

THE BODY PROJECT

A Dissonance-Based Body Acceptance and Eating Disorder
Prevention Program

4-Session Manual



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The Body Project

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is excited to present you with this manual, which outlines a dissonance-based body acceptance intervention referred to as the *Body Project*. Backed by two decades of research and evaluation data, the *Body Project* was developed and evaluated at Stanford University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Oregon Research Institute. 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. There is further evidence that the *Body Project* intervention reduces the risk of future onset of eating disorders and obesity.

The intervention consists of verbal, written, and behavioral exercises in which participants voluntarily critique our culturally promoted appearance ideal for women during four weekly sessions. These activities have been shown to result in decreased subscription to the appearance ideal and consequent reductions in body dissatisfaction, negative mood, dieting, and eating disorder symptoms, as well as decreased risk for future eating disorders and improved psychosocial functioning when delivered by research clinicians (Stice, Marti, Spoor, Presnell, & Shaw, 2008; Stice, Mazotti, Weibel, & Agras, 2000; Stice, Shaw, Burton, & Wade, 2006) as well as clinicians who work in high schools and colleges (Stice, Butryn, Rohde, Shaw, & Marti, 2013; Stice, Rohde, Gau, & Shaw, 2009; Stice, Rohde, Shaw & Gau, 2011). A rigorous trial found that the intervention prevented 60% of the cases of eating disorders that emerged in the control condition over a three-year follow-up, suggesting that for every 100 young women who complete this program, there should be nine fewer young girls who develop eating disorders over the subsequent three-year period. The effects produced by this intervention are superior to those of several alternative interventions. Numerous independent labs have replicated the positive effects of this intervention (Becker, Smith, & Ciao, 2006; Green, Scott, Diyankova, Gasser, & Pederson, 2005; Halliwell & Diedrichs, 2014; Matusek, Wendt, & Wiseman, 2004; Mitchell, Mazzeo, Rausch, & Cooke, 2007; Roehrig, Thompson, Brannick, & van den Berg, 2006).

Consistent with the intervention theory, reductions in appearance ideal internalization mediate the *Body Project*'s effects on change in eating disorder symptoms, (Seidel et al., 2009; Stice et al., 2007) and participants assigned to high- versus low-dissonance versions of this program showed greater eating disorder symptom reduction (Green et al., 2005; McMillan et al., 2011). The *Body Project* also produced larger symptom reductions for youth with initially elevated appearance ideal internalization, consistent with the thesis that they experience more dissonance, (Stice et al., 2008) and eliminated the negative effect of exposure to thin models on body dissatisfaction in young girls (Halliwell & Diedrichs, 2014). Participants who completed the *Body Project* showed a reduction in brain reward region response to thin models, when compared to **controls (Stice, Yokum, & Waters, 2014)**, **indicating that this body acceptance intervention reduces** neural response to stimuli thought to play a key role in promoting disturbances in body image and eating.

No other body acceptance intervention/eating disorder prevention program has been found to significantly reduce future eating disorder onset, outperform alternative credible interventions, produce effects that persist through a three-year follow-up, or produce effects that have been replicated by independent research teams.

NEDA AND THE BODY PROJECT

In 2014-2015, the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) partnered with five Title I schools in New York City to disseminate the renowned *Body Project*. The program was delivered to ethnically diverse student populations, expanding the program's reach and presenting exciting opportunities to improve the activities with cultural competency adaptations. Results from the pilot initiative indicated a general trend of improvement in all measures: (a) thin ideal internalization, (b) dietary restraint, (c) body dissatisfaction, (d) negative affect and (e) eating disorder symptoms. While participants in the New York State pilot showed improvement across measures, NEDA made adjustments to the script to better suit more diverse populations. Previous versions of the *Body Project* manual used the term "thin-ideal" to define the cultural appearance ideal; however, results from NEDA's pilot study indicate that the thin ideal is not representative of all cultural appearance ideals.

As of November 2016, NEDA has trained facilitators from 27 states and four countries. With funding from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, NEDA partnered with 15 community organizations to disseminate the *Body Project* to NYC youth. Through this partnership, NEDA is continuing to evaluate the cultural competency of the *Body Project* program script and will incorporate a social media campaign based on body activism projects.

NEDA has created a password-protected website for NEDA-trained facilitators and trainers. The website enables those trained by NEDA to access up-to-date resources and tracking tools, so that NEDA can provide feedback on the *Body Project*'s reach and impact on both a national and local level. In the near future, NEDA-trained facilitators will have the ability to post questions or share tips with other NEDA-trained facilitators or trainers. If you have any comments or questions, contact NEDA's program associate, Chelsea Kronengold, at ckronengold@myneda.org.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

According to Festinger (1957), **cognitive dissonance** occurs when there is a discrepancy between one's beliefs and one's actions. This inconsistency creates psychological discomfort, which then motivates the individual to reduce the cognitive discord by changing their beliefs. In this intervention, adolescent girls and young women who subscribe to the appearance-ideal are subtly encouraged to critique the appearance-ideal through a series of verbal, written, and behavioral exercises. These activities are theorized to produce cognitive dissonance, which reduces the extent to which they subscribe to the appearance-ideal, which in turn is thought to result in improvements in body dissatisfaction, negative affect, and eating disorder symptoms. Thus, the overarching goal of this intervention is to have the participants speak, write, or act in a way that is contrary to the appearance-ideal. It is vital for the participants to generate the costs of the appearance-ideal, rather than the group leaders, because the latter would not produce

cognitive dissonance. In addition, participants should never focus on any benefits of the appearance-ideal, because this will only undermine the effects of the intervention.

It is important that group leaders not embellish this intervention in any way (e.g., discuss a past history of an eating disorder) because this may undermine the effects of the intervention that have been observed in past trials.

STRUCTURE

Groups are led by a facilitator or two, who can be educators, youth program coordinators, psychology and social work graduate students, eating disorder specialists, and more. Program facilitators are empathetic, experienced in facilitating group discussions, and have an interest in women's health and empowerment.

It is often useful to include a co-facilitator who can be a participant from a previous group, to help run the sessions (e.g., pass out material and write participant responses on a whiteboard). Experience suggests that the optimal group size is approximately 6 to 8 participants, as this ensures that all group members will be able to participate verbally. The group meets for four consecutive weeks in 1-hour sessions (or six, 45-minute sessions).

COMMON PROBLEMS

Home exercises assignments can pose difficulties, especially those that seem “homework-like.” Participants’ adherence to between-session assignments depends on whether leaders emphasize the importance of completing these exercises and how well facilitators track the assignments in subsequent session. Contacting participants via email, phone or text a day before the scheduled session can help prompt participants to complete their assignments and bring them to their next session. Additionally, all home exercise forms should be placed in participants’ folders, which should be kept in the possession of the facilitator.

Participants often are extremely invested in the appearance-ideal and may have difficulty letting go of this pursuit. However, it is important not to allow *participants* to argue for the appearance-ideal, as this will only solidify their position further. Always keep in mind that the primary goal of the intervention is to get the *participants* to criticize and challenge the appearance-ideal. Group facilitators should try to get other group members to speak out against the appearance-ideal or pose counter arguments to pro-appearance-ideal statements voiced by participants. Experience indicates that the program does not work if *participants* do not critique the appearance-ideal. It may be helpful for facilitators to say that they are simply trying to follow the script when they ask participants to discuss the costs rather than the benefits of pursuing the appearance-ideal. Facilitators can simply ask a reluctant participant to just give the activities their best shot, telling them that they are free to revert back to their old opinions after the group is over. It is also crucial for facilitators to keep self-disclosure to a minimum to ensure that participants maximize the time spent critiquing the appearance-ideal.

It is useful to make a distinction between the appearance-ideal and the healthy ideal. The appearance-ideal is about conforming to a very rigid societal/cultural standard of beauty, such as

appearing ultra-slender. People often engage in very unhealthy behaviors to attain this slenderness, including laxative abuse, and go to extreme ends, such as cosmetic surgery, to attain this ultra-slender look. In contrast, the healthy ideal is about striving for a healthy body, which is typically nowhere near as slender as the appearance-ideal, in part because it is healthy to have muscles. Healthy looks different on everyone. Further, individuals pursuing the healthy ideal do not engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors, such as fasting and laxative abuse.

It is also important to engage all participants during the group sessions. Although it is crucial to follow the manual closely, participants often get bored if group leaders just read directly from the script. Therefore, becoming familiar with the main points of the script is recommended. Maintaining eye contact with participants during the entire session and using first names helps encourage discussion as well. Be sure to look at each participant and try to draw her in to the discussions, paying special attention to those who are less talkative or reluctant to speak up. If one or two participants tend to dominate the discussion, call on other participants to share their opinions. Go around the entire group so that *each* group member can participate in each main activity (change the order so the same person does not always have to go first). Try to use humor when possible, be relaxed, smile and laugh when appropriate, and listen carefully to what participants are saying. When a participant shares personal information or discusses difficulties they have with body image, make empathetic statements (“Wow, it sounds like you’re really struggling with this”, “That must have been hurtful when your father made that comment to you about your weight”).

It is also important to manage the time carefully during the sessions. A co-facilitator can help with this. In order for participants to get maximal benefit from the intervention, you should cover *each activity* and allot the recommended time to each activity. Spending too much time processing activities that occur early in the session will result in insufficient time for the activities that occur later in the session and can result in a rushed feeling. It is sometimes necessary to tactfully interrupt particularly talkative individuals so that the group leader can move the group onto the next exercise in the manual. If you find that you are consistently running out of time before completing all the activities in the session, consider using the 6 50-minute version of the *Body Project*, which provides a little more time for activities. Alternatively, consider adding an additional few minutes per session, if possible.

MANUAL GUIDELINES

The curriculum contained in this manual has been demonstrated in dozens of randomized trials to be an effective prevention program for individuals at risk for eating disorders. Adherence to the manual protocol is critical in obtaining positive outcome results.

If a participant misses a session, try to schedule a brief 15-minute mini-session that covers the important points and exercises with them. This is usually offered over the phone a few days before the next session or right before the next session begins. Although this represents extra work for the facilitators, it minimizes the number of missed sessions and helps girls feel their participation is important, and maximizes intervention effects.

The manual describes each of the 6 intervention sessions. For each session, information is provided on (a) materials used for the session, (b) a listing of topic areas to be covered, (c) main procedural elements for group leaders to follow, and (d) assigned home exercises for the participants to complete between sessions. Each session provides distinguished spaces to fill in the **On point leader:** _____ for the section. Instructions to facilitators are presented in regular typeface. Verbal instructions that group leaders should say, or paraphrase, to participants are presented in *italics*. Throughout the manual all handouts are distinguished in a box with **underlined bold print.**

NEDA's Guidelines for Facilitators

GUIDELINES FOR SELF-DISCLOSURE

- As the Body Project has decades of evidence supporting the effectiveness of the program as written, it is crucial to follow the script to allow for the best possible results.
- Know your limits. Remember, because you are not an expert or professional in the eating disorders field, you are not responsible for providing therapy. If you suspect a group member is currently struggling, share your concerns with the representative from the school. NEDA has numerous resources to help you or someone you know struggling with an eating disorder:
 - Call our toll free, confidential Helpline number at 1-800-931-2237
 - NEDA maintains a [database of treatment options and support groups](#)
 - Our [parent](#), [educator](#), and [coach/athletic trainer](#) toolkits tackle the complex nature of eating disorders in a way that is useful and easy to understand.
- If participants ask questions you are unsure of how to answer, it is absolutely fine to say, “You know, I’m actually not sure, but I will look into that,” and refocus participants on the topic at hand. Check-in with NEDA’s program coordinator with any questions, comments or situations that concerned you or made you feel uncomfortable. Your role is to guide participants through the sessions, not to be able to answer every question that arises during the program.
- Know what you are and are not willing to share. As the goal is to engage the participants in actively speaking out against societal beauty ideals, group facilitators should keep sharing to a minimum. There are ways to empathize with feelings and pressures that participants identify, without disclosing details of your personal experiences. Try validating participants’ feelings with statements like:
 - “I understand, that is really hard.”
 - “Yeah, those thin-ideal comments really bothered/confused me too.”
 - “Its really common to feel that way”
 - “I bet a lot of women have had a similar experience”
 - “I’m so glad you felt comfortable sharing that with the group... can anyone else relate to that experience?”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SELF-CARE

- First and foremost, commit to your own recovery. Before becoming a body image advocate and leading group discussions of body image, relationships with food/disordered eating and societal beauty ideals, be sure you are an advocate for yourself. Leading groups for teens who are navigating confusing messages about health & appearance, and who may be at risk for developing an eating disorder, is a big responsibility!
- Understand that the topics and exercises of the Body Project may bring up a lot of emotions. It is imperative to stay focused on your own recovery before taking steps to The Body Project National Eating Disorders Association Proud2Bme.org help others. If

you are currently working with a professional, or have worked with one in the past, please ask for her/his feedback regarding your decision to facilitate the Body Project.

- Before leading a group, ask yourself, “Am I able to model truly healthy eating behaviors in groups and outside of groups?” If you are not, this may not be the right time for you to facilitate the Body Project. Talk to NEDA’s Volunteer Coordinator to discuss other ways to get involved with NEDA and Proud2Bme.
- Be prepared for assumptions. As a facilitator, you are in a unique position to clear up some widespread myths about weight bias, dieting and the prevalent photo manipulation. Study the facilitator fact sheet in the beginning of your handbook, and prepare to respond to assumptions & questions with facts. Practice how you might respond to some frequently asked questions or prevalent misunderstandings, and how you might move the conversation forward, staying focused on the topic at hand. Don’t get caught up in debates and side conversations, as this can be a detriment to the flow and impact of the program, and will leave less time for the entire group to actively participate in proven effective exercises.
- Remember your reason for getting involved with the Body Project. Before leading a group, consider your motivation for doing so. While it may be personally rewarding, also keep in mind that you have an important obligation to empower the teenage members of your group with knowledge and positivity to raise their body satisfaction and prevent disordered eating.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL TRIGGERED

- Be mindful of how you feel as you read and practice each session. Are certain topics or exercises particularly difficult for you? If it is helpful, ask your co-facilitator to lead those exercises that are uncomfortable for you.
- Check-in with yourself after each session. How did you feel throughout the session? Journal or meditate if that is helpful to you.
- If you are currently working with a therapist, discuss your experience as a group leader. If you do not have a therapist and would like to connect with one, you can refer to NEDA’s directory of facilities and treatment providers.
- Call NEDA’s toll free, confidential Helpline at 1-800-931-2237.
- If at any point you feel unable to continue as a group leader, please contact the program coordinator ASAP and we will work with you on a smooth transition. Your health is top priority.

The Body Project: Facilitator Fact Sheet

1. **Fashion Magazines** (According to *former fashion magazine editor*; International Conference on Eating Disorders)

- **Function of a fashion magazine:** To convince women that something is wrong with them (e.g., hair, body, sex life, etc.) so that they can sell their product (i.e., the content of the magazine) to fix it. The more anxious they make you, the more likely you will buy the magazine and the larger their readership, which increases advertising sales.
- How they convince you something is wrong
 - **Lead articles:** Pulitzer Prize winning article on eating disorders or cancer not going to win author a big bonus. However, writing an article which produces the following title will: “You never knew what your butt looked like from the rear! Strategies for a better behind.”
 - **Idealized images:** Digital enhancement, make-up, clothes pinning etc.
- At this editor’s magazine, many of the key staff had eating disorders due to a culture of disordered eating and weight/shape attitudes.
 - Couldn’t bring food onto the floor, because it was too upsetting for some staff
 - One woman brought scale to work and moved scale around bathroom floor until she got an acceptable weight.

2. **Advertising Strategies**

A. Physical Tactics

- Bras are stuffed with pads to fill out the front of a dress that is too loose.
- Padded underwear is also used to fill out the back of a dress.
- Duct-tape is often used to tape breasts together to create cleavage.
- Girdles are used to squeeze the flesh of models into a dress sample size that is too small.
- Excess flesh is duct-taped in the back for a front angle photograph depicting a taut, streamlined, wrinkle-free body. Models can be taped from the front for a rear or side angle photograph showing tight, firm hips, bottoms, legs, and arms.
- Heavy clamps are used to cinch clothing in and weigh it down to create an illusion of the perfect fit.

B. Computer Tactics

- Once a photo shoot is complete, images are altered even further through a process called re-imaging. By scanning the photograph into a computer, the image can be altered in thousands of ways. Almost every magazine uses computer re-imaging.
 - Complexion is cleaned up, eye lines are softened, chins, thighs and stomachs are trimmed, and neck lines are removed. Some pictures of models in magazines are not real. The pictures are computer-modified compilations of different body parts.
 - 20/20 aired a story of a photo shoot of supermodel Cindy Crawford. How much time was spent digitally editing and airbrushing her face and body? **2 hours.**

3. The average American woman is 5'4" tall and weighs 140 pounds. The average American model is 5'11" tall and weighs 117 pounds.
 - The average American woman wears a size 12 to 14.
 - **Marilyn Monroe**, Hollywood goddess, wore a size 12.
4. Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women (Smolak, 1996).
 - Twenty years ago, models weighed 8 percent less than the average woman. Today they weigh 23 percent less and many fall into an anorexic weight range.
 - Kate Moss is 5'7" and weighs 95 pounds. That is 30% below ideal body weight. Supermodels Niki Taylor and Elle Macpherson also meet the Body Mass Index criteria for anorexia.
 - Many of the models shown on television, advertisements, and in other forms of popular media are approximately 20% below ideal body weight, thus meeting the diagnostic criteria for anorexia nervosa (Dittmar & Howard, 2004).
5. 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. (When the models have large breasts, they've almost always had breast implants.)
6. Americans spend over \$60 billion on dieting and diet-related products each year (Marketdata Enterprises, 2010).
 - A study of mass media magazines discovered that women's magazines had 10.5 times more advertisements and articles promoting weight loss than men's magazines did (Guillen & Barr, 1994).
 - 95% of enrollees in weight loss programs are women although the sexes are overweight in equal proportions.
 - Women who have a history of chronic yo-yo dieting can decrease their overall lifespan of up to 20%!
7. In 1995, before television was first introduced to Fiji, there were no cases of eating disorder. Sixty-five adolescent school girls were followed over 3 years...
 - After the introduction of British and American television, **12.7%** of the girls had developed high eating disorder symptoms after 1 month and **29.2%** after 3 years.
 - Self-induced vomiting as weight control went from **0% in 1995** to **11.3% by 1998**.
8. Often, body doubles are used in films, TV commercials and advertising.
9. Celebrity work-outs ranging from 90 minutes to up to 6-7 hours A DAY at times.
 - P. Diddy has a personal trainer that makes \$500,000 a year on Puffy alone (VH-1).
 - Usher does 1000 crunches per day plus daily "forty minutes funk" (stretching & cardio) and strength training.
 - Hilary Swank for *Million Dollar Baby*: 4.5 hours per day, six days per week (from Oprah on line).

10. A study in 1995 found that after just three minutes spent looking at models in a fashion magazine, 70% of women reported feeling depressed, guilty, and ashamed of their bodies (Stice & Shaw, 1995).
11. A 1996 study found that the amount of time an adolescent watches soaps, movies and music videos is associated with their degree of body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996).
12. If shop mannequins were real women, they would be too thin to menstruate and bear children.
 - **Could Mannequins Menstruate?** (British Medical Journal; Rintala, Mustajoki, 1992) Store mannequins do not have enough body fat to menstruate. The researchers visited clothes stores and based on measurements of their mannequins calculated the percentage body fat that a woman the shape of a mannequin would carry. In direct contradiction to the slim, healthy and fertile physique that mannequins seek to portray and inflict on women, the finding of the study was that, overwhelmingly, shop mannequins, if they were people, would be infertile!
 - Clothing on mannequins is pinned, so clothes would never look the same on a real person unless it was pinned exactly perfect.
13. Women naturally carry fat on their hips and thighs - it is vital for fertility, prevention of osteoporosis, healthy skin, eyes, hair and teeth.
14. The National Weight Loss Registry, which tracks those that have achieved significant, long-term weight loss and is run by the Universities of Pittsburgh and Colorado, has documented that not one person has been successful by eliminating or severely restricting one of the macronutrients (protein, carbohydrate and fat).
 - Long term weight loss typically associated with low-fat, low calorie maintenance diet along with 1 hour of moderate exercise most days per week.
15. In the study, *Exposure to the Mass Media and Weight Concerns Among Girls*, the authors use a cross-sectional survey of 548 girls in 5th grade through 12th grade to assess influence of the media on weight concerns, weight control behaviors and perceptions of body weight and shape.
 - A majority of girls (59%) reported dissatisfaction with their body shape, and 66% expressed the desire to lose weight; the prevalence of overweight in this study was 29%.
 - Girls were asked about their frequency of reading women's fashion magazines. Some 69% reported that appearance of models in the magazines influenced their image of a perfect female body, and 47% desired to lose weight because of the magazine pictures.

SESSION 1

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

Materials:

- Flip chart (or whiteboard) and markers
- Handouts (should be placed in participants' folders)
- Nametags

Topic Areas:

- I. Introduction
- II. Voluntary Commitment and Overview
- III. Definition and Origin of the Appearance-Ideal
- IV. Costs Associated with the Appearance-Ideal
- VI. 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 this ideal. The importance of attendance and completing the home exercises is also stressed.

I. INTRODUCTION (8 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Thanks for coming. All of you decided to take part in this group because of your body image concerns —a common issue among women/girls.

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

That’s also why I’ll be referring to this script throughout the class. What we do here is based on scientific research, so I want to be sure to cover everything we know to be helpful.

The group leader begins by introducing herself to the group. Introductions include name, professional status, and personal information (e.g., something interesting or unique about themselves). The group leader asks the co-leader (if available) and group members to introduce themselves.

Let's start by getting to know each other better. Can each of you tell us your name and something unique or interesting about you? I will go first.

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?).

II. VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT AND OVERVIEW (2 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Soliciting voluntary commitment to participating in the class

Participants get the most out of these groups if they attend all four meetings, participate verbally, and complete all of the between-meeting exercises. It is important to clearly note that participation is voluntary, so I will ask each of you to go around the room and say, "I am willing to actively participate in the group." I will start...

Go around the room and have each participant **say** they are willing to actively participate.

During the four 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 the appearance-ideal
4. Discuss how to challenge our body-related concerns
5. Learn new ways to talk more positively about our bodies, and
6. Talk about how we can best respond to future body pressures

Attendance

It is important that everyone attends all four meetings. If you need to miss a meeting, please let me (or my co-facilitator) know as soon as possible. We will schedule a make-up meeting with you before the next regular group session so you will be caught up with everyone else.

Group leaders should **call or e-mail or 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" before the next session. Ask them to complete the home exercises before the next session too.

III. DEFINITION AND ORIGIN OF THE APPEARANCE-IDEAL (18 MINS)

<p>On point leader: _____ Scribe: _____</p>

Now we are going to define the cultural appearance-ideal for women to understand exactly what we are discussing. Imagine what society tells us the “perfect woman” looks like. What are her physical characteristics? 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.

Leave this on the board for the entire session.

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” has...

Read back the list on the board playfully highlighting the incompatible features. Depending on one’s cultural influences, the terms “beauty-ideal” or “thin-ideal” may be used interchangeably with “appearance-ideal.”

We call this “look” – this [thin, toned, busty] woman – “the appearance-ideal.” Depending on one’s cultural influences, the terms “beauty-ideal” or “thin-ideal” may be used interchangeably with “appearance-ideal.”

When defining the appearance-ideal, draw from whichever description the group provided (i.e. curvy, small-waist, tall, etc.) for the “perfect woman.” While the On Point Leader explains that the “perfect woman” description is actually the beauty/appearance ideal, the Scribe should cross out “Perfect Woman” on the flip chart and write “Appearance Ideal.”

The appearance-ideal is not the same as the healthy-ideal. With the appearance-ideal, people use extreme measures to look like a supermodel, including some very unhealthy weight control behaviors. The goal of the appearance-ideal is to achieve a figure 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, and looks different from person to person.

Where did the appearance-ideal come from and how do we learn about it?

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

Has our present beauty ideal always been the ideal for feminine attractiveness? Was there ever 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, super-models of today).

Is this ideal the same for all ethnic groups and cultures? How might this be different?

Give participants a chance to discuss differences of the appearance ideal (physical characteristics, including the appearance-ideal) for various ethnic groups and cultures. Summarize discussion to acknowledge that, just as the ideal has not been consistent over time, it also varies across ethnic and cultural groups.

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

How did that make you feel?

Discuss participant's personal experiences in these areas and the impact on their emotions and self-worth (i.e., emphasize the personal costs of society's focus on the appearance-ideal for women).

How do appearance-ideal messages from the media or other people in your life affect how you feel about your body?

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

MAKE SURE ALL PARTICIPANTS RESPOND.

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, wealth.

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

Do you really think all of these good things happen if you look like the appearance-ideal? 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 problems like substance addiction, no real friends, etc.

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 an ultra-thin appearance-ideal).

IV. COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PURSUING THE APPEARANCE-IDEAL (18 MINS)

<p>On point leader: _____</p> <p>Scribe: _____</p>
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We've discussed the appearance-ideal and where it comes from — now let's think about the costs involved with this ideal.

What are the costs of trying to look like the appearance-ideal for women/girls? Our scribe will make a list for us on the board.

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

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

Increased mental health care costs, decreased productivity, promote a culture of discontent.

Who benefits from the appearance-ideal? In other words, are you getting rich from this ideal?

Diet industry, media, fashion industry, fitness industry, plastic surgeons.

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

No!

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

V. HOME EXERCISES (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Group participants are reminded of the home-based assignment 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 the appearance-ideal? Think of as many costs as you can, and feel free to work with others to come up with ideas.

Please bring this letter to our next meeting so you can read it.

Pull the **Letter to Younger Girl** form from your packet (Exercise #1).

Second, we would like to ask you to stand in front of a mirror with as little clothing as you feel comfortable with and write down 10 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.

Please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list. It may be difficult at first, and it is important to recognize each of these areas about yourself. Students have found this exercise to be very helpful and empowering. When I did this exercise for the first time, I really enjoyed it because...

Make testimonial statement to encourage participants to complete this exercise.

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

Pull the **Mirror Exercise Form** from your packet (Exercise #2).

Third, please privately complete the brief checklist of appearance-ideal behaviors. It is designed to increase awareness of behaviors that perpetuate this ideal.

Pull the **Appearance-Ideal Perpetuation Behavior Checklist** from your packet (Exercise #3).

Can someone tell me what the home exercises are for this week in your own words?

1. Write a letter to a younger girl about the costs of pursuing the appearance-ideal.
2. Do the self-affirmation mirror exercise.
3. Complete the appearance-ideal perpetuation checklist.

We will discuss exercises next session. 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 (i.e., head nods).

I will be collecting all home exercises. 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:

Can everyone tell me something that “worked for you” in this session, or “hit home”?

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

SESSION 2

Prep: Email each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of this session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials:

- Nametags

Topic Areas:

- I. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment
- II. Letter to Younger Girl Exercise Debriefing
- III. Mirror Exercise Debriefing
- IV. Role Play: Discourage Pursuit of the Appearance-Ideal
- V. Home Exercises

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: _____

Thank you for coming to Session 2. As we mentioned in the first session, participation in this program is voluntary, so I would like each of you to go around the room and state that you are willing to actively participate in today's session. I will start...

Go around the room and have each participant say they are willing to actively participate.

II. LETTER TO YOUNGER GIRL 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 room so that each of us can share our letter with the rest of the group.

Have each participant read her letter. After each participant concludes reading her letter, respond by thanking her and/or making a positive comment about her letter.

NOTE: If a participant is unwilling to read her letter, ask her if she is willing to summarize it or choose an excerpt to read.

Everyone clearly spent a lot of time writing these letters and did a great job on them. Please hand them in!

Collect the **Letter to Adolescent Girl** form from your packet (Exercise #1).

III. MIRROR EXERCISE DEBRIEFING (12 MINS)

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?

What are at least three aspects of yourself that you are satisfied with, including two physical features? If you can, please try and pick more challenging areas to get the most out of this activity. I'll start, I like my...

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 was completely positive?”).

Collect the **Mirror Exercise Form** (Exercise #2).

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?

Hopefully, you recognize the positive things about yourselves and will remember them, particularly as the pressures of the appearance-ideal surround you. Given that these are potent pressures — let's discuss ways to resist them.

IV. ROLE PLAYS TO DISCOURAGE PURSUIT OF THE APPEARANCE-IDEAL (20 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Leaders take the role of either a severe dieter or eating disordered individual for each participant. Let each participant spend about two minutes attempting to dissuade your character from pursuing the appearance-ideal (do two role plays if necessary).

Tips on being “in character:”

- 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 statements that hint at the costs of pursuing the appearance-ideal (“It will take time away from my schoolwork and friends, but I’ll find a way to do it,” or “I really don’t think dieting like this is that dangerous”) so that the participant can point out those costs to you.
- Be difficult to persuade (you and the participants should volley the role play back and forth several times), but it is OK to be playful with this exercise. Feel free to go over the top a bit with the more resilient participants.
- Don’t give in. This will challenge the girls to actively speak out against the appearance ideal.

Now let’s review some examples of appearance-ideal statements, and practice how one could respond to them. I will play a person that is obsessed with the appearance-ideal and your job will be to convince me that I shouldn’t be. Feel free to use any of the costs and information brought up in our earlier discussions.

My co-facilitator and I will model the role-play first. I will be the facilitator who is obsessed with this ideal, and my co-facilitator will play the role of the participant who is trying to talk me out of it.

The facilitators should model the role-play before having participants do them.

Then select group members to participate, making sure each participant has a turn. Start with the most gregarious participant, or if no one volunteers, start with the person next to you and go around the room.

Sample statements for leaders appear below:

- *“Swimsuit season is just around the corner, so I think I will start skipping breakfast to take off some extra weight.”*
- *“I’m sure that I’d be popular if I could lose a little more weight.”*
- *“I just saw an ad for this new weight loss pill; I’m going to order it right away. I can finally be as thin as I want.”*
- *“I can’t meet you for dinner tonight because I have to go spend a few hours at the gym. I only went for two hours yesterday.”*
- *“I feel a little dizzy lately, which may be from these diet pills and laxatives I’ve been taking, but I don’t care because I have already lost 10 pounds.”*
- *“Most people have weak will power and give in to hunger – I will show people how much self-control I have by not eating anything but grapefruit.”*

- *“To be the best runner, I have to be down to my lightest weight. I am only doing this for my health—this will help me avoid injuries.”*
- *“I have to be thin or my life is ruined.”*
- *“Anyone could have the body of a supermodel if they really wanted it.”*
- *“No guy is ever going to ask me out unless I drop some of this weight.”*
- *“I am never going to be selected by a sorority unless I lose 10 pounds.”*
- *“I want to make sure I don’t gain that freshman 15 this year, so I am going to only eat a banana for breakfast and an apple for lunch every day.”*
- *“I am training for a marathon right now, so have to get in at least two three hour runs this weekend.”*
- *“My trainer says that if I cut out breakfast, I could be a better athlete.”*
- *“My schedule is packed so I never have time to eat. I know I could probably make time, but I like how much weight I’m losing”*
- *“I just got an app on my phone that helps me budget my calories. It says that in order to lose 10 pounds by next month, I can only have half of what I usually eat.”*
- *“If I want to go out tonight, I’ll have to skip lunch and dinner today.”*
- *“To get closer to that thigh gap I’ve been striving for, I think I’ll spend an hour on inner thigh exercises each day this week”.*
- *“Do you think smoking will make me skinny? I’ve heard it’s a great way to suppress your appetite.”*

Leaders should generate additional statements as needed and may tailor the statements to be appropriate for their group members.

Role-play debriefing

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.

How might it be beneficial for you to challenge 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.

V. HOME EXERCISES (5 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Home-based assignment for next session:

Now we would like to describe two home exercises for you to do before the next session. The first is to write a letter to someone in your life who pressured you to conform to the appearance-ideal, such as a parent, sibling, dating partner, or friend. Please tell them how this affected you and indicate how you would respond now, in light of what you have learned in these groups.

If no one has made appearance-related comments to you, please make up an example or use an example you have heard from others in the group or a friend.

Pull the **Rewind Response Letter** form from your packet (Exercise #4).

The second exercise is to come up with a top-10 list of things girls/women can do to resist the appearance-ideal. The goal of this exercise is to do something that will actually change your environment/the world, at least a little bit, in a way that will benefit other young women. Think of yourself as a social activist who is combating the appearance-ideal. What can you avoid, say, do, or learn to battle this unhealthy beauty ideal in your community? Please write your top-10 list down and bring it to the next group.

Does anyone have some ideas for this right now? I'd like to get a couple of examples in case anyone is confused.

Pull the **Top-10 List Form** from your packet (Exercise #5).

Elicit one or two examples. Examples:

1. Write a letter to a fashion magazine editor saying they should include a variety of body sizes in the magazine
2. Put post-its on mirrors in women's bathrooms saying "love your body" or "your mind makes you beautiful"
3. Stand outside a cosmetic surgeon's office with an "accept yourself the way you are" sign.
4. Write a Facebook, Twitter, or blog post that critiques the appearance-ideal and share it with family and friends.
5. Invite friends to join you in a boycott of a fashion magazine that promotes the appearance ideal.

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

1. Complete the rewind response letter.
2. Generate top 10-list of ways to challenge the appearance-ideal at a societal level.

Time permitting:

Can everyone tell me something that “worked for you” in this session, or “hit home”?

During the next meeting, we will talk more about resisting the appearance-ideal and how to challenge our personal body concerns. Does anyone have any questions before we leave today?

Thanks again for coming. We are looking forward to seeing you next week!

SESSION 3

Prep: Email each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of this session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials:

- Nametags

Topic Areas:

- I. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment
- II. Rewind Response Letter Exercise Debriefing
- III. Role-Play: Quick Comebacks to Appearance-Ideal Statements
- IV. Reasons for Signing Up
- V. Behavioral Challenge
- VI. Top 10 List Debriefing
- VII. Home Exercises

Session Overview: The focus of Session 3 is to further discuss how to resist the appearance-ideal, how to challenge personal body-related concerns, and how to respond to future pressures to conform to the appearance-ideal. Role-plays are also used so participants can practice making statements that counter the appearance-ideal.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (2 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Thanks for coming back to session 3. Like always, it is important to note that participation is voluntary. Is everyone willing to actively participate in today's session?

Make sure everyone at least gives you a head-nod in response.

II. REWIND RESPONSE LETTER DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked you to write a letter to someone in your life who has pressured you to conform to the appearance-ideal. We asked you to tell them how this affected you. We also asked you to indicate how you would respond now, in light of what you have learned from these groups.

We would like each of you to read your letters to the group. Who would like to start?

Go around the room and have all participants read their letter.

NOTE: If a participant is unwilling to read her letter, ask her if she is willing to summarize it or choose an excerpt to read.

How did it feel to write this letter?

Allow for group discussion.

Please turn in your rewind response letter form!

Collect the **Rewind Response Letter** form from your packet (Exercise #4).

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

On point leader: _____

We often do not notice some of the more subtle ways the appearance-ideal is perpetuated. Can any of you think of some ways that you or others might promote this ideal without even knowing it?

Possible responses include complimenting others' weight loss, commenting on what or how much you are eating, devoting a lot of time to thinking about how you can cut calories by becoming gluten-free or vegan, complaining about your body, and talking about celebrities who are either very thin or look as though they have gained weight.

Last week we asked you to talk someone out of pursuing the appearance-ideal in an extended role-play. This week we are going to do something a little different — we would like each of you to briefly challenge “appearance-ideal” statements with a quick comeback. Your goal is simply to derail the negative body talk.

For example, if I say: “Buy it a size smaller; it will be good motivation.” You could say: “There is nothing wrong with the size I currently wear.”

Facilitators should demonstrate first.

I would like each of you to counter two appearance-ideal statements I make. We will go around the room twice, each of you combatting one comment at a time.

Role-play using counter appearance-ideal statements to resist pressure from peers. Ask each participant to generate appearance-ideal statements in response to two statements that leaders generate. Go around the circle twice. If participants provide a lengthy answer, gently interrupt them and ask them to provide a response in just a sentence or two.

Sample statements:

- *"Wow, look at the size of that girl!"*
- *"Lindsay has really gained weight over the holidays."*
- *"I think if I cut out dairy and gluten I can really lose a lot of weight."*
- *"I'm thinking of going on a diet, do you want to join me?"*
- *"Don't you think that girl is a cow?"*
- *"I would never be friends with someone that heavy."*
- *"My trainer says I need to stop eating breakfast if I want to get to my ideal weight."*
- *"My brother says I look too fat, what do you think?"*
- *"I love listening to Adele, but she's hard to look at with all that excess weight."*
- *"I think it'd be really cool if we could both achieve a thigh gap."*
- *"I hate my body so much—I wish I could just wake up in a different one."*
- *"You know if you just stopped eating cheese, you would lose enough weight to look attractive."*
- *"Only skinny girls get asked out by guys."*
- *"She really doesn't have the body to be wearing that outfit."*
- *"I really wish I had the body of a model"*
- *"I was thinking of getting a tummy-tuck"*
- *"Does this dress make me look fat?"*
- *"No one will ever date me with this body."*
- *"I'm way too fat to be eating this."*
- *"You are so thin, how do you do it?"*
- *"I'm thinking of becoming vegan because I hear it helps you lose weight."*
- *"You are so thin, you have nothing to worry about."*
- *"If I don't lose some weight, I know he's going to cheat on me."*
- *"Let's start doing hot yoga, I heard you burn almost 1000 calories per class."*
- *"Spring break is coming up, do you really think you should be eating that?"*
- *"Coach says only to eat salads for lunch."*
- *"I'm trying a new juice cleanse, you should do it too!"*
- *"He told me he only dates girls with a thigh gap"*
- *"I can't believe such a whale showed up in that dress."*
- *"Buy it a size smaller; it will be good motivation."*
- *"You think you're out of shape? Look at me!"*

Role-play debriefing

How did it feel to do these role-plays?

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

Encourage discussion with additional questions as necessary (e.g., “Which statements were more challenging to respond to?” or “What would it be like in real life to indicate that you don’t support the appearance-ideal?”).

IV. REASONS FOR SIGNING UP FOR THIS CLASS (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

At this point, it is helpful for students to share the main reasons they signed up for this body acceptance class so that they can get some feedback from the group. I hope everyone will honestly share why they signed up for this group. For example, some girls have signed up because of a negative comment somebody made to them or because of concerns about the shape of their body.

What was the main reason you signed up for the group?

Have participants discuss as much as they are comfortable sharing. The purpose is to allow participants to share specific body image concerns and have the group challenge the thoughts and feelings that participants have about specific body parts.

If necessary, ask “*Would you be willing to say what body image concerns you have? Almost everyone has some type of concern!*”

Listening to you, it sounds like it would be helpful to some of you to challenge some of your fears and concerns related to your body image.

V. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE (10 MINS)

Are there things you do not do because of body image concerns?

(e.g., wearing certain clothes, going specific places, etc.)

Are you willing to do an experiment to help you feel better about your bodies? We would like to challenge you to do things that you currently do not do because of body image concerns. Doing this should increase your confidence and disprove your fears.

Examples include:

- *Wearing shorts to school if your legs are an area of concern for you*
- *Going to the pool in a swimsuit if you're usually scared to*
- *Exercising in public*
- *Wearing a form-fitting shirt or a tank top to the mall/dinner/library*
- *Wearing your hair up if you normally wear it down*
- *Wearing a sports bra without a top over it during work outs*
- *Not wearing make-up*
- *Going to the gym if you usually avoid it because of body image concerns*
- *Revealing a part of your body, such as your feet, that you tend to cover up (like wear sandals)*

We would like each of you to do two behavioral challenges in the next week (or the same challenge twice) and let us know how it went. Please take a moment to think of two things you would like to do but haven't done yet. Now let's go around the share the two things that you will do this week.

Have each participant share with the group two behavioral challenges that they will do in the next week. 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 too fat).

Pull the **Behavioral Challenge Form** from your packet (Exercise #6).

VI. TOP 10 LIST DEBRIEFING (15 MINS)

On point leader: _____

The second exercise from last session asked you to list 10 things that girls/women could do to resist the appearance-ideal — what you can avoid, say, do, or learn to fight this social pressure. This might be referred to as “body activism.”

Can each of you share three items on your list?

Collect the **Top-10 List Form** (Exercise #5).

We would like each of you to do at least two acts of body activism this week and then let us know how they go at the next session. For example, you could:

1. Put post-its that say, “you look great the way you are” into weight loss books at a bookstore
2. Put up a “love your body” poster in the girls’ restrooms at school
3. Hang body acceptance fliers around campus
4. Create a body talk jar that friend and family put change in any time they make a negative body statement.

Take a moment to choose the two forms of body activism that you will do. Now let’s go around the room and share the two things that you will do this week.

Pull the **Body Activism Form** (Exercise #7).

Have each participant choose two behaviors from their list to do during the next week. As needed, push participants to be specific in their plan (e.g., who will they do the activity with [if anyone], when will they do it, where will they do it, and how will they do it). As needed, also remind participants that body activism is intended to have an impact beyond the individual level (e.g., among friends, at school, in the community, etc.).

VII. HOME EXERCISES (3 MINS)

Again, we would like each of you to do two behavioral challenges relating to your personal body image concerns, and engage in two body activism exercises.

We would also like you to do a third exercise. Would you be willing to write a letter to your younger self, describing how to avoid developing body image concerns? Draw from what you have learned in these sessions. The goal is to give yourself advice on things you can do, say, avoid, or learn to help yourself develop a positive body image.

Refer to the **Letter to Younger Self Form** (Exercise #8).

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

Behavioral challenges; Body activism; Letter to younger self describing how to avoid developing body image concerns

Time permitting:

Can everyone tell me something that “worked for you” in this session, or “hit home”?

Once again, thanks for coming. See you next week for the final session!

SESSION 4

Prep: Email each participant before this session to remind them about the time/location of this session and to complete the home exercises.

Materials:

- Nametags

Topic Areas:

- I. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment
- II. Behavioral Challenge Debriefing
- III. Body Activism Debriefing
- IV. Letter to Younger Self Debriefing
- V. Benefits of the Group/Closure Discussion
- VI. Self-Affirmation Exercise
- VII. Home Exercises
- VIII. Closure

Session 4 Overview: The focus of Session 4 is to discuss participants' experiences with the behavioral challenge and body activism exercises, and to discuss how the ways in which we talk about our bodies may promote the appearance-ideal. This final session focuses on having participants come up with more positive alternative ways of talking about their bodies and encouraging participants to continue to challenge their body image issues in the future.

I. REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (2 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Welcome back to our final session. Is everyone willing to participate verbally in today's session?

Make sure everyone at least gives you a head-nod in response.

II. BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked you to do something that you do not normally do because of concerns about your body.

Let's go around the room and describe what each of you did and how it turned out.

Did you find this exercise useful? What did you learn?

Have each participant discuss her experiences.

If they did not do the exercise, ask about the barriers to doing it. How can they overcome them? Is there something they can do that might be easier to try out first? Encourage participants to continue to challenge their body-related concerns.

We appreciate that you were willing to try something new. Hopefully you will continue to challenge yourselves and your body image concerns in the future in a similar way.

Collect the **Behavioral Challenge Form** (Exercise #6).

III. BODY ACTIVISM DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

On point leader: _____

Last time we also asked you to do two body activism exercises. Let's go around the room so we can hear what each of you did and how it went.

Go around the room so that each participant describes what they did and what happened. As needed, ask questions to prompt additional discussion (e.g., "X, it sounds like you enjoyed doing this exercise. Tell me more about what made it enjoyable" or "X, what aspects of this exercise were challenging?").

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

Is anyone willing to do more body activism in the future? If so, what would you do?

Give participants an opportunity to talk themselves into doing more body activism activities in the future.

Please turn in your body activism forms.

Collect the **Body Activism Form** (Exercise #7).

IV. LETTER TO YOUNGER SELF DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked if you would be willing to write a letter to your younger self, instructing yourself on how to avoid developing body image concerns. We would like each of you to read your letters to the group. Who would like to start?

Have each participant read her letter. After each participant concludes reading her letter, respond by thanking her and/or making a positive comment about her letter.

NOTE: If a participant is unwilling to read her letter, ask her if she is willing to summarize it or choose an excerpt to read.

Everyone clearly spent a lot of time writing these letters and did a great job on them. Please hand them in!

Collect the **Letter to Younger Self Form** (Exercise #8).

V. DISCUSSION OF BENEFITS OF BODY ACCEPTANCE AND GROUP 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?

Have you noticed that you feel differently about your own body?

Do you think this group has affected how you feel when you interact with people?

What do you feel you have gotten out of this class?

Did any particular activity really stand out as helpful to you?

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.

VI. SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISE (10 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 one friend or family member and discuss one thing you like about yourselves.*

2. *Keep a journal of all the good things your body allows you to do (e.g., do a long hike, play tennis well etc.).*
3. *Pick one friend to make a pact with to avoid negative body talk. When you catch your friend talking negatively about their body, remind them of the pact.*
4. *Make a pledge to end complaints about your body, such as “I’m so flat chested” or “I hate my legs.” When you catch yourself doing this, make a correction by saying something positive about that body part, such as, “I’m so glad my legs got me through soccer practice today.”*
5. *The next time someone gives you a compliment, rather than objecting (“No, I’m so fat”), practice taking a deep breath and saying “Thank you.”*

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

Consider this an “exit exercise.” Doing these kinds of things makes it more likely that you will talk about yourself in a more positive way. Think of which specific exercise you can do. I’d like to go around the room and ask each of you to share.

Pull the Self-Affirmation Exercise Form (Exercise #9).

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

VII. CLOSURE (8 MINS)

On point leader: _____

If school/organization **IS** continuing Body Project groups and recruitment:

Second, we wanted to see if you would be willing to encourage at least 3 of your friends to give the Body Project body acceptance class a try, based on your positive experience with this class. Please have your friends email me.

We would also like you to do one more form of “body activism” and email us

If school/organization **IS NOT** continuing Body Project groups:

Second, we would like you to do one more form of “body activism” and email us about what you did. Are you willing to do a form of “body activism” as a group? This could consist of writing a letter that you all sign and sending it to a magazine or company that promotes the appearance-ideal. You decide what you want to do and

about what you did. Are you willing to do a form of “body activism” as a group? This could consist of writing a letter that you all sign and sending it to a magazine or company that promotes the appearance-ideal. You decide what you want to do and check in with one another about it by email or text messages.

Are there any ideas about what could be done?

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

So, we would like each of you to do one self-affirmation exercise during the next week and email us about how it went. Second, we would like you to encourage three friends to attend a future Body Project group and to send us their contact information so we can get them scheduled. Third, we would like you as a group to do one additional form of “body activism.”

Pull the Group Body Activism Exercise Form (Exercise #10).

check in with one another about it by email or text messages.

Are there any ideas about what could be done?

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

So, we would like each of you to do one self-affirmation exercise during the next week and email us about how it went. Second, we would like you as a group to do one additional form of “body activism.”

Pull the Group Body Activism Exercise Form (Exercise #10).

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

Body Project Group Materials

Session One:

Home Exercise #1: Letter to Younger Girl

Home Exercise #2: Mirror Exercise Form

Home Exercise #3: Appearance-Ideal Perpetuation Behavior Checklist

Session Two:

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Session One, Exercise #1: Letter to Younger Girl

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

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Session One, Exercise #2:

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 10. This includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities. For instance, you may like the shape of your arms, the strength of your legs, your long dark hair, the sound of your laugh, or the fact that you are a good friend. Please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list.



Session One, Home Exercise #3: Appearance-Ideal Perpetuation Behavior Checklist

This checklist is designed to increase awareness of behaviors that serve to perpetuate the appearance-ideal in our culture. Please circle “yes” for the behaviors you have engaged in over the last few years.

Purchased a fashion or beauty magazine	yes
Subscribed to a fashion or beauty magazine	yes
Gone to a fashion show with a runway and live models	yes
Watched a TV show focused on the thin-ideal (America’s Top Models)	yes
Complimented someone because they lost weight	yes
Made a negative comment about someone’s appearance	yes
Made a negative comment about someone’s weight	yes
Made a critical comment about the weight of an actor, musician, or model	yes
Instantly judged someone negatively because of their weight or appearance	yes
Made a negative comment about my own weight or appearance that was contrived	yes
Asked someone if they have lost weight	yes
Encouraged someone to try a weight-loss diet	yes
Given a sibling a hard time about his/her weight	yes
Decided not to talk with or befriend someone because they were overweight	yes
Purchased products that promote the appearance-ideal in their ads	yes
Dined at an establishment that promotes the appearance-ideal (e.g., Hooters)	yes
Covered up parts of my body that I was embarrassed about	yes
Weighed myself multiple times a day	yes
Considered or got plastic surgery (e.g., a nose job, a boob job, or liposuction)	yes

Session Two, Home Exercise #4: Rewind Response Letter

Please write a letter to someone in your life who pressured you to conform to the appearance-ideal, such as a parent, sibling, dating partner, or friend. Please tell them how this affected you and indicate how you would respond now, in light of what you have learned in these groups. If no one has pressured you to conform to this ideal, please make up an example or use an example you have heard from others in the group or a friend. Use any of the information you have learned in these sessions, and any additional ways you may think of on your own.

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Session Two, Exercise #5: Top-10 List Form

Please generate a top-10 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 top-10 list down and bring it to the next group.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

Session Three, Exercise #6: Behavioral Challenge Form

We would like to challenge each of you to do two things that you currently do not do because of body image concerns to increase your confidence. For example, wearing shorts to school, going to the pool in a swimsuit, exercising in public. We would like each of you to do two behavioral challenges next week (or the same one twice) and then let us know how it turned out during the next session. Please take a moment to think of something you would like to do but haven't done yet. Please write your behavioral goal down on this page to remind yourself of it.

Session Three, Exercise #7: Body Activism Form

The second exercise from last session asked you to list 10 things that girls/women could do to resist the appearance-ideal – what you can avoid, say, do, or learn to combat this social pressure. This might be referred to as “body activism.”

Please choose two behaviors from your list to do during the next week. You may want to write your body activism goal on this sheet to remind yourself of it.

Session Three, Exit Exercise #8: Letter to Younger Self

Please write another letter, this time to a younger version of yourself (approx. three pages), on how to avoid developing body image concerns. Use any of the information you have learned in these session, and any additional ways you may think of on your own. The goal is to help the younger version of you understand the different things she can do, say, avoid, or learn that will help her develop or maintain a positive body image.

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Session Four, Exit Exercise #9: Self-Affirmation Exercise Form

Part of challenging body-related concerns involves talking about our bodies in a positive, rather than negative, way. We discussed some examples of this in the group, for instance, making a pledge to end complaints about your body or accepting compliments rather than objecting to them. Please choose three ideas that we talked about, or one of your own, to practice over the next week, and let us know how it goes via email.

Session Four, Exit Exercise #10: Group Body Activism

We would like you, as a group, to do one additional form of “body activism.” As a reminder, “body activism” is something you could avoid, say, do, or learn to resist the appearance-ideal. This could consist of writing a letter that you all sign and sending it to a magazine or company that promotes the appearance-ideal. You decide what you want to do and check in with one another about it by email or text messages. Please list some ideas you may have below, and then one person can email us about what you did as a group.



Group members:

Name:
Name:
Name:
Name:
Name:

Name:
Name:
Name:
Name:
Name:

Notes

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This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features approximately 28 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across the entire page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The lines are consistent in color and thickness throughout.