

BODY ACTIVISM



ACTIVITY GUIDE



National Eating Disorders Association

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Why a Guide for Body Activism?	3
About the Body Project	3
Suggestions on How to Use the Guide	4
Let Us Know How It Goes!	4
Join the Conversation on Social Media	4
Recommendations for Self-Care	5
What to Do If You Feel Triggered	5

Activities

Body Acceptance Baseline (T/F)	6
Activity #1: Social Media Break Down	7
Activity #2: Let's Make A Difference	9
Activity #3: Letter for Change	11
Activity #4: The Name Game	13
Activity #5: Give a Compliment	15
Activity #6: Self (Esteem) Portrait	17
Sample Figure Outlines.....	19
Activity #7: Reshaping Body Image	25
Activity #8: Change the Beat	28
Activity #9: Dear Body,	30
Activity#10: Love Your Selfie	32
Body Acceptance Follow Up (T/F)	34

Resources

Information & Support	35
Glossary	36
Inspirational Quotes	38

Have you ever wondered why you don't look like the people on TV or in magazines? Are you looking to improve your body image and self-esteem? The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is excited to present this fun and empowering activity guide, which encourages you to critique media images, take a stand against unrealistic beauty standards, and challenge your personal body-related concerns.

Why a Guide for Body Activism?

In the United States, 30 million people will struggle with an eating disorder at some point in their lives. Early intervention efforts aimed to increase body acceptance can reduce disordered eating symptoms as well as help to create an environment that encourages healthy recovery. Numerous studies have linked exposure to prevalent “appearance ideal” in mass media to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. Likewise, low self-esteem is a common characteristic of individuals who have eating disorders. Body acceptance reinforces the value that “true beauty” is not simply skin deep and, here at NEDA, we recognize the importance of body acceptance, media literacy, and more. We are starting a movement! Change begins at home, in our personal conversation with friends and family, and even with how we talk to ourselves!

About The Body Project

In an effort to promote body acceptance and prevent eating disorder onset, NEDA disseminates the [Body Project](#); a body confidence and self-esteem program for high school and college-aged girls. Backed by more than two decades of research and evaluation data, the program gives girls the tools and skills to confront unrealistic beauty ideals and engages them in the development of a healthy body image. This intervention has been delivered to over one million young women around the world and has repeatedly been shown to effectively reduce body dissatisfaction, negative mood, unhealthy dieting and disordered eating.

The Body Project engages participants to consider the costs of conforming to rigid societal appearance ideals through role-plays, written exercises, media literacy, and body activism. In the spirit of expanding the impact of the Body Project, we created a guide with activities to spark discussion about body diversity and encourage participants to speak up and speak out against unrealistic appearance norms. The activities in this guide are inspired by various body activism carried out by our teenage Body Project participants. While the Body Project intervention is targeted to young women and girls, these activities are intended for all ages and genders.

Suggestions on How to Use the Guide

- **In the classroom** – Choose activities to complete individually or as a group. After students complete each activity, the teacher or class leader can facilitate a discussion pulling from the questions to think about.
- **With friends** – Relaxing night in? Grab some snacks, your friends, and give these activities a go. Feel free to work together to come up with ideas, discuss your findings, and become stellar body activists.
- **At family night** – Research shows that 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat. Older relatives (e.g., parents, siblings, or cousins) are in the unique position to bring awareness to negative feelings about their loved one’s body. Using this activity guide, you can have an open dialogue about societal pressures and help cultivate body acceptance with your family members.

Let Us Know How It Goes!

We hope you find these activities fun and engaging, and that they inspire you to continue your activism. Please email info@myneda.org with any photos of your activism projects. Select photos and letters may be reposted on our social media pages.

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is active on a variety of social media platforms. Let’s get social, strengthen our recovery community, stay up to date on the latest news, and create a world without eating disorders – together!

Join the Conversation on Social Media

- Like us on [Facebook](#) for inspirational posts, news from the field, and support via Messenger.
- Follow us on [Instagram](#) for daily doses of encouragement and pro-recovery images!
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) for the latest news on eating disorders, recovery support, and ways to get involved.
- Read our [Tumblr](#) blog for recovery tips and information.
- Check out our [Pinterest](#) boards for visual inspiration, fundraising tips, and NEDA Walks team spirit ideas!

Recommendations for Self-Care

If you are in recovery or struggling with body image and eating concerns, it is important to be mindful of how you feel as you complete these exercises. It is imperative to stay focused on your own recovery before challenging societal beauty and body ideals.

BEFORE BECOMING A BODY IMAGE ADVOCATE, BE SURE YOU'RE AN ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF!

What to Do If You Feel Triggered

Please note that some the topics and exercises in this guide may bring up a lot of emotions, and we encourage you to check-in with yourself after each activity. If you find that certain exercises are particularly difficult or uncomfortable for you, consider journaling, meditating, and/or discussing your experience with a therapist. If you do not have a therapist and would like to connect with one, you can visit NEDA's [directory of facilities and treatment providers](#) or connect with NEDA's toll free, confidential [Helpline](#) through phone, chat, or Facebook messenger. You can also refer to the resource page at the end of the manual for additional organizations and resources.

NATIONAL EATING DISORDERS ASSOCIATION
HOPE STARTS HERE

NEDA HELPLINE
M-Th (9-9 ET), F (9-5 ET)
(800) 931-2237

CLICK-TO-CHAT
M-Th (9-9 ET), F (9-5 ET)
www.myneda.org

CRISIS TEXT LINE
24/7/365
text 'NEDA' to 741741

The banner features a group of six diverse young people (three women and three men) smiling and wearing blue t-shirts with the NEDA logo and the text 'HOPE STARTS HERE'. The background is a solid blue color.

BODY ACCEPTANCE BASELINE (T/F)

Read the following questions to help measure how accepting you are with your body and of yourself. Write **true (T)** if you agree with the statement and **false (F)** if the statement doesn't currently ring true for you. If you found yourself answering *false* for many of these statements, you may find these activities especially helpful in challenging the ways in which you've internalized the pressure to conform to the appearance-ideal. At the end of this guide, you will see this checklist again on page 34 and we hope you have noticed an improvement in the way you perceive your body.

- I like the way I look and appreciate my unique traits
- I can easily name my favorite body part
- I look in the mirror and see a beautiful person looking back
- I do not participate in group body bashing of myself and others
- I move my body in ways that are joyful and fun without the goal of changing my physical appearance
- I do not compare my appearance to anyone else
- I compliment others for their accomplishments rather than their appearance
- I wear clothing that fits my body and makes me feel good regardless of the size
- I do not comment on other people's weight
- I do not let the number on the scale determine my self-worth
- I do not avoid certain activities or clothing for fear of judgement
- I post realistic, unedited photos of myself on social media
- I know that media does not set the standards of beauty or perfection
- I don't feel the need to alter my natural physical appearance
- I realize that I'm beautiful no matter what shape or size I am
- I know that true beauty is not simply skin deep

Activity #1: Social Media Break Down



We often compare ourselves to others both in our day-to-day life and on social media. Research indicates that social media use can contribute to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating; however, it can also be used to promote media literacy, self-acceptance, and body image activism. In this activity, we will examine how our social media activity may unintentionally perpetuate the appearance ideal.

Materials

- Phone, computer, or tablet
- Pen (for “General Questions” checklist)

Instructions

1. Grab a nearby phone, get on your computer, or pull out that tablet that you carry everywhere.
2. Take a look at your social media apps or websites: Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, etc.
3. Review your photos, posts, comments, and likes.
4. Complete the checklist below, which is designed to increase awareness of social media behaviors perpetuating the appearance-ideal in our culture. Circle “**yes**” for the behaviors you have engaged in while using social media.

General Questions

- | | |
|--|------------|
| ❖ Does social media has a negative effect on your body image? | yes |
| ❖ Is social media a competition to earn the most followers, likes, and comments? | yes |
| ❖ Do you compare your life to others based on their social media posts? | yes |

Pictures

- | | |
|--|------------|
| ❖ Do you pose in pictures so your body contorts to the appearance-ideal? | yes |
| ❖ Do you edit your pictures before uploading to enhance your appearance? | yes |
| ❖ Have you untagged yourself from a picture you didn’t like of yourself? | yes |

Written Posts

- ❖ Do you post about going to the gym, what you eat, or your appearance? **yes**
- ❖ Do you spend a lot of time refining a post that is meant to appear casual? **yes**
- ❖ Do you delete posts if they do not receive enough comments or likes? **yes**

Comments

- ❖ Do you make appearance-related comments on your friends' photos? **yes**
- ❖ Have you refrained from liking a friend's photo because it wasn't flattering? **yes**
- ❖ Have you posted a comment about someone's body or appearance, even though it wasn't the focus of the photo? **yes**

Likes and Follows

- ❖ Does getting "likes" give you a boost of confidence or higher self-esteem? **yes**
- ❖ Do you compare your body/appearance to your other followers? **yes**
- ❖ Do you habitually check your notifications after posting a picture, tweet, or status? **yes**

Questions to Think About

- How might social media have a negative impact on one's body image/ self-esteem?
- How can social media be used as a tool to inspire (body) positivity?
- What are some strategies you can use to eliminate harmful social media behaviors?

Did You Know?

- ✓ 21% of teens feel worse about themselves after using social media (Pew Research Center, 2015).
- ✓ 70% of women and 50% of men aged 18 to 35 edit their images before posting them on social media (Renfrew Center Foundation, 2014).
- ✓ NEDA has joined forces with [Facebook](#) and Instagram in the fight against eating disorders. Their innovative tools and commitment to the cause have helped us reach millions with the support and resources they deserve.

Relevant Resources

- [What Does the Research Tell Us About Social Media and Body Image?](#)
- [6 Questions to Ask Yourself Before Sharing a Social Media Post](#)
- [You Don't Have to Be What You See on Social Media](#)

Activity #2: Let's Make ADifference



Many media messages and advertisements present the false and harmful notion that people will be happy and successful if they achieve a specific body “ideal.” It is important to think critically about the images you see on all types of media so you can recognize potential use of filters and photo retouching.

In this activity, we will analyze and evaluate media messages that promote a narrow – and

often unattainable – depiction of beauty and success, and recognize the importance of questioning media messages.

Materials

- Media images from magazines, the Internet, TV, or movies
- Pen and paper
- Computer (optional)

Instructions

1. Pick up your favorite magazine; search a news website, online shopping mediums, or search “advertisements.”
2. Select **two** advertisements to analyze.
3. Write down what catches your eye, focusing on physical characteristics and appearance-related themes.
4. Answer the questions below for each advertisement:
 - ❖ What caught your eye about this picture?
 - ❖ What product or service is being advertised?
 - ❖ How is the ad trying to persuade you to take part in or buy their product?
 - ❖ Who is the audience for this advertisement? (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender).
 - ❖ How does this advertisement appeal to the target audience?
 - ❖ Describe the models in the ad. Is there a representation of various genders, ethnicities, abilities, body shapes, and sizes?
 - ❖ Did the people in this ad reflect your ideas about what is attractive? If not, what were you looking for that you could not find?
 - ❖ Does the ad make you feel like you need to fix, change, or buy something to have the “right” look? Why or why not?

Questions to Think About

- What messages do the media suggest about people and their physical appearance?
- How do binary appearance-ideals (i.e., male/female) exclude non-binary folks?
- Who benefits from these kinds of images? Who do these images hurt?
- Why is it important to be a critical viewer of media messages?

Did You Know?

- ✓ The function of a fashion magazine is to convince people that something is wrong with them (e.g., hair, body, etc.) so that they can sell their product (i.e., the content of the magazine) to fix it.
- ✓ Once a photoshoot is complete, images are altered: complexion is cleaned up, eye lines are softened, chins, thighs and stomachs are trimmed, and necklines are removed.
- ✓ Of American elementary school girls who read magazines, 69% say that the pictures influence their concept of the ideal body shape. 47% say the pictures make them want to lose weight. (Martin, 2010).

Relevant Resources

- [Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media](#)
- [Media, Body Image, and Eating Disorders](#)
- [Media and Your Body Image: What You Need to Know](#)

Activity #3: Letter for Change



The media is a powerful tool that has the potential to positively or negatively influence one's body image. As body activists, it is our responsibility to educate industry leaders about the impacts of harmful media messages. In this activity, we will advocate against advertisements that send negative body image messages by writing a letter to an organization, company, or magazine that promotes the appearance-ideal in order to inspire change.

Materials

- Media images from magazines, the Internet, TV, movies, or music
- Pen and paper
- Computer (optional)
- Envelope and stamps

Instructions

1. Choose an advertisement you examined in the last activity or select another option from print, broadcast, or an online media outlet.
2. Grab some paper and a pen (or your computer) and write a letter explaining:
 - ❖ What product or service you are concerned about?
 - ❖ How the appearance-ideal is being promoted in this advertisement.
 - ❖ Why this is a concern and how this ad makes you feel.
 - ❖ Suggestions for how to more effectively promote their brand, company, or service without perpetuating unrealistic appearance-ideals
3. Research contact information, including names, titles, and company's mailing or email address.
4. Mail or email your letter and send a copy to info@myneda.org!

Optional: Write a letter to a magazine or company you believe is sending positive and inspiring messages, and thank them for celebrating the natural diversity of human body shapes, looks, and sizes.

Questions to Think About

- How do you think participating in body activism can help you in your pursuit of body positivity?
- What are some companies that promote body diversity, and what are some key points of their successful campaigns?
- After completing this activity, how likely are you to boycott a product or service that promotes the appearance-ideal?

Did You Know?

- ✓ Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women (Smolak, 1996), and only 5% of women have the body type (tall, genetically thin, broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped, long-legged and usually small-breasted) seen in almost all advertising.
- ✓ 56% of women said seeing body diversity in media made them feel better about themselves (Refinery29, 2016).
- ✓ Most males would like to be lean and muscular, which typically represents the ideal male body type seen in mass media. Research shows that the sexual objectification of men and internalization of media images predicts drive for muscularity (Daniel, 2010).

Relevant Resources

- [Media Watchdog Forum](#)
- [Get REAL! Digital Media Literacy Toolkit](#)
- [Clothing Has No Gender: Removing Gender Labels on Kids' Clothes Can Reduce Pressure to Conform](#)

Activity #4: The Name Game



How often do you look in the mirror and give yourself a compliment or pat on the back? Many people are more likely to say something nice to others than to ourselves, even though we deserve compliments too! In this activity, we will recognize our positive qualities and create a poem with those words to showcase our unique traits.

Materials

- Pen and paper
- Computer (optional)
- Dictionary or thesaurus (optional)

Instructions

1. Decide if you want to use your first name, last name, or nickname.
2. Write or type your name vertically, with each letter on a separate line.
3. Brainstorm positive affirmations about yourself including accomplishments, personality, values, and appearance. You can use single words, phrases, or even full sentences in your poem.
4. Place your qualities or phrases on the lines that begin with (or contain) the same letter.
5. Make each letter of your name a positive affirmation.

Optional: Illustrate your appreciation for friends and family members by making additional poems using their names and unique qualities.

Example:

- N** - I **n**ever judge someone based on their weight or shape
E - I am an **e**xcellent listener
D - I am **d**etermined to make the world a better place
A - I **a**cept and appreciate myself for who I am

Questions to Think About

- What makes it important to recognize the qualities we like about ourselves?
- Was it easier to pick out internal (e.g., emotional) or external (i.e., physical) qualities about yourself? Why?
- What are qualities you like about yourself you don't often show to others?
- How come so many of us find it difficult to compliment ourselves?

Did You Know?

- ✓ Complimenting yourself not only improves your mood and boosts your confidence; there are also physical and emotional health benefits: increased productivity, decreased stress, pain, and insomnia.
- ✓ Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that when people act in a self-confident way, they actually feel more self-confident themselves.
- ✓ Teens with self-confidence are better able to withstand peer pressure and to make decisions with their own best interests in mind.

Relevant Resources

- [The Self-Care Master Post: Ideas, Inspiration & More!](#)
- [B.E.A.U.T.Y](#)

Activity #5: Give a Compliment



Praise and compliments can have a powerful effect on people. Even Mark Twain agreed on the lasting effects of compliments stating, *“I can live for two months on a good compliment.”* Complimenting someone when they least expect it can put a smile on their face (and yours) and brighten their day! In this activity, we will spread feelings of empowerment, self-worth, and body positivity by way of compliment cards.

Materials

- Index cards or paper
- Markers or pens
- Scissors (optional)

Instructions

1. Write a compliment down on an index card or small piece of paper. Compliments can be physical (e.g., “You are beautiful”), social (e.g., “You are a great friend”), and emotional (e.g., “You are worthy”).
2. Hand out your cards to friends, classmates, or strangers.
3. Repeat.

Tip: If you want to take your compliment game to the next level, tell your community members to take a picture with the compliment card and post it on Instagram. Don’t forget to tag [@neda](https://www.instagram.com/neda/)!

Questions to Think About

- What is usually the first thing you notice about someone?
- What is the best compliment you ever received?
- How might it feel to receive a compliment from your friend, classmate, or a stranger?

Did You Know?

- ✓ To the brain, receiving a compliment is as much a social reward as being rewarded money. (Sugawara, Tanaka, Okazaki, Watanabe, & Sadato, 2012).
- ✓ Two-thirds of all compliments include one of five adjectives: nice, good, beautiful, pretty, and great. In addition, two verbs (like and love) occur in 90% of compliments that contain a positive verb (Wolfson & Manes, 1980).
- ✓ Women are more likely to give appearance-related compliments to each other, whereas men usually praise one another about their possessions (Holmes, 1988).

Relevant Resources

- [The Incredible Power of a Compliment](#)
- [How to Compliment Someone with an Eating Disorder](#)
- [5 Ways to Challenge Body Bullying](#)

Activity #6: Self (Esteem) Portrait



Beauty is often presented as an external construct, and body acceptance reinforces the notion that “true beauty” is not simply skin deep. It’s important to recognize both the physical and external traits that make you beautiful.

In this activity, we will write down the things we like about ourselves while also cutting away at our insecurities.

Materials

- Printed copy of the attached figure
- Markers or pens
- Scissors

Instructions

1. Print out one of the attached figures or create your own.
2. On the inside of the person, write positive qualities about yourself; including physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities.
3. On the outside of the figure, write down your internal and external insecurities.
4. Take a pair of scissors and cut out the shape of the body.
5. Tear up, crumple, and dispose of the outside scraps.
6. Place your image somewhere safe for **Activity #7: Reshaping Body Image** (optional)

Questions to Think About

- How did it feel to throw out what you considered to be negative aspects of yourself?
- Why is it important to focus on your positive qualities instead of your insecurities?
- Now that you’ve cut out negativity on paper, how can you apply this to your life?

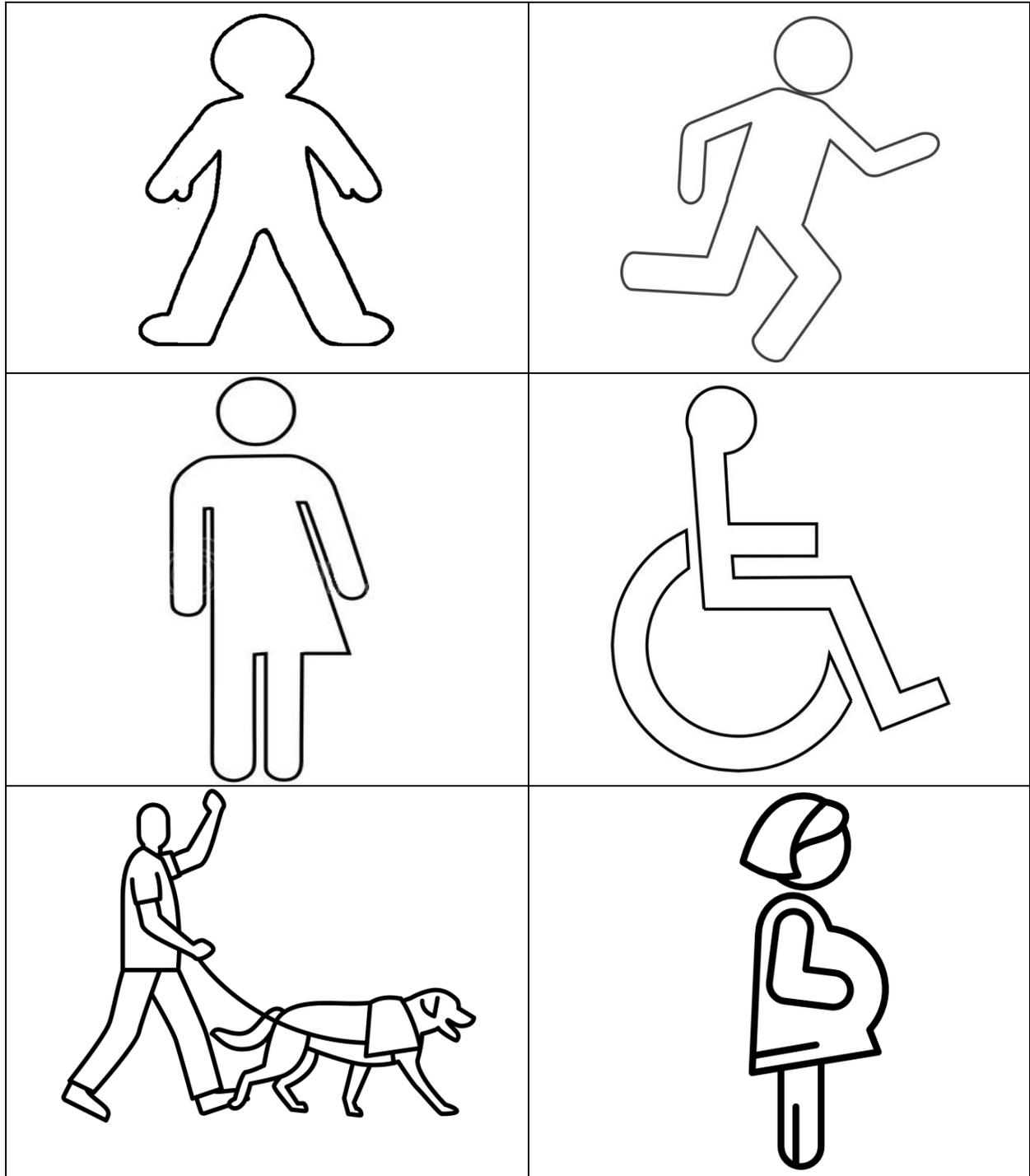
Did You Know?

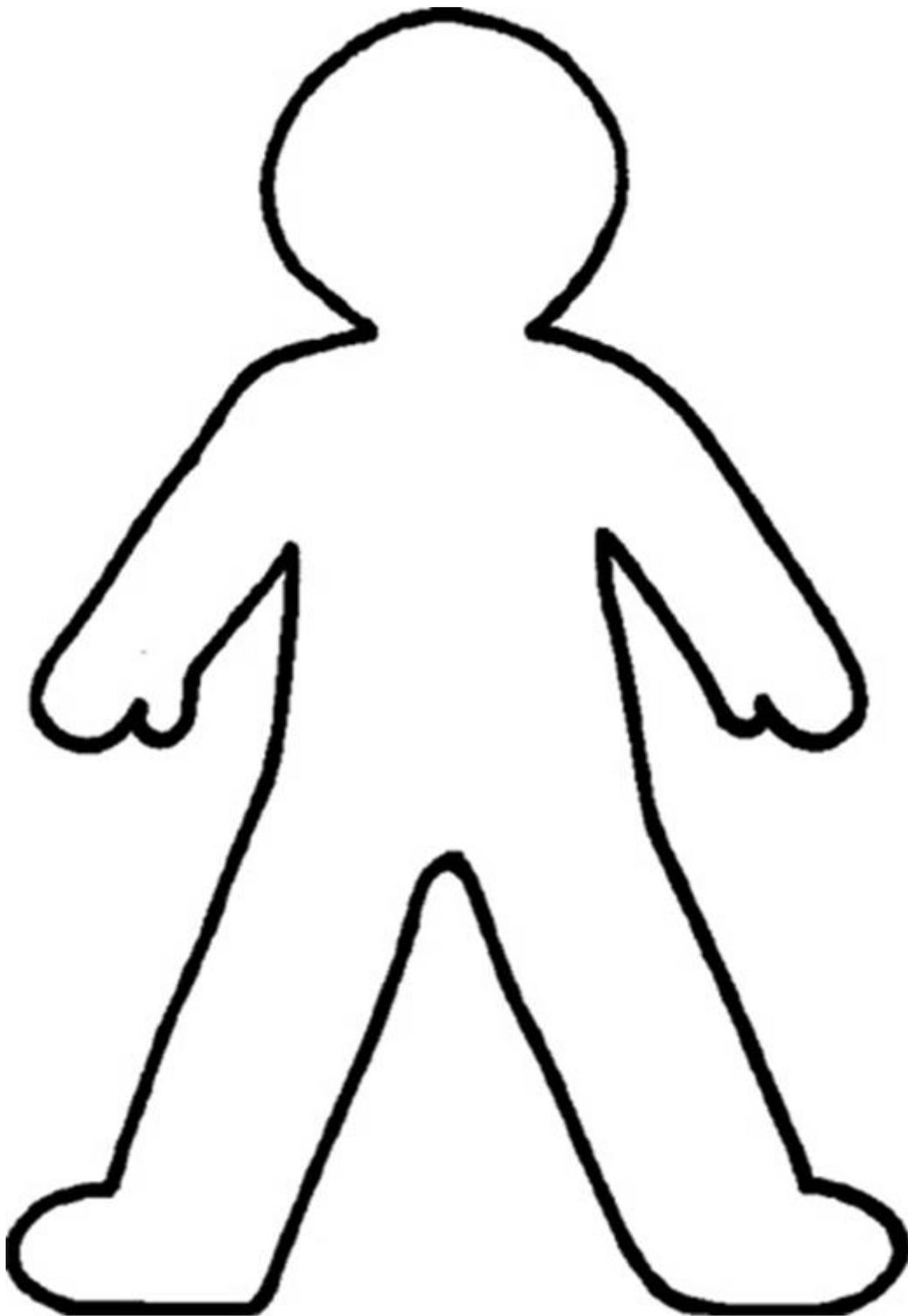
- ✓ Eating disorders and body dissatisfaction were once thought to affect only a narrow portion of the population in the teens and early twenties, but we now know that they affect people of every age, race, gender and socioeconomic status.
- ✓ The best-known contributor to the development of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa is body dissatisfaction. (Stice, 2002).
- ✓ It has been said that in order to be self-compassionate, people need to recognize their suffering, pause and acknowledge it (Neff, 2011).

Relevant Resources

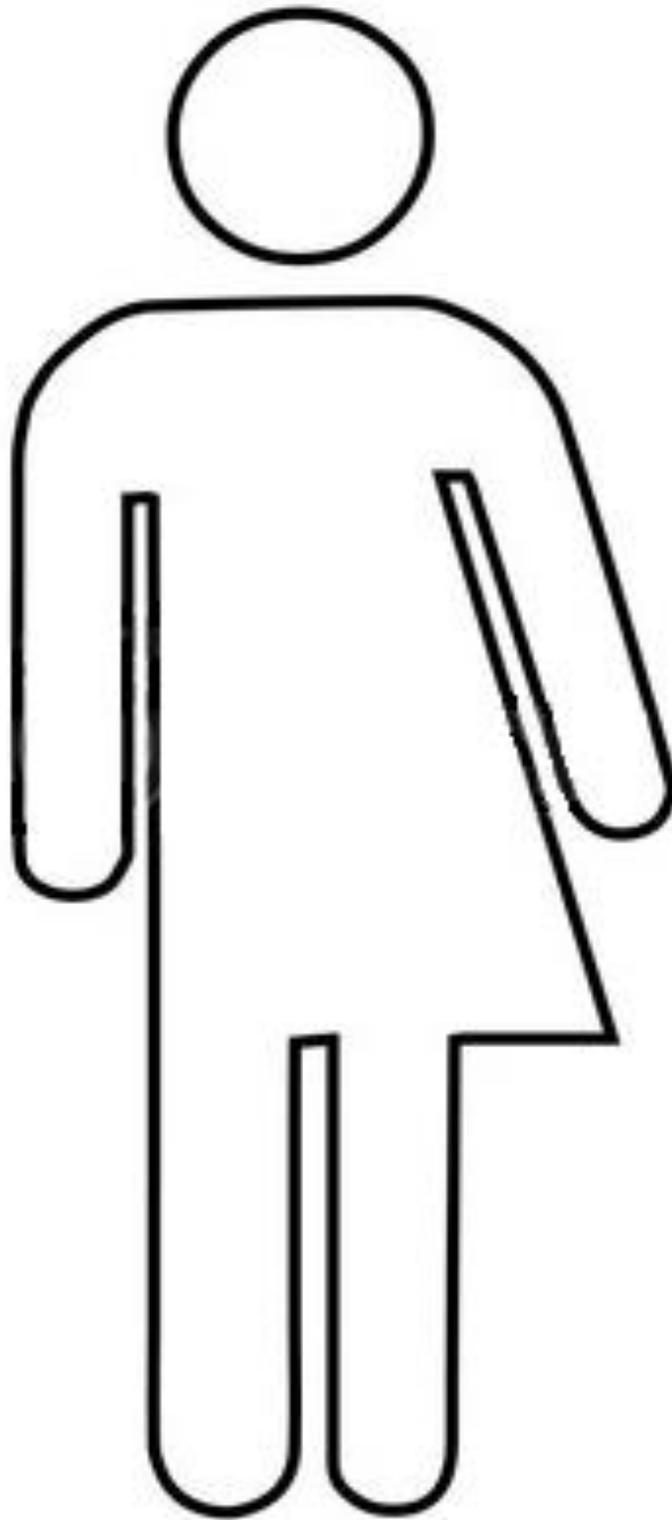
- [Every Body Is Different](#)
- [20 Ways To Love Your Body](#)
- [Developing & Modeling Positive Body Image](#)

Example Figures



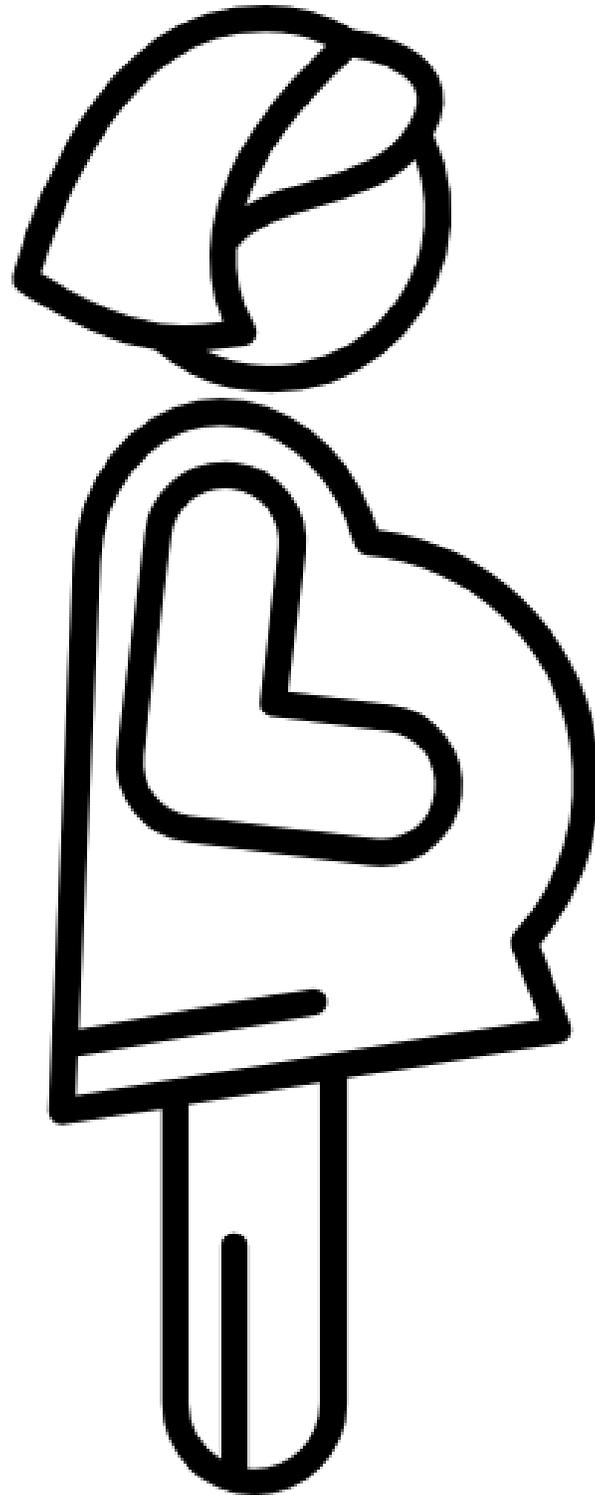




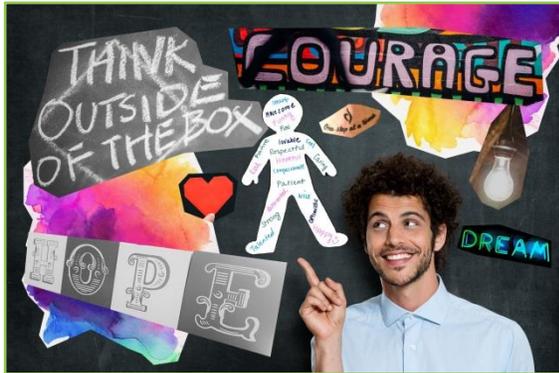








Activity #7: Reshaping Body Image



The media has a powerful influence on how we see ourselves. Often times it can make us feel inferior, imperfect, and like we need to change. While cutting down on the negative messages we take in, it's equally important to surround ourselves with positive images and messages. In this activity, we will create a collage to remind ourselves of our ideals, values, and goals.

Materials

- Magazines and photos
- Poster board
- Markers, colored pencils, scissors, glue and/or tape
- Image from **Activity #6: Self (Esteem) Portrait** (optional)

Tip: Try to select diverse magazine offering pictures of men and women of varied races, ethnicities, ages, and sizes.

Instructions

1. Select images from photo albums, magazines, the internet, artwork, etc.
Examples include:
 - ❖ Heroes and role models
 - ❖ Inspirational quotes
 - ❖ Photos of loved ones
 - ❖ Values and goals
 - ❖ Image from **Activity #6: Self (Esteem) Portrait** (optional)
2. Sort through your images, quotes, and words; decide what belong where. Be selective about the images you are using and make sure they adequately represent your ideals, values, and goals.
3. Glue or tape your images on the poster board. You can also use magnets on a whiteboard or pins on a cork board.
4. Hang up in a visible spot like your bedroom or locker, and refer back to this vision board when you find yourself consumed by negative body and media pressures.

Questions to Think About

- Now that you've made this vision board, do you view media's impact on your life differently?
- How might seeing these positive messages multiple times a day change the way you feel about yourself?
- What are some other strategies to help you be surrounded by positive media messages?

Did You Know?

- ✓ 67% of American women wear a size 14 or larger (Refinery29, 2016), yet only 2% of mainstream media images feature plus-size women (Dunn & Christel, 2017).
- ✓ Herzog, Franko, and Cable (2008) identify the media's role in presenting to young women an unattainable body type ideal as a precursor to body dissatisfaction and dieting
- ✓ 45 minutes of creative activity significantly lessens stress in the body, regardless of artistic experience or talent (Kaimal, Ray, & Muniz, 2016).

Relevant Resources

- [5 Ways to Add Positive Inspiration to Your Life](#)
- [10 Steps to Positive Body Image](#)
- [10 Simple Ways to Practice Self-Love](#)

Activity #8: Change the Beat



In recent years, music lyrics have gotten increasingly explicit and saturated with sexual and objectifying references. As activists, we have the power to change the lyrics of songs with negative messages to promote acceptance and diversity. In this activity, we will pick a song and change the lyrics to encourage positive self-esteem and body image.

Materials

- Music player or Computer
- Music library or YouTube
- Paper and pen
- Dictionary or thesaurus (optional)

Instructions

1. Choose a song that promotes harmful appearance- and societal-ideals, or simply a catchy tune.
2. Search the lyrics of the song from the Internet and print or write out the lyrics.
3. Listen to the song while reading the lyrics.
4. Select a verse (or the entire song) and replace the lyrics with fun, body-loving lines.
5. Share your completed song lyrics with your friends and family or on social media.

Questions to Think About

- How do explicit songs that promote violence, racism, sexism, and homophobia make you feel about your body?
- Conversely, how do body-positive songs (e.g. *Girl on Fire* by Alicia Keys) impact your mood?
- Do you think that applying body-positive messages to a catchy tune can help you internalize the message? Why or why not?

Did You Know?

- ✓ 44 – 81% of music videos and 70% of rap, hip-hop, and rhythm & blues (R&B) include song lyrics with content that is sexually degrading towards women and promotes materialism, power, and physical prowess (APA, 2007).
- ✓ Just ten minutes of exposure to music videos featuring thin, sexualized performers led to a measurable increase in body dissatisfaction (Bell, Lawton, & Dittmar, 2007).
- ✓ Teenage boys who watch music videos are at higher risk of becoming obsessed with bodybuilding (Tiggemann, 2005).
- ✓ Women of color are less likely to be influenced by music videos and other media (Zhang, Dixon, Conrad, 2010).

Relevant Resources

- ["Not About Your Waist": An Interview with Natty Valencia](#)
- [How I Used Songwriting as a Way to Heal](#)
- [Finding Strength in More Than Making Music](#)

Bonus: Body Positive Playlist

Beautiful – Christina Aguilera	Born This Way – Lady Gaga	Brave – Sara Bareilles
Confident – Demi Lovato	Freckles – Natasha Bedingfield	F*ckin' Perfect – Pink
Girl on Fire – Alicia Keys	Most Girls – Hailee Steinfeld	Pretty Hurts – Beyoncé
Rainbow – Kesha	Scars to Your Beautiful – Alessia Cara	Secrets – Mary Lambert
This Is Me – Keala Settle	True Colors – Cyndi Lauper	Try – Colbie Caillat
Unpretty – TLC	Who You Are – Jessie J	Who Says – Selena Gomez

WHAT'S ON YOUR "BOPO" PLAYLIST? TWEET [@NEDASTAFF](#) WITH YOUR FAVORITE SELF-LOVE HITS!

Activity #9: Dear Body,



When was the last time you thanked your body for all of the great things it allows you to do? We often critique our bodies for its flaws and imperfections, rather than appreciating its function and strength. In this activity, we will write a letter to our bodies that focuses on what it does for you and why you're grateful. This has proven to be an effective way to increase body satisfaction.

Materials

- Pen and paper
- Computer (optional)
- Mirror (optional)

Instructions

1. Brainstorm by making a list of specific things your body can do for which you're grateful.
2. Write a letter to your body. Be sure to thank your body at the end of the letter.
3. Keep the letter and refer back to it when negative body thoughts pop into your head.

Questions to Think About

- Did completing this activity heighten your awareness of how you define your body?
- What challenges arose while writing this letter?
- How did this exercise make you feel?

Did You Know?

- ✓ 51% of women have avoided activities because they felt self-conscious about their bodies (Refinery29, 2016).
- ✓ A recent study of adolescent boys reveals that nearly 18% of boys are highly concerned about their weight and physique (Field, Sonnevile, Crosby, Swanson, Eddy, Camargo Jr, Horton, & Micali, 2014).
- ✓ Research suggests health benefits of writing about positive experience, including increased mood and decreased illnesses (Burton & King, 2004).

Relevant Resources

- [A Letter to My Body](#)
- [When Writing Makes You Feel Worse \(But Could Help You Feel Better\)](#)
- [10 “Will-Powers” for Improving Body Image](#)

Activity #10: Love Your Selfie



With an abundance of editing apps and programs at our fingertips, we often feel pressure to fix “imperfections” before posting pictures on social media. In this activity, we will unapologetically post unedited photos of ourselves – or with a group of friends – without using filters or retouching. This activity will empower us to spend less time worried about what we look like, and more time having fun hanging with your crew.

Materials

- Phone or camera
- An outfit or accessories that make you confident in the skin you’re in
- Family, friends, and furry loved ones (optional)

Instructions

1. Post an unfiltered and unedited photo of yourself on social media.
 - ❖ Try to challenge yourself to display an area of your body that you typically hide due to body image concerns.
2. Come up with a fun caption, include [#NEDAselfie](#), and don’t forget to tag [@neda!](#)

Optional: Design body positive swag (e.g., t-shirts, bracelets, etc.). Take a photo in your gear and share with NEDA and friends on social media.

Questions to Think About

- Do you think that it was easier to post a photo with the hashtag [#NEDAselfie](#) than posting an unfiltered photo with no explanation?
- Did you notice a difference in the types of comments and number of likes on your unfiltered photo?
 - If so, did you receive any positive feedback?
- After completing this activity guide, have you noticed that you feel differently about your own body?

Did You Know?

- ✓ The average millennial will spend about an hour a week to take up to 25,700 selfies in their lifetime (Now Sourcing and Frames Direct, 2014).
- ✓ 35% of teens active on social media are worried about being tagged in an unattractive photo (Common Sense Media, 2012).
- ✓ 65% of teenage girls said seeing their selfies on social media boosts their confidence (TODAY/AOL Ideal to Real Body Image Survey, 2014)

Relevant Resources

- [Unrealistic Social Media Portrayals May Contribute to Body Dissatisfaction](#)
- [Instagramming for Change: An Interview with Megan of Body Positive Panda](#)
- [5 Inspirational Challenges That Will Actually Make You Feel Good About Yourself](#)

BODY ACCEPTANCE FOLLOW UP (T/F)

Read the following questions to help measure how accepting you are with your body and of yourself. Write **true (T)** if you agree with the statement and **false (F)** if the statement doesn't currently ring true for you. We hope you have noticed an improvement in the way you perceive your body and answered *true* more frequently than the first time you filled out this checklist on page 6 . Body acceptance is journey, and we encourage you to continue to challenging yourself and your body image concerns.

- _____ I like the way I look and appreciate my unique traits
- _____ I can easily name my favorite body part
- _____ I look in the mirror and see a beautiful person looking back
- _____ I do not participate in group body bashing of myself and others
- _____ I move my body in ways that are joyful and fun without the goal of changing my physical appearance
- _____ I do not compare my appearance to anyone else
- _____ I compliment others for their accomplishments rather than their appearance
- _____ I wear clothing that fits my body and makes me feel good regardless of the size
- _____ I do not comment on other people's weight
- _____ I do not let the number on the scale determine my self-worth
- _____ I do not avoid certain activities or clothing for fear of judgement
- _____ I post realistic, unedited photos of myself on social media
- _____ I know that media does not set the standards of beauty or perfection
- _____ I don't feel the need to alter my natural physical appearance
- _____ I realize that I'm beautiful no matter what shape or size I am
- _____ I know that true beauty is not simply skin deep

Resources: Information & Support

Eating disorders are serious illnesses that can be life-threatening. They are also extremely complex illnesses, arising from a variety of biological, psychological and social factors. NEDA has amassed a large resource of information to help you better understand eating disorders, which can be found at <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn>.

Take an Eating Disorders Screening Are you struggling with food or exercise issues? Take this free, confidential online eating disorders screening today and share the link with students and educators.

The NEDA Helpline is available **Monday-Thursday** from **9AM to 9PM ET**, and **Friday** from **9AM to 5PM ET**. Contact the Helpline for support, resources and treatment options for yourself or a loved one. You may reach the Helpline at (800) 931-2237.

The **Click-to-Chat** option and **Facebook** are alternative ways to speak with a live, trained Helpline volunteer, should you prefer instant messaging the Helpline instead of speaking to a volunteer over the phone.

For crisis situations, text "**NEDA**" to **741741** to be connected with a trained volunteer 24/7.

You may also reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

Resources: Glossary

Activism: practice of individuals challenging the status quo in order to bring about social, political or economic change.

Advocacy: public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.

Appearance-ideal (also referred to as the thin-ideal or beauty-ideal): narrow, unhealthy, and unattainable cultural expectations of how we should look.

Body checking: obsessive, intrusive thoughts and behaviors about body shape and size that can involve repeatedly checking appearance in the mirror, checking the size and appearance of certain body parts, and/or asking others whether they look fat.

Body dissatisfaction: one's negative feelings toward his or her body, often regarding weight and size.

Body image: one's thoughts and perceptions about their physical appearance.

Body Project: evidence-based group intervention program that provides a forum for young women who have internalized the beauty-ideal to critique it in verbal, written, and behavioral exercises.

Cognitive dissonance theory: inconsistent thoughts create psychological discomfort that motivates people to alter their beliefs to produce greater consistency.

Disordered eating: term used to describe any atypical eating behavior.

Diversity: the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Empowerment: the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.

Evidence-based treatment: treatments that are based on scientific evidence and research trials, and have been shown to be effective. Also known as empirically-supported treatment or evidence-based practices.

Healthy body weight: a weight range in which a person is physically and psychologically healthy.

Mainstream media: media that disseminate messages to the general public via the largest distribution channels.

Media Literacy: ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending.

Perfectionism: a drive for perfection that can exist before the onset of an eating disorder or may occur alongside it and disappear during recovery.

Prevention: efforts to promote health and reduce the chances of developing disease.

Retouch: to alter an image by adding or removing lines, lightening areas, etc.

Risk factor: any factor that makes it more likely that an individual will develop a condition or disease.

Self-care: caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words, actions and thoughts.

Self-confidence: belief in oneself and one's powers or abilities.

Self-esteem: a confidence and satisfaction in oneself.

Thin-ideal internalization: Thin-ideal internalization is the extent to which a person identifies with the cultural ideal that thinness is equivalent to attractiveness.

Thinspiration: *Slang.* Photographs, poems, or any other stimuli that aim to influence a person to strive to lose weight.

Triggering: Words, subjects and images can have the impact of triggering negative thoughts and feelings.

Values: a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life.

*For a comprehensive list of terms, please visit
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/glossary*

Resources: Inspirational Quotes

“Learning to be grateful for our bodies and taking care of them are the best ways for us to empower ourselves physically, mentally, and spiritually.” - Demi Lovato

“This is who I am. I am proud at any size. And I love you, and want you to be proud in any form you may take as well.” - Lady Gaga

“I love my body, and I would never change anything about it. I'm not asking you to like my body. I'm just asking you to let me be me.” - Serena Williams

“My great hope for us as young women is to start being kinder to ourselves so that we can be kinder to each other. To stop shaming ourselves and other people for things we don't know the full story on – whether someone is too fat, too skinny, too short, too tall, too loud, too quiet, too anything. There's a sense that we're all 'too' something, and we're all not enough.” -Emma Stone

All bodies are beautiful; let's face it. We are so overly critical of ourselves – with the obsession with perfection, trying to reach a goal that's unrealistic” - Jennifer Aniston

“To lose confidence in one's body is to lose confidence in oneself.” –Simone de Beauvoir

“I was one of the only girls in my high school that didn't get a nose job. And if anybody needed it, I probably did. I'm proud to be on a positive show and to be a voice for girls and say, 'You don't need to look like everybody else. Love who you are.” - Lea Michelle

“We must shift our culture from viewing women as objects so that we are empowered to make choices not based on how other people see us, but instead how we feel.” - Tracee Ellis Ross

“I think no matter what you look like, the key is to first of all be happy with yourself. And then you know if you want to try to improve things that you don't like about yourself, then do it after you appreciate yourself.” - Adele

"Whether I put on weight or take it off, someone's got something to say, so what I've figured is this: As long as I'm healthy and happy, cool. I'm just me – take it or leave it. And personally, I think I'm looking good!" - Kelly Clarkson

"I love my snaggle fangs. They give me character and character is sexy." - Kirsten Dunst

"My main beauty tip is don't say that negative thing when you look in the mirror. It just isn't healthy...That lack of beating up on ourselves – that's my new mantra. Happiness is the best makeup; a smile is better than any lipstick you'll put on." - Drew Barrymore

"The more I like me, the less I want to pretend to be other people." - Jamie Lee Curtis

"I want to be a voice for that: just because I've lost weight doesn't mean that I'm happy and content with my body. Because of the media, and because of what I feel I should look like, it's always going to be a battle in my head." - Sam Smith

"It's not so much about physical beauty – or it shouldn't be," she said. "It's more about who you are as a person on the inside. That's what you should really focus on. That's where the beauty starts and that's where it'll shine from." - Jazmine Sullivan

"If the body positive movement is going to be a success, there can't be any exceptions. People can't just be positive towards the bodies that look like theirs or the ones they admire on social media." - Troy Solomon

"Take that one thing that you don't like about yourself and more often than not that's the one thing that makes you more special. Whether it's that gap in your teeth, or that mole you never liked, or your skin color." - Shay Mitchell

"I think it's an absolutely ludicrous idea that beauty only fits in one box. You look at history, look at who are our most beautiful, iconic women in the world and they're all different shapes and sizes and colors and heights. It doesn't matter what measurement is around our thigh, it matters what you put out into the world. It matters how many times a day you smile, and are you good to the people in your life. Are you good to the people you work with? Are you good to your family and your friends? Are you good to your community? Those are the things that make a person beautiful." - Sophia Bush