photos in magazines so that we never get to see a real person.

I will start and then we will go around the room. My biggest pet peeve is....

II. VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT AND OVERVIEW (2 MINS)

Soliciting voluntary commitment to participating in the class

People get the most out of these groups if they attend both 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 two sessions we will:

1. *Define the appearance ideal and explore its origin*
2. *Examine the costs of pursuing this ideal*
3. *Explore ways to resist pressures to conform to an appearance ideal*
4. *Discuss how to challenge our personal 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 an appearance ideal*

Attendance

It is important that everyone attends both meetings. If you need to miss next session, please let one of us know as soon as you know that you are going to be gone. We will schedule a make-up session with you so you will be caught up with everyone else.

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

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

On point leader: _____

Scribe: _____

Now we are going to define the appearance ideal for women to understand exactly what we are discussing. What are we told that the “perfect woman” looks like? 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.

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 is.....

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

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

Cross out phrase “Perfect Woman” and write “Appearance Ideal” on the board.

On point leader: _____

Now, before we discuss the appearance ideal further, it is important to contrast this appearance ideal with the healthy ideal because they are not the same thing. With the appearance ideal, people go to extreme measures to look like a supermodel, including some very unhealthy weight control behaviors and excessive exercise. The goal of the appearance ideal is to attain a physique 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.

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

No, differs with differing times.

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

Where did appearance ideals come from?

Media, fashion industry, diet/weight loss industry

How is the appearance ideal promoted to us?

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

On point leader: _____

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

How did that make you feel?

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

How do appearance ideal messages from the media impact the way you feel about your body? Let's go around the group on this question. Who would like to start?

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

How much computer touching-up or airbrushing do magazines do in order to make their cover photos reflect and perpetuate the appearance ideal? Let's go around the group on this one.

Discuss with the group the various ways fashion and celebrity photos can be retouched (e.g., eyes can be made wider, bags under the eyes can be removed, necks can be made longer, thighs can be made slimmer or more muscular, getting rid of wrinkles, increasing definition of muscles, increasing symmetry, etc.).

Also explain that sometimes photos are retouched to make very thin models who also look sickly (e.g., lank hair, dull eyes and skin, jutting bones) look healthier. This creates a misleading impression of health for some models who are not healthy.

Let's talk a little more about that. How does it make you feel to know that the women who are commonly considered the "most beautiful women in the world" are touched up and, in other words, not attractive enough?

Now think for a moment about the photo editors who do the touching up and decide what the ideal is. Do you think they personally meet this standard?

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

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

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

Will coming closer to this ideal really makes 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 other 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 ASSOCIATED WITH PURSUING THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (25 MINS)

On point leader: _____

We've discussed the appearance ideal and where it comes from – now let's think about the costs of this ideal. We would like you to take 7-8 minutes to come up with a list of the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal. Please think first about costs to individual women who try to pursue the appearance ideal. Then, when you can't think of any more ideas, think about the collective costs to our campus if we try to pursue the appearance ideal. What are the costs to us as a group? Please try to think of as many costs as you can and use all the time we give you to brainstorm.

Hand out **Costs of the Appearance Ideal** form. Allow approximately 7-8 minutes for this exercise. When participants have completed their lists, go around the group and ask group members to share their thoughts. Scribe will write these on the board under each section below (**individual costs, costs to our campus, society costs**).

*The blank space in the above question should be filled in with the most salient collective group for the group members. E.g. university; residence hall; sorority.

Scribe: _____

What are the costs of trying to look like the appearance ideal for the individual person? Let's go around the group once so everyone can share 2 things from your list. Our scribe will put these up on the board for us.

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

What costs do you have for us collectively as a group of women at [Insert University or College Name]_____.

Fill in the blank line with a collective to which the participants all belong such as “at our university” “in our sorority” “in our residence hall.” Put list up on board.

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

Put list up on board. Increased mental health care costs, promotes a culture of discontent. Impairs women’s and girls’ ability to contribute to our society as much as possible and prevents them from fully leading their lives.

On point leader: _____

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

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

Are you becoming a multi-millionaire as a result of the appearance ideal? In other words, did you develop the latest popular diet program or fad exercise gimmick?

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 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. VERBAL CHALLENGE EXERCISE (15 MINUTES)

On point leader: _____

Now we would like to ask you to do a different type of exercise. Come up with three examples from your real life concerning pressures to conform to an appearance ideal that you have encountered. Think about how you responded to the pressure at that time, and then think of some verbal challenges to these pressures, or in other words, ways you could have responded to that pressure to indicate that you do not agree with the appearance ideal.

First, let's run through an example together verbally as a group, before we start writing on our own.

For example, your mom might comment on how a friend has really let herself go because she gained weight. Your friend is thinner than you and this made you think you need to lose weight as well.

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?

Get general responses.

We want to emphasize that the verbal challenges do not reflect how you actually responded to the pressures in the past, but rather how you ideally would respond now.

Hand out **Verbal Challenge** form.

Please take a few minutes to write down your own personal examples from a time when you felt pressured to pursue the appearance ideal. Then, write down the way you would respond to them now, given what we have discussed today.

On point leader: _____

Okay. Now we are going to go around the group so that each of us can share one of our examples. You may find it easiest to tell us what happened and then say, "In hindsight what I would say now in that situation is....." I'll start us off as an example.

VI. CHALLENGING BODY TALK (15 MINS)

On point leader: _____

We've spent a lot of time discussing the obvious pressures to conform to an appearance ideal that we encounter on a regular basis from the media, friends, and family. However, sometimes we put ourselves or others under pressure to try to attain this appearance ideal. We often do not notice some of the more subtle ways the appearance ideal keeps going.

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

Possible responses include complimenting others' weight loss, commenting on what or how much you are eating, complaining about your body, and talking about celebrities who are either very thin or look as though they have gained weight.

Here is a handout of statements women commonly make. These statements are all forms of fat talk. Please take a moment to read these statements to yourself.

Hand out **Fat Talk List** form.

Fat Talk List

1. I wish I could be as skinny as you!
2. Do I look fat in this?
3. You look amazing! How much weight have you lost?
4. No one will date me if I don't drop a few pounds.
5. You think you're fat? Look at my love handles!
6. Did you see the girl he is dating? She's such a whale.
7. She totally shouldn't be wearing those pants! Her butt is huge.
8. I look disgusting at this weight.
9. I'm so fat.
10. She has gained so much weight since last semester.
11. I'm trying to get rid of everything that jiggles, except my boobs.
12. I think I'm going to try that new diet. Do it with me; you could afford to drop a few.
13. Buy it a size smaller, it'll be good motivation for you.
14. My thighs are so big.
15. I am too fat to wear a swimsuit.
16. I hate my flat chest.

How do these statements keep the appearance ideal going?

How would your feelings towards your own body change if you were to stop talking this way?

If you stopped saying statements on this list, how would it affect others around you?

Now we are going to play a mini-role-play game to practice responses to fat talk. I'll say a fat talk statement to each of you, and you will respond to show me you don't agree with my fat talk. We'll go around the group twice. Okay, here we go....

VII. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Now we'll do another type of exercise.

Can you think of things you do not do because of body image concerns? For instance, when I did this program originally, I was reluctant to _____ . Let's now go around the room so all of us can share one thing that we avoid doing (or feel we have to do) because of body image concerns. Who would like to start?

Examples include wearing certain clothes, going specific places, etc. Peer leaders can give an example from when they first did the program or can say – Although it is a lot better now, I still find it a bit challenging to do _____.

Are you willing to do an experiment to help you feel better about your bodies?

Get head nods; general yes.

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.

Let me give you some more examples to consider....

Leaders can skip reading examples that were raised in the discussion above.

- *Wearing shorts to school*

- *Going to the pool in a swimsuit*
- *Wear shorts or a swimsuit in public and sit down and let your thighs spread (yes it is normal for them to do that).*
- *Exercising in public or when wearing form fitting exercise clothes*
- *Wearing a form-fitting shirt or a tank top to the mall/dinner/library*
- *Wearing your hair up*
- *Not straightening your hair if you think straight hair makes you look thinner*
- *Wearing a sports bra without a top over it during workouts*
- *Not wearing make-up, particularly when going somewhere when you would usually wear make-up.*
- *Going to the gym*
- *Revealing a part of your body, such as your feet or somewhere with a scar or birthmark, that you tend to cover up*
- *Stop mirror or body checking. If you constantly check the mirror to make sure you are okay, don't do it. Or if you frequently check some part of your body – like making sure your stomach is sucked in – stop.*

Can you promise to do one item on this list or one example from the group sharing at least twice in the next week?

Get at least a head nod from everyone.

On point leader: _____

Great. We would like each of you to do this as a challenge and then let us know during the next session how it went. Please take a moment to think of something you would like to do but haven't done yet and write it down on your handout.

Hand out the **Behavioral Exercise** form.

Now, let's go around the room and quickly share our plans so that we can be supportive to one another this week. I'm going to do the same activity I did last time, because I think it is helpful to keep doing these things since appearance ideal messages constantly surround us. So I'll start.....

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

Have each participant come up with 2 behavioral challenges that they will do in the next week.

Peer-leaders will help participants select challenges that are appropriate and that they will be able to do in the next week (e.g., do not select “wear a swimsuit to an outdoor pool” if it’s winter).

V. HOME EXERCISES AND WRAP UP (10 MINS)

Group participants are told about the home-exercises for next session:

Now that we have begun discussing costs of the appearance ideal, 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 an appearance ideal?

Get general head nods.

Think of as many costs as you can, and feel free to work with others to come up with ideas.

Please bring this letter to our next meeting so you can read it and we can discuss your feelings about writing it. I really encourage you to do this exercise because (make a statement about why you found this helpful). In fact, because we’ve found this so helpful before, each of us as group leaders will also be writing letters this week to share with the group.

Hand out the **Letter to a Younger Girl** form.

On point leader: _____

Second, we would like to ask you to stand in front of a mirror with as little clothing as possible and write down at least 15 positive qualities. This includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities. For instance, you may like the shape of your arms, the strength of your legs, your long dark hair, the sound of your laugh, or the fact that you are a good friend.

We know it can be hard, but please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list. Don’t forget that sometimes we like body parts because of the ways we look, but other times we like them because of what they allow us to do.

For example, you may say, “I really like the shape of my hips,” or “I love to dance and I appreciate that my legs help me dance well.” You might also like your sense of humor or the way you care about other people or your positive attitude towards life.

It may be difficult at first, but we really want you to do this because it is important to recognize each of these areas about yourself. Past participants have found this exercise to be very helpful and empowering. Also, we recommend that you wear something as revealing as possible while doing this so that you can actually see your body.

Again, please do complete this exercise because it is really helpful. When I did this exercise for the first time, I really enjoyed it because (make a testimonial statement here to encourage participants to complete this exercise). We are also going to do this exercise again this week, because it is such a good exercise.

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

Hand out the **Mirror Exercise** form.

OK, can someone tell me what the home exercises are for this week in their 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. We 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 please feel free to talk about them with others between group sessions.

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 this session, “hit home” or even something that you just liked**?*

End by saying:

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

SESSION 2

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 or audio recorder
Digital camera/cell phone
Handouts for

- a) Body Activism Form
- b) Future Body Activism Form
- c) Self-Affirmation Exercise Form
- d) Letter to a Younger Girl Form

Topic Areas:

- I. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment
- II. Letter to a Younger Girl Exercise Debriefing
- III. Mirror Exercise Debriefing
- IV. Behavioral Challenge Debriefing
- V. Role Play: Discourage Pursuit of the Appearance ideal
- VI. Body Activism
- VII. Future Pressures to Conform to an Appearance ideal
- VIII. Quick Comebacks
- IX. Discussion of Benefits of Group
- X. Self-Affirmation Exercise
- XI. Home Exercises
- XII. Closure

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

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (2 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Thanks for coming to Session 2. Is each of you willing to actively participate in today's session? Let's go around the group again – I'll start....

Go around the room and get a verbal affirmation that they are willing to actively participate. Turn on video camera now.

II. LETTER RECORDING AND DEBRIEFING (20 MINS)

Last week 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. Who would like to start?

Have each participant read her letter. For those who are interested, record with a group leader's cell phone or participant cell phones so you can generate short individual video clips for participants. It can be fun for individual campuses to create a page for these videos. NOTE: For confidentiality purposes, it is important to make sure that the participant reading the letter is the ONLY person in the video.

Everyone clearly spent a lot of time writing these letters and did a great job on them. Please hand them in - be sure your name and signature are on them! If you want to keep your letter, take a quick photo of it with your phone.

Collect **Letter to a Younger Girl** form. 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 encourage you to post a copy of your letter on Facebook or another social media site.

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

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

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

Now we are going to go around the group so that each of us can state one aspect of ourselves that we are satisfied with. If you can, please try to pick harder aspects versus easier ones. For example, if you like your smile and your hips, say "I like

my hips” because we’ll all get more out of this activity this way. I’ll start, I like my.....

Go around the group.

Okay, now let’s do that again. If you gave a physical quality last time, give an emotional quality this time. And if you gave an emotional quality last time, give a physical one this time. Who wants to start this round?

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 **Mirror Exercise** form. Make sure each participant has written and signed their name on the form.

Please hand in your homework sheets and make sure to sign them.

Hopefully, you recognize the positive things about yourselves and will remember them, particularly as the pressure of the appearance ideal surrounds you.

Okay, let’s now practice more ways to resist the appearance ideal.

IV. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

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. Who would like to start?

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. Please make sure you turn in your signed behavioral challenge forms.

Collect **Behavioral Challenge Exercise** form. Make sure each participant has written and signed her name on the form.

V. ROLE PLAY TO DISCOURAGE PURSUIT OF THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (15 MINS)

Leaders take the role of someone intensely pursuing the appearance ideal for each participant. Let each participant spend about 3-4 minutes attempting to dissuade one of your characters from pursuing the appearance ideal. If leaders have more than 2 people in their mini groups they should use more than one of the characters so that it doesn't become too easy for the 3rd participant. Parrot, or echo back, any pro-appearance ideal comments previously made by participants while you are playing an 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. Feel free to go over the top a bit with the participants.

On point leader: _____

Now we would like to go through some role-plays, and practice how one could respond to an individual pursuing the appearance ideal. Each of us peer leaders will play a person who is obsessed with the appearance ideal and your job will be to convince one of us that we shouldn't be. Each role play will last several minutes. Feel free to use any of the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal that we identified in our earlier discussions.

Now let's break into 3 smaller groups, so that each of you can individually practice talking us out of pursuing the appearance ideal. The people closest to me should come with me and the same for the other peer leaders.

Each peer leader should take 1/3 of the group into a smaller group. Then select in turn, each group member to participate, making sure each participant individually has a turn. Start with the most gregarious participant. Peer leaders can pick which character they want to use, but should not use a single character with more than 2 participants.

Character One

I am going to play a friend who is obsessed about how my body will look for spring break. I'm dying to have a flat stomach, so I have put myself on a vegetarian diet because meat contains an outrageous amount of fat, which will make me huge and disgusting. In order to lose as much weight as possible, I also refuse to eat carbohydrates. I did this last year to lose weight for spring break but started too late to get the effects I wanted. So this time, I started 5 months ago. I'm dieting because I know I will have to wear a bikini on the beach. Whenever my friends and I mention spring break all I can think about is how I can't wear a swim suit in front of everyone if I don't have an amazingly flat stomach.

Character Two

I am going to play a freshman who is trying to get into a sorority. I'm very concerned about gaining the freshman fifteen because I know if I do, no one will want to be my friend or give me a bid. I weigh myself at least four times every day to make sure that I'm losing weight, or at least not gaining any. If my weight is higher than it was the last time, I skip my next meal and hope for better results at the next weight in. Sometimes I'm late for class because I have to get back to my dorm room between classes to weigh myself or I won't be able to focus on anything else. If I don't start losing weight faster, then I will start skipping two meals every time my weight doesn't go down by at least ¼ of a pound.

Character Three

I am going to play a friend who is exercising three times a day because I am trying to get a thigh gap to make me more attractive to the person I'm dating. I run 3 miles after breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day because if I don't, I feel super gross. It's like I can feel the food in my stomach moving straight to my thighs and accumulating there. I run even if I'm sick or injured because I know I will get fat thighs if I skip even one work out. The person I'm dating says they won't date girls with fat legs and in the past they have teased me for gaining weight. I stopped losing weight last week, so I think I need to amp up the mileage.

Leaders should generate additional statements as needed and may tailor the statements to be appropriate for their group members. Leaders should keep the role play going for several minutes with the first participant and then move onto the next one. After everyone has gone, the group should come back together.

Role play debriefing

On point leader: _____

How did it feel to do these role plays?

Let participants reflect on how it felt to argue against someone who is fixated on pursuing the appearance ideal. Peer leaders should also share how it felt to play the characters.

What might be the benefit of challenging people when they make appearance ideal statements?

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

VI. BODY ACTIVISM (20 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Scribe: _____

Because this part of the session requires use of the flipchart, one group leader should be assigned as the “scribe.”

We have talked about some ways to resist these commonplace statements about our body and the bodies of others around us. Now, let’s add to these ideas by shifting our discussion back to the appearance ideal perpetuated by our society. We would like you to generate a list of things we can do both as individuals and as a group on campus to resist the appearance ideal. Think back to the first session, and remember what we discussed regarding the appearance ideal and the ways we feel pressured to pursue this appearance ideal in our society today. What can you avoid, say, do or learn to battle this beauty ideal? Please record your list on the “Body Activism” form. We will give you 5 minutes to complete this list.

Hand out the **Body Activism** form. Give participants 5 minutes to write.

Can each of you share two items on your list? We will go around the group. Who would like to start us off?

Scribe will write “Body Activism” on the board, and then record each participant’s two items.

On point leader: _____

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

For example, in addition to the items on our list on the board, you could:

- 1. Put post-its saying “you look great the way you are” into weight loss books at a bookstore.*
- 2. Put up a poster encouraging people to take care of their bodies in the 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 car window paint to write “accept your body” on your own car window.*
- 7. Make and give away “fit for function” buttons or stickers.*
- 8. Share an anti-appearance ideal video on social media.*
- 9. You could make a “stuff people say” about body image concerns video, and put it on social media.*
- 10. Write to a magazine or advertising company about a particular ad that is pro-appearance ideal and explain why you have a problem with this. Or you could compliment a positive campaign.*
- 12. Go to the Proud2BMe website (www.proud2bme.org) and get active there. This website is sponsored by the National Eating Disorders Association and is a positive body image online community.*
- 13. Keep a jar in your room and have everyone contribute a dollar if they make a fat talk statement. Then donate this money to a relevant charity, such as the Eating Recovery Foundation or the National Eating Disorders Association.*

Does anyone have any other ideas?

Let’s now go around the group so each of us can say what two activities we intend to do over the next week. Who would like to start?

Have each participant choose 2 items from their list or the list above to do during the next week.

Hand out the **Future Body Activism** form.

Please turn in your Body Activism form and make sure you signed your name. If you want to keep a copy of it, feel free to quickly take a photo of it with your phone.

Collect **Body Activism** form. Make sure each participant has written and signed her name on the form.

VII. FUTURE PRESSURES TO CONFORM TO AN APPEARANCE IDEAL (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

It is often helpful to think of how to respond to future pressures to conform to a certain look or appearance before they happen (for example, spring break, weddings, having your body change as you age). Now each of us is going to identify two examples of future pressures to conform to an appearance ideal that seem personally relevant, along with one way to respond to each of the two pressures. We will go around the room to hear your anticipated pressures to conform to an appearance ideal and how you might respond. Who can we start with?

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

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

On point leader: _____

Last week we practiced making comebacks to straightforward fat talk statements. Because this is challenging to do out in the real world, we think we could all use a bit more practice challenging these “pro-appearance 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 “appearance 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 focus on appearance issues like that.”

I will say a statement to each of you and your job is to come up with a response statement. Then I’ll give you a second chance to try this out with a new practice statement. We’ll go around the group twice so everyone gets four different “pro-appearance ideal” statements. Who is up for going first?

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

- *Becca has really put on the pounds over the holidays.*
- *Spring break is coming up so I'm going on a diet, do you want to join me?*
- *I think I'd find Amy Schumer a lot funnier if she wasn't so heavy.*
- *She's too pudgy to be wearing that crop top. Nobody wants to see that.*
- *If I don't lose some weight before my next volleyball game, everyone will be staring at my thighs.*
- *I hate my body so much—I wish I could just wake up in a different one.*
- *Only skinny girls get partners.*
- *She really doesn't have the body to be wearing those short shorts.*
- *She's too flat chested for that dress. Maybe we should tell her where to get a good pushup bra.*
- *I really wish I had the body of a Victoria's Secret model.*
- *I need liposuction; I am such a cow!*
- *Did you see how flat her butt is? Squats anyone??*
- *Do these jeans make me look chubby?*
- *I am thinking of giving up carbs because I hear it helps you lose weight.*
- *You are so thin, how do you do it?*
- *I can't take yoga because I am too fat to wear yoga pants.*
- *I really wish I was thinner. My life would be so much better.*
- *No wonder you're cold, you don't have any of this blubber!*
- *Being that bony just isn't attractive. Eat a burger already.*
- *I'm way too fat to be eating this.*
- *There is no way I am wearing that dress. My arms aren't toned enough for the sleeveless look.*

Role play debriefing

How do you plan to challenge your friends and family in the future if they make appearance ideal statements?

Encourage discussion.

IX. SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISE (3 MINS)

On point leader: _____

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 three things that you like about yourselves.*
- 2. Keep a journal of all the good things your body allows you to do (e.g., go on 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.”*
- 6. Make a pledge to do the mirror exercise once per week.*

Can each of you choose one of these ideas (or one of your own) and do it sometime next week and e-mail us about how it goes?

Get head nods.

Hand out the **Self-Affirmation Exercise** form.

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 what exercise you are going to do.

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

X. HOME EXERCISES (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Second, we would like you to do another exit exercise. Would you be willing to write another letter to a younger girl telling her how to avoid developing body image concerns? This can be to a younger sibling, cousin, or friend.

Please use the information you have learned in these sessions about the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal and the activities you have learned to help develop positive body image. 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. Send this letter, via regular or email, to the actual person if you are willing.

Hand out the **Letter to a Younger Girl** form.

Lastly, we also wanted to see if you all would be willing to recruit 3 friends to take part in a future Body Project group. We'd like you to send us their names and contact information once you have convinced them to participate. You can send your names to me at my email address, which is _____.

So, to summarize, we would like each of you to do the self-affirmation positive body exercise during the next week and email the group telling us how it went. Second, we would like you to write an email letter to a younger girl telling her how to avoid developing body image concerns and send the letter to us and her, if you like.

Third, we would like you to recruit three friends who agree to join a future Body Project group and to send us their contact information so we can get them scheduled.

XI. DISCUSSION OF BENEFITS OF THE GROUP AND CLOSURE (10 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?

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?

On point leader: _____

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, or how you will interact, with friends, romantic partners or any other people in your life?

What else have you gotten out of this program? Let's go around the group one last time so everyone can state at least one thing they have learned or liked in this group.

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.

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

We would also like to encourage you to tell your friends about the group.

Name:

Signature:

Session One

Costs of Pursuing the Appearance Ideal

Please list as many costs to pursuing the appearance ideal as you can identify.

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Name:

Signature:

Session One Verbal Challenge Form

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

Here are some examples of appearance ideal statements:

1. A partner might say that they think the ideal dress size is a two.
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 and how you responded back then:*

NEW Verbal Response:

2) *Situation:*

Verbal Response:

3) *Situation:*

Verbal Response:

Name:

Signature:

Session One Fat Talk List

1. I wish I could be as skinny as you!
2. Do I look fat in this?
3. You look amazing! How much weight have you lost?
4. No one will date me if I don't drop a few pounds.
5. You think you're fat? Look at my love handles!
6. Did you see the girl he is dating? She's such a whale.
7. She totally shouldn't be wearing those pants! Her butt is huge.
8. I look disgusting at this weight.
9. I'm so fat.
10. She has gained so much weight since last semester.
11. I'm trying to get rid of everything that jiggles, except my boobs.
12. I think I'm going to try that new diet. Do it with me; you could afford to drop a few.
13. Buy it a size smaller, it'll be good motivation for you.
14. My thighs are so big.
15. I am too fat to wear a swimsuit.
16. I hate my flat chest.

Name:

Signature:

Session One 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 in order to increase your confidence. For example, wearing shorts to school, going to the pool in a swimsuit, exercising in public. We would like each of you to do two behavioral challenges and then let us know during the next session how it turned out. Please practice each challenge at least once in the next week. Please take a moment to think of something you would like to do but haven't done yet. Please write your behavioral goal on this page to remind yourself of it, and please bring this to the next group.

Lined writing area with 25 horizontal lines.

Name:

Signature:

Session One Mirror Exercise Form

Please stand in front of a mirror and look at yourself and write down all your positive qualities. Please list at least 15. Include 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 Body Activism Form

Please generate a 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 list. This might be referred to as “body activism.”

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

Name:

Signature:

Session Two

Future Body Activism Form

The exercise in session two asked you to list body activism that girls/women could do to resist the appearance ideal—what you can avoid, say, do, or learn to combat this social pressure. Please choose two behaviors from your list to do during the next week. Please write your body activism goal on this sheet to remind yourself of it. Please send us an email of how it went.

My two body activism plans:

How it went:

Name:

Signature:

Session Two

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 one of these ideas that we talked about, or one of your own, to practice over the next week, and let us know how it goes via e-mail.

