



Body Image

Grade-6

Lesson

2

Lesson Objectives – 1. Students explain the difference between positive body and negative body image. 2. Students explain at least two ways to work toward having a positive body image.

| | Time | Page |
|--|----------------|------|
| Prepare Students | 5 min. | 112 |
| Attention Grabber | 5 min. | 113 |
| Explain/Demonstrate/Practice Journals and Handouts | 10 min. | 113 |
| Review and Preview | 8 min. | 114 |
| Total Time | 28 min. | |

Equipment & Materials

- ✓ Copies of the following handouts:
 - “Body Image” in Appendix 6-2A, p. 115.
 - Journals in Appendix 6-2B, pp. 116-117.
 - “Steps to Positive Body Image” in Appendix 6-2C, p. 118.
- ✓ Tape recorder and tape of journal readings

Teacher Preparation

Prior to the start of this lesson:

- ✓ Review the handouts for the class.
- ✓ Make copies of the handouts.
- ✓ Decide how you will present the two journal readings in Appendix 6.2: tape them ahead of time; read them yourself; or choose a confident student during class.

If you choose to tape them ahead of time, find a young teen to read them, and do the taping.

This lesson addresses the following content standards:

| Michigan Standards | | National Standards | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Physical Education | Health Education | Physical Education | Health Education |
| Standard #13 | Standard #1 Standard #3 | Standard #6 Standard #7 | Standard #1 Standard #3 |

This lesson relates to Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education:

Grade 6, Phase I, Lesson 11: Only One Me . . . Only One You!

Additional Preparation

This lesson may generate discussion that reveals a risk of eating disorders among students. Before presenting the lesson, verify procedures for referring a student for evaluation and intervention.

Key Message & Background Information for Teachers**Key Messages:**

I believe there is no such thing as a “perfect” body size and/or shape.

I accept people as they are and believe that the differences among us make the world more interesting and beautiful.

Background Information:

Body image is how we feel about our bodies and what we believe about our own appearance. Body image is independent of body size and shape. It is even independent of physical appearance. Any person—of any description—can have either a positive or negative body image. Body image contributes to self-esteem. Promoting positive body images in children can improve self-esteem and help prevent eating disorders. Teachers help promote positive body images by avoiding making negative comments about their own or others’ appearance.

Note that this lesson isn’t about eating disorders. However, having a poor body image is a risk factor for developing an eating disorder. It is possible that the issue may come up during or after the lesson. Here are some suggestions for how to be prepared if this happens.

The National Eating Disorders Association is a great resource for teachers. They have a website with general information, tips for talking to students who may have an eating disorder, and information on helping promote positive body image. Spending a bit of time before the lesson browsing materials on the website can provide information and insight. Visit the website: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.

Also, you may wish to inform your school’s counselors or other mental health professionals that you’ll be conducting the lesson, so that they can prepare for any referrals you may make.

Prepare Students**5 min.**

Gather students together in a group seated on the floor.

Introduce the lesson:

- Today we’re going to be learning about body image and how it influences the way we see ourselves and the way others see us.

Attention Grabber

5 min.

Ask the students:

- Has anyone ever heard the term “body image?” Does anyone know what “body image” is? [Allow students to respond.]

Distribute the handout on body image definitions and have students take turns reading the definitions aloud.

Ask students:

- What do you think makes someone have a negative body image? What makes them have a positive body image? Can someone who looks terrific have a negative body image? [Accept all answers.]

Journals and Handouts

10 min.

Explain/Demonstrate

Practice

Tell the students:

- We’re going to hear from two journals written by two different sixth graders who are thinking about their body image.
- After hearing each journal, we’re going to discuss what was said and what it means.
- Finally, we will talk about how we might use what we’ve learned.

Distribute “Journal Entry 1 & 2” handout to students.

Teacher tip: *To avoid embarrassing students during class, choose one of the following three options for journal readings:*

- *Record the journal entries ahead of time, taping a young teen who enjoys dramatics (preferably one that is not in the class). Then play the recordings for the class.*
- *Read the journal entries yourself to the class.*
- *Choose confident students who are unlike the teens represented in the journal entry.*

Present “Journal 1.” Have the students read along silently as they listen, and underline any clues indicating whether the writer has a positive or negative body image.

Wait until the reading has been completed.

Ask:

- Do you think the writer has a positive or negative body image? Why? (Students should respond with evidence from the reading.)
- How does the writer think other people see him or her?
- How do YOU THINK others see him or her?

Repeat the same steps with “Journal 2.”

Teacher tip: *As you review each of the stories, be sure to bring out:*

- *When a person is feeling good about him/herself, others are more likely to feel good about that person also.*
- *The girl in “Journal 2” had support from her mother in developing a positive body image. **We can help each other** develop a positive body image.*

Review & Preview

8 min.

Ask students:

- Why do you think it is important to have a positive body image?
- Do you have to look like a professional model to have a positive body image?

Distribute the handout “Steps to Positive Body Image” and have students take turns reading the steps aloud. If time permits, have students discuss some of the tips as they read through them, or practice some of the suggestions in the tips.

Ask students:

- How could you help a friend who has a bad body image? What would you say to that person?

***Teacher tip:** Prompt students if necessary with questions like “What type of people would you tell them to hang around?” (Answer: Positive people [from Step 5].) Encourage students to respond and contribute to the discussion with tips from the “Steps to Positive Body Image” handout. Reinforce the concepts of respecting differences in size and shape, and encouraging and having compassion for those who may be struggling with their body image.*

Tell students:

- Remember, having a positive body image is important for health because when we feel good about ourselves we are more likely to take care of ourselves and do all the things that keep us healthy, such as eating healthy foods and being physically active.

***Teacher tip:** To reinforce this lesson, ask the English or health teacher to assign students to write a personal response or plan for adopting some of the “Steps to Positive Body Image.” The students should be told when they are given the assignment that their essays will be private and not shared with others without permission.*

Body Image

(adapted from material of the same name created by the
National Eating Disorders Association, ©2002)
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

Body image is . . .

- how you see yourself when you look in the mirror or when you picture yourself in your mind.
- what you believe about your own appearance.
- how you feel about your body, including your height, shape, and weight.
- how you feel in your body—how you sense and control your body as you move.

A “positive” body image is . . .

- a clear, true sense of your actual body shape and size.
- appreciation of your body’s form and function.
- feeling comfortable and confident in your body.

A “negative” body image is . . .

- a distorted sense of your actual body shape and size.
- feeling ashamed, self-conscious, and anxious about your body.
- feeling uncomfortable and awkward in your body.

Journal Entry # 1

Even though people are always telling me how good I look, I don't believe it. I look in the mirror and I see all my flaws. I have a magazine picture taped up in the corner of the mirror in my bedroom. My goal is to look like that. Even though I'm a long, long, way off, I know I can look like that someday if I just try hard enough.

I'm always thinking about how I look compared to other people. I spend a lot of time looking at posters and saving pictures of people I want to look like. They look so happy and relaxed, like it's easy to have a body like theirs. But I know how hard it is for me, and I don't even have a good body. Sometimes I wonder about what those people in the magazines are really like. I wonder how they feel when they look in the mirror.

I buy a lot of clothes, but they don't look as good on me as they do on professional athletes or models. It takes me a long time to get dressed in the morning. I usually try on about 10 different outfits before I decide on one that looks good enough to wear to school. Every day I notice something wrong with at least one part of my body, so I have to find something to cover it up.

Some of my friends are trying out for the volleyball team. At first it sounded like a good idea. I'd get plenty of exercise. But when I thought about it a little more, I realized that it would mean I'd have to wear shorts and tank tops in front of everyone. I can't do something like that until I get in better shape.

Worrying about my body can get in the way of me having a normal life. I envy some of my friends. Their bodies aren't any better than mine. To be perfectly honest, some of them are a lot worse! But they don't seem to let it bother them. They're always off having lots of fun. For instance, unlike me, they would never turn down an invitation to a pool party because they didn't want anyone to see them in a bathing suit. Also unlike me, they would never say no to someone else's birthday cake because they were "watching their weight." Deep down inside, I know I should be using my body to do all kinds of great things, like sports, music, and dance. Instead, I feel like I have made my body into a prison. Unfortunately, I have no idea where the key is to get out.

Journal Entry # 2

I don't look like models in magazines. They are tall and skinny but I'm more solid and shorter. I don't want to be like those people in the magazines. I like myself the way I am. When I look at myself in the mirror I can see little bits of my mom and dad. They don't look like the people in magazines, either.

If somebody asked me what my best feature is, I'd have to say my legs. Even though they're short and thick, they're really strong. I like to ice skate in the winter and play soccer and cycle in the summer—those sports can sure build your leg muscles!

Sometimes I wonder what it would look like if I had longer legs, or bigger eyes, or other things I think would look better than what I've got. But to tell you the truth, most of the time I'm too busy to think about what I look like. Between school, sports and music lessons (I'm learning how to play guitar), I don't have the energy to wonder what it would be like if my body were different from the way it is.

But I get frustrated with my body once in a while. Shopping for clothes can be a big pain, especially for pants, which never seem to fit right. My mom says that when a pair of pants doesn't fit me right it's the pants' problem—not my body's. We found one brand that fits me better than others, so I just usually try that on first, and save a whole lot of hassle!

One thing that's for sure, I really hate to be sick. When I feel good, I take all the things my body does for granted. Most of the time I don't give very much thought to the fact that my body helps me do so many things, especially sports that I like. But when I catch a cold, I'm miserable! So, I do my best to keep my body healthy so I don't get sick too often!

Steps to Positive Body Image

(adapted from material created by the
National Eating Disorders Association, ©2002)

One list cannot automatically change negative body thoughts into positive body image, but it can help you think about new ways of looking more healthfully and happily at yourself and your body.

1. Keep a top-10 list of things you like about yourself, that aren't about how much you weigh or what you look like.
2. Look for people to admire because they do things to make the world a better place, not just because they have a certain type of body or have a certain type of "look."
3. Use your time and energy to help others instead of worrying about food or your weight. Helping other people can help you feel better about yourself. It will also make the world a better place.
4. Don't believe everything you read or see in magazines or ads, at the movies or on TV. Become aware of messages that make you feel bad about yourself or your body. Don't let them get to you.
5. Hang out with positive people. Stick with people who support you, and who think it's important to like yourself.
6. Wear clothes that are comfortable and that make you feel good about your body.
7. Remind yourself that "true beauty" is much more than what you look like.
8. If you find yourself feeling bad about your body, think of all the amazing things your body does for you, like running, dancing, breathing, laughing, and dreaming.
9. Shut down those voices in your head that tell you your body is not "right" or that you are a "bad" person. Fill your mind with good thoughts about you.