



Body Image

8-WEEK FACILITATOR ACTIVITY GUIDE

For Ages 12 – 18

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Written: 3/1/99, Revised 11/09





Week One Theme: **BODY TALK**

Using discussion and activity, girls begin to examine and raise key questions and concerns around the issues of body image.

ACTIVITY

- Creating Group Guidelines, “Healthy Body Means...Beautiful Body Means...” Activity with Quick Writing and Discussion, Looking at Body Image Facts & Statistics

MATERIALS

- A few sheets of yellow and pink colored paper
- Pens or pencils
- Scissors

PURPOSE

- To define health and beauty related to girls’ bodies
- To raise the girls’ awareness regarding the prevalence of negative body image in our society.
- To explore girls’ sources of information on health and beauty
- To share factual information and statistics regarding this issue.
- To explore beliefs, opinions, cultural differences, and feelings about body image.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Cut the colored paper into small strips, enough to provide each girl with 5 strips of yellow and 5 strips of pink paper.

*On Week One, it is recommended that you use an “Ice-breaker.”
See the list of “Ice-breakers” in the Resources file in your kit.*



Week One



OPENING RITUAL

Choose an opening ritual that will mark the beginning of your girls' circle. You can use this same opening ritual at the beginning of each group for the next eight weeks. The opening ritual invites participants into the unique space and time of the circle.

Examples: Lighting a candle, ringing a bell, having each participant say one word about how they're feeling, silence, music, sharing a special reading, etc.



THEME INTRODUCTION

Introduce the theme of the week, "Body Talk." The "Theme Introduction" process of the Basic Circle Format means just that – introducing the theme. This gives the girls a basic overview of what is planned for the session. The Theme Introduction should be brief and to the point, leaving a lot of the detail for later.

Create the Group Guidelines with the girls. Ask: "How can we make our circle a safe and caring place? What guidelines or rules will help us create and keep a friendly place and safe space here as a group?" If girls make few responses, help them out with suggestions, such as: "If a person here is speaking, what do you want others to be doing?" Assist as needed in sharing "safe space" suggestions. Have the girls create a group poster, decorate it and make it their own. They can sign their name to the poster, signifying their commitment to the guidelines.

Ice-Breaker: Pick one of the ice-breakers to use here from your list in the "Ice-Breakers" section or create one of your own.



CHECK-IN

Go around the circle and have each girl "check in" as to what is going on in her life. Check-In is a time for the girls to check in with the circle and express whatever they wish or perhaps say something about the theme.

For the most part, the check-in process is a way for the girls to express what they are currently feeling, going through, or what their day or week has been like. One by one, the girls share, with no interruptions. The facilitator can share too. The girls are welcome to say as little or as much as they choose. They may pass if they wish.

The "Opening ritual," "Theme Introduction" & "Check-in" are part of the process of each meeting. Make sure to include it at the beginning of each session. After that, you can proceed with the activities and discussions that are outlined in each week's plan.



ACTIVITY 1

Introduction & "Healthy Body Means...Beautiful Body Means..." Activity

- 1 Inform girls that you are going to lead an anonymous activity followed by a discussion about body image. Tell the girls there are many ideas about health and beauty, and that we will explore the different definitions and meanings that our group has for these words. Tell the group that our beliefs and cultural definitions may vary according to our experiences and that there are no right or wrong ideas in this exercise, only definitions.



Week One

- 2 Hand out pencils and ten strips of paper to each girl, five of each color. Tell girls that the yellow paper represents “healthy body” and the pink paper represents “beautiful body.”
- 3 On their own, ask girls to finish the following sentence on the yellow pieces of paper: “Healthy Body Means _____.” Each girl will complete the sentence 5 times, on the 5 strips of yellow paper. (She may have several ideas of how to finish the sentence.)
- 4 When finished ask them to finish the following sentence on the five pink pieces of paper: “Beautiful Body means _____.”



SHARING OF ACTIVITY

- 1 Collect all the yellow strips, mix them up, and lay them on the floor in the center of the circle. Invite the girls to view and state aloud the various definitions of “Healthy Body Means _____.” Welcome any observations from the group. Remind the girls that there may be some different understandings of “healthy.”.

- 2 Now collect all the pink strips, mix them up, and lay them around the yellow strips on the floor. Once again, invite the girls to view and state aloud the various definitions provided of “Beautiful Body means _____.” Welcome further observations from the group.

Any of the following words and many others may have been written: *long hair, wavy hair, straight hair, slender nose, fat, skinny, curvy shape, large or thin, tall, short, strong, exercise, clear complexion, glow, large bust/flat bust, pretty face, smile, eats healthy food, well rested, confident, big lips, nips and tucks, style, natural features, etc...*

Look for any common words, or opposite words, or words that show up more than once. The goal is to explore the girls’ definitions, not to make value statements or to say right from wrong as facilitators.

- 3 Lead a discussion using the following questions:
 - What did it feel like doing this exercise?
 - What do you notice about the two categories of responses? For example, were there answers that were true in both categories?
 - Where do these ideas come from?
 - What messages does the media tell us about health and/or beauty? (I.e., movies, songs, television commercials.)
 - Where do girls generally get information about body health? How well do those messages match what the movies, TV, and fashion industry show?
 - Who decides what is beautiful?
 - What differences or similarities are there in ideas about beauty from different cultures and ethnicities?



Week One

- What was the main point of this activity?

Using the talking piece, go around the circle and have each girl answer the following question:

- What is one thing you can do this week to appreciate your body more?



ACTIVITY 2

Looking at Body Image Facts & Statistics

1 The following facts and information can be shared with the girls. Select all or some that may be relevant to their definitions about health and beauty, and invite different girls to read these facts aloud to the group:

- Adolescents with a negative body image are more likely to suffer from mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety, and also to suffer from peer group problems.¹
- 1 or 2 out of every 100 students will suffer an eating disorder.²
- While eating disorders are well documented among white girls, they affect girls of all ethnicities at a growing rate.³ These eating disorders include anorexia, bulimia, compulsive eating and obesity, binge eating disorder.
- About 2,000,000 adolescents have pre-diabetes⁴ a condition influenced by a diet heavy in sugars and 'hidden' sweeteners such as corn syrup.
- The number of kids 18 and under having plastic surgery rose from just under 60,000 in 1997 to nearly 225,000 in 2003, according to statistics compiled by the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.⁵
- The average model used in the fashion industry is 5-foot-10 and weighs 120 pounds, almost 20 percent underweight.⁶

2 Tell the girls, "Today we've looked at our definitions of a healthy body and a beautiful body, and heard various views on that. We've heard a lot of statistics about how much our appearance and our feelings toward our appearance can interfere with our wellness - eating disorders, mood problems. And we've heard about health problems like diabetes - often related to diet and nutrition choices. Health, beauty, appearance, body image - these are big topics. So now that we've talked about these, let's hear what you think."

- How important is it to have a positive body image?
- If how we feel about our bodies affects our moods, our friendships and our whole sense of well being, how can we develop a positive body image?

1 Science Daily, <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090318140234.htm>
2 Kidshealth.org; http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/mental_health/eat_disorder.html?tracking=T_RelatedArticle
3 At Risk- All Ethnic and Cultural Groups, <http://www.girlpower.gov/AdultsWhoCare/resources/Pubs/Diversity.pdf> and <http://www.mysistahs.org/health/bodyimage/eatingdisorders.htm>
4 American Diabetes Association, <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-statistics/prevalence.jsp>
5 WebMD, <http://www.webmd.com/baby/features/is-plastic-surgery-teen-thing>
6 Hellmich, Nanci. "Do Thin Models Warp Girls' Body Image?" USA Today Sept. 2006: 1-3.



Week One

- What are some ways we can support each other toward developing a positive body image?

Pass the talking piece a final time around the circle, and ask the girls:

- What is something you'd like to do related to health and wellness in your own life this week?



CLOSING RITUAL

Choose a closing ritual that will mark a special close to the shared experiences and sends off the circle members with a sense of gratitude and respect. Do this same closing ritual each time.

For further information or resources, see websites in the notes below.

** This exercise adapted with permission from materials of Heidi Mack, 44 So. Street, Perth, Ontario, Canada K7H2G34*