



# **Body Image workshop kit for teachers of 9-13 year old youth**

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## **Body Image workshop kit for teachers of 9-13 year old youth**

**Goal:** To provide a resource for delivering body image workshops or incorporating positive body image messages into teaching.

**Why:** Young people are at increasing risk to develop body image issues that can impact self-esteem and lead to disordered eating and eating disorders. Well-intentioned health information about the risks of obesity can make these problems worse by creating concerns about body size and promoting dieting to lose weight.

The goals of the workshop are to discuss:

- what body image is
- why it's important for all of us to feel good about our bodies
- why dieting doesn't work
- the impact of messages from media and other sources about body types
- healthy behaviours for people of all body sizes

While a one-hour workshop can't fix poor body image or self-esteem issues, it can begin an important conversation about them, a valuable step towards positive body image and positive self-esteem.

### **Benefits of the workshop:**

- It can be completed in one lesson, or broken up and covered over several days.
- The program was developed in Manitoba and features Canadian resources where possible.
- It's linked to learning outcomes for Phys Ed and Health for Grades 4-8, although the workshop can be used by teachers of any subject.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The “obesity epidemic”. Celebrities with eating disorders. Children in the US and UK being removed from their homes by child protection agencies because they’re considered “too fat”.

We hear much about how eating disorders and excess weight can kill people, and how both are more common than ever. Getting a healthy perspective requires all of us to question some ideas we may assume to be true.

Children feel pressure to be thin from many places:

- Peers tease bigger children about their size; being called “fat” has never stopped being a common insult.
- The medical community increasingly warns parents about the health risks of obesity for children at younger and younger ages.
- Caring adults, who want to protect children from the social stigma of having a larger body, may restrict eating or overly promote exercise, setting up negative associations with both.
- Celebrity culture in magazines, television, movies and the Internet promote unrealistic ideals about what our bodies should look like.

These messages are all around us and are not often questioned. “You look great! Have you lost weight?” continues to be a standard greeting meant as a compliment, and yet body size does not accurately indicate if a person is doing well or is in good health.

With all this focus on eating and food control, it’s no wonder so many of us become preoccupied with thoughts about weight and body image. These ideas start at younger and younger ages, when children should be thinking about what their bodies can do (climb monkey bars, run fast, throw a ball), rather than how they look.

## **THE PROBLEM**

Weight preoccupation is defined as being so dissatisfied with weight and body image that it interferes with quality of life. This may include:

- excessive concerns with food and dieting
- over-exercising
- frequent weighing (basing how we feel about ourselves on the number on the scale)
- feeling guilt or shame about eating
- judging our own and other’s bodies against an “ideal” body few can actually achieve
- a constant pursuit of thinness.

Unchecked, these behaviours may potentially develop into more serious eating disorder like binge eating, anorexia or bulimia. Weight preoccupation has been observed in children as young as five, and middle-years students are increasingly affected.

Weight preoccupation and disordered eating are often more complex than just wanting to be smaller. They are also coping strategies some people use to deal with underlying emotions, stresses and experiences. When other parts of our lives feel chaotic, we might feel that food is one of the few things we can control. Becoming preoccupied with weight and body image can actually start to control us, by taking up much of our time, energy, and money, and ultimately make us feel worse rather than better.

For more information on these ideas, check out the *Frequently Asked Questions* on page 18.

## **WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC PERSPECTIVE**

We believe that people can be healthy and attractive at every size. We encourage healthy eating and physical activity - not to control body weight, shape and size - but to improve overall health and well-being.

Research shows that:

- Sustained weight loss is not possible for most people who diet.<sup>1</sup>
- Dieting actually increases the likelihood of weight gain.<sup>2</sup>
- The health risks of repeated weight loss and gain over time (called yo-yo dieting) are greater than the risks of maintaining a stable, but heavy, weight.

We promote the idea that all people - of every body shape, weight and size - deserve respect and acceptance.

In this curriculum, we approach body and food issues on a continuum. We recognize that people may move between having a healthy relationship with their bodies and food to occasional dieting, to more frequent or yo-yo dieting, and then possibly to development of an eating disorder. The closer we move along the continuum towards an eating disorder, the more difficult it is to return to having a healthy relationship with food, eating and our bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Studies show that 90%-95% of individuals who diet are unsuccessful in the long term. Bennett, William Ira. (1995) Beyond Overeating. *The New England Journal of Medicine* Vol. 332 (10) 673-674; Weinsier, R.L., et al. (2000) Do adaptive changes in metabolic rate favour weight gain in weight-reduced individuals? An examination of the set-point theory. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 72. 1088-1094

<sup>2</sup> Adolescent girls who diet are at 324% greater risk for obesity than those who do not diet. Stice, E., Cameron, R., Killen, J. D., Hayward, C., & Taylor, C. B. (1999). Naturalistic weight reduction efforts prospectively predict growth in relative weight and onset of obesity among female adolescents. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 67, 967-974.

## PRE-WORKSHOP PREPARATION FOR FACILITATORS

Please take the time to reflect on these ideas concerning your own relationship to weight, your body, and your assumptions about other bodies:

How often do you:

	Never	Rarely	Often	Daily
Compliment someone on weight loss?				
Encourage someone to go on a diet?				
Tease or criticize someone about food or eating habits?				
Admire rigidly controlled eating habits?				
Make negative comments about your body size or shape?				
Make negative comments about someone else's size or shape?				
Disapprove of fatness in general?				
Assume someone is doing well because they lost weight?				
Say something that presumes that people around you want to lose weight?				
Say something that presumes that fat people eat too much?				
Admire someone who is compulsive and/or rigid about their exercise routines?				
Talk about your weight?				

*\*Adapted from Sandy Stewart Christian, Food & Body Connections, Whole Person Associates Inc, 1996, 124-130.*

If you answer "often" or "daily" to the above statements is important to challenge your own beliefs and attitudes about weight, size and body image. It is very difficult to provide this workshop if you have prejudice against size and/or believe it is necessary to engage in dieting behaviours.

Students need to feel valued and accepted as they are, and not feel like some body shapes or sizes are more valuable than others. That message is one they receive daily in the wider world, and this workshop attempts to create a space where all bodies are respected and appreciated.

**LINKS TO MANITOBA PHYSICAL EDUCATION & HEALTH CURRICULA**

<b>Grade 4</b>	
K.4.4.A.1	<b>Demonstrate an awareness of factors</b> (e.g., personal attitudes, supportive environment, accomplishments, positive thinking, genetics, media stereotyping...) <b>that influence self-esteem and self-confidence</b>
K.4.4.B.1a	<b>Identify appropriate social behaviours</b> (e.g., speaking kindly, acknowledging others' ideas and opinions, offering to help...) <b>toward others in small-group situations</b>
S.4.4.A.3	<b>Demonstrate interpersonal skills</b> (i.e., ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally with others, work cooperatively and collaboratively, show respect and consideration for rights and feelings of others, be responsible for self and others) <b>for getting along with others in class activities</b>
<b>Grade 5</b>	
K.4.5.A.1	<b>Identify how one's self-concept and feelings are affected by others</b> (e.g., praise/success/encouragement build confidence, ridicule/insults hurt feelings...)
K.4.5.B.1a	<b>Describe behaviours</b> (e.g., listen without interrupting, avoid ridicule or teasing, use inclusive language and actions...) <b>that show respect for the rights and feelings of others</b>
<b>Grade 6</b>	
K.5.6.B.3	<b>Identify the positive and negative influences of media and other sources on promoting active living</b> (e.g., commercials, sport and special event coverage, physical activity promotions such as fund- raising walkathons/ runs...)
S.5.6.A.1	<b>Develop a personal action plan for daily personal health practices during adolescent years</b>
S.5.6.A.2	<b>Develop a personal action plan for daily active living, including ways to adhere to the plan</b>

*Continued on next page...*

<b>Grade 8</b>	
K.4.8.A.1	<b>Examine the effects of stereotyping based on a variety of factors</b> (e.g., gender, age, race, roles, media influences, body type, sexual orientation, source of income...), <b>and ways</b> (e.g., set/review personal and group norms, standards...) <b>to promote acceptance of self and others</b>
K.4.8.B.1a	<b>Describe behaviours that show social responsibility and respect for diversity</b> (e.g., showing respect toward officials and other players, inviting others to play, greeting others, helping others who are experiencing difficulty...) <b>in different contexts</b> (e.g., sports, physical activity participation, classroom settings...)
K.4.8.B.1b	<b>Discuss personal participation and responsibilities in physical activities and/or social events for the promotion of inclusion and cultural diversity in communities</b>
K.5.8.C.1a	<b>Evaluate information related to healthy body weight and body image</b>
K.5.8.C.1b	<b>Explain influences</b> (i.e., healthy eating, regular activity, media, healthy body image) <b>on growth and development during adolescence</b>
K.5.8.B.3	<b>Determine the degree to which technology has had an impact on personal health</b> (e.g., personal fitness equipment/aids; prolonged exposure to technological devices and machines decreases physical activity; effect of media messages on body image...)
S.5.8.A.3a	<b>Develop a personal plan that includes daily healthy practices</b> (e.g., physical activity participation, healthy food choices, positive thinking...) <b>to maintain a healthy body</b>

The topics in this workshop lend themselves to being a whole-school project. Phys Ed and Health teachers can work in conjunction with teachers of other subjects who could address these topics in other ways. Cross-curricular connections help to reinforce the learning for the students and helps the school to create a body-friendly environment for all students.



## BODY IMAGE WORKSHOP BACKGROUNDER

Each workshop takes one hour to complete when done as one lesson. It includes an introduction to the topic, followed by four activities that complement and build on each other. The activities may also be broken up and covered over several lessons, and they will build on each other if done sequentially.

1. What is body image? (Starts the discussion by brainstorming what body image means)
2. Diet cycle and set-point (This is the lecture portion of the workshop. Go through it as quickly and painlessly as you can! We've provided a sample script to help you).
3. *Stand up if you...* (This movement activity gets participants out of their chairs and moving a bit while raising awareness of some body image issues and messages we get about our bodies.)
4. Media awareness (There are a few options for activities)

You may choose to:

- use the Dove Self-Esteem Fund Evolution video (available on Youtube)
  - use magazines
  - deconstruct an ad
5. Game (An opportunity for participants to put knowledge into action through friendly competition. The game reviews information from the workshop and asks participants to link it to their own experiences.) **Important: you will need at least 15 minutes to complete the game.**

Suggested times are offered for each section as a guide to complete the workshop in an hour, but if more time is available, most activities can be adapted to take more time.

If done as one lesson, the movement activity is timed for the half-hour mark. This re-energizes the participants and gives them a break while continuing their learning.

## **Adaptations for students with special needs**

These topics can be covered for students of varying needs and ages. What's important is to come back to the foundation messages as often as needed:

- Everyone has a good body.
- It is never okay to tease or exclude someone because of their appearance.
- Caring for our bodies is something we can all do with healthy behaviours: eating a variety of food, moving our bodies, getting enough rest, and cultivating healthy relationships.

These foundation messages can be addressed in more or less detail or depth depending on the group's needs. Breaking the workshop up into shorter sections and covering them over a number of lessons might also help with groups that need more physical activity or who have shorter attention spans. You know your group best and will be the best judge of how to cover the material in the most effective way.

## BODY IMAGE WORKSHOP YOUTH 9 – 13 YEARS OLD

### Objectives:

- Raise awareness of how body image and weight preoccupation affects us
- Talk about how media can create unrealistic expectations of our bodies and looks
- Discuss why it's important for each of us to feel good about our bodies
- Show how our attitudes and actions can affect how others feel about their bodies

### Materials:

- White/black board
- Game (either laminated or written on the board)
- TV & DVD player and Evolution video **OR** magazines
- Space to move

### 1. Introduction: (5 minutes)

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm here for the next hour to talk with you about body image and self-esteem.

#### Ground rules:

Let's review: what are the ground rules for this space? I want to remind you that it's very important that we are respectful and to listen to each other. It is okay to not agree with someone else's opinion, but we all deserve respect. This means no put-downs or name-calling.

### 2. Body Image (5 minutes)

To start, we want to make sure everyone knows what we are talking about. Let's do a brainstorm:

Ask: What is body image?  
What are some words (or images, or examples) that come to mind?

Answers: *Various answers are okay. The goal is for participants to understand that body image isn't just about how we look or what our bodies can do, it also includes our feelings and how we interpret our body's value. Try to tease out that body image includes:*

- How you **feel** about what your body **looks** like
- How you **feel** about what your body **can do**

### 3. Diet Cycle and Set Point

(10 minutes)

Go through this section quickly to leave time for the very important game at the end! If you're rushed for time, you can just talk about set point and brainstorm Health at Every Size.

Ask: Did you know that of all the people that diet around the world, only 5% can actually keep the weight off for five years or more?

Go through the diet cycle quickly, using the following script:

Ask: We are going to talk about what happens when someone diets. What are some of the reasons why people go on diets?

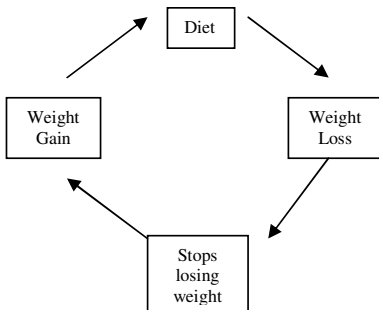
Answers include:

- being teased about the way we look
- feeling "too big" or uncomfortable with the ways our bodies change as we grow
- feeling bad about something else in our lives and turning it around into focusing on getting the body "right"

So this is Jennifer. (Choose any name that isn't the name of a real person known to the participants. Draw a stick picture of a woman on the board.)

Jennifer feels bad about herself because she is being teased about her weight. She decides to try a diet. (Let the students name a diet) Jennifer is following all the rules of this diet.

#### What happens when Jennifer goes on a diet?



1. She begins to eat less (by skipping meals or not eating certain foods).
2. Jennifer might lose a couple of pounds. Someone says "Hey you're looking good". She starts to feel good.
3. After a while, she stops losing any more weight even though she's eating less and less.
4. This is because Jennifer's metabolism (the rate calories are burned) has slowed down. Her body wants to hold on to as much energy reserves as it can.
5. At this point, a survival reaction kicks in and Jennifer HAS to eat. This is a normal body reaction for all people when food is scarce. Jennifer's body doesn't know when it will get enough energy from food again and now needs her to eat a lot. When this happens,

Jennifer starts to feel like she failed and didn't try hard enough at her diet. The fact is that her body wanted to make her eat so it could survive.

It's no surprise that diets fail. Once a person has stopped growing, every body has a **set point**, a unique body weight or body fat level our genetic background determines for each of us. This is the individual weight range that each body will naturally settle at. Each body feels best (has energy, doesn't get sick all the time) at a certain weight and will defend that weight at all costs.

**It might help to think of the set point like an imaginary rubber band we each have inside our bodies - the further we move away from our natural weight, the harder it acts to pull us back to it.**

Ask: What does "health" mean?

Answer:

- having enough energy to get through the day
- being free from disease or illness
- having healthy skin, bones, teeth
- having enough nutrition to grow
- being able to deal with stress
- getting enough rest and sleep
- being fit and strong enough to do what we want to do

Ask: Do people diet because they think it's healthy?

Answer: *Often yes. In fact, dieting is not healthy at all. Continuous weight loss and gain makes it very challenging for our bodies to adapt to changes. It's even a bigger problem when kids or teens diet, because their bodies need enough fuel to grow their brains and bodies normally.*

Ask: So if dieting is not healthy, what can people do when they want to improve their health? Can you think of other ways you can be healthy that don't include dieting?

Answer by brainstorming: Be sure to include the basic Health at Every Size ideas:

- *enjoying eating a variety of foods*
- *being physically active in ways that feel good to your body*
- *accepting and appreciating your self*
- *accepting and appreciating the people around you*
- *a holistic view of health (time to rest, to play, to spend time with friends, etc.)*

Ask:

Can people with thin body types do these things?

Answer: Yes, of course.

Can people with fat body types do these things?

Answer: Yes, of course.

Focus on **healthy behaviours**, not weight change.

We can control our behaviours, but not how our body may change due to them.

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It's important to realize there are many things to consider when thinking about our health. Weight is just one small part that makes up our wellbeing. People can do many things to be healthy at any size. You can take care of yourself by listening to your body and doing the things that are good for you and feel good to you.

#### 4. Stand up if you...

(5 minutes)

*Read each statement out loud, one at a time. Allow participants time to stand up and sit down in between (ie. "Stand up if you have ever been teased because of your size...thank you, sit down. Stand up if you know anyone on a diet...thanks, sit down." etc.).*

*Feel free to change the action up.*

- *Instead of sitting and standing, they can hop on one foot, do jumping jacks, or turn around.*
- *If you have open space, you can also have participants line up and walk across the room for each statement that applies to them.*

Ask: "Please stand up if you..."

- Have ever been teased because of your size (including height.)
- Know someone who has been on a diet.
  - If the person is a woman or girl, raise your left hand.
  - If the person is a man or boy, raise your right hand.
- Have ever heard the word "fat" used as an insult.
- Know someone who feels good about the way they look (including yourself!.)
- Have ever seen commercials for diet plans (like Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, LA Weight Loss, diet pills).
  - If the commercial had a man as a spokesperson, crouch down.
  - If the commercial had a woman as a spokesperson, stand on one leg.
- Want to feel good about yourself just as you are right now.

#### **Reflection or Debrief Discussion:**

*Pose the following statements and questions for discussion or self-reflection. Try to highlight the reasoning for the debrief.*

- Some of the statements were clearly connected to body image. Some of them were less obvious.
- Why would I ask if you knew someone on a diet?

- Who do you think the diet industry targets more - males or females?
- What are the different messages that women and men get about body image?

Answer: Messages include that women should get smaller, men should get bigger; women should be more concerned with how their bodies look, men should be more concerned with what their bodies can do.

- Think about doing this exercise as a group - when you stood up, were you ever the only person standing? Were there statements where most of the others stood too? Were there any statements where everyone stood? What does this mean to you?

### **5. Media awareness exercise (15-20 minutes)**

(Choose one of the three options below, based on the time, supplies, or equipment you have)

#### **Option A. Dove Self-Esteem Fund Evolution video (12 minutes)**

Think of all of the magazines or ads, etc., you've seen over the last few months.

Ask students:

- What are some of the magazines you like to read?
- Who is on the cover?
- What do they look like?
- Do most people look like this?
- What do the images tell us about our bodies?
- Are we good enough?

Ads and media in general lead us to believe that the images we see are real, that this is how these people look all the time.

We're going to watch a short video clip now that shows just how much work goes into making people in ads and magazines look the way we see them.

*Show Dove Evolution clip (you might need to show it twice). Ask:*

- Have any of you seen this video before?
- What were you thinking as you watched it?
- What is 'perfect'? (*Answers include: no pores, no freckles, no blemishes, flawless skin, thin, no bones poking out*)

This video was filmed over several hours and then was sped up to show us all the changes that are made to a person when they are going to be used as an advertisement.

These images of 'perfect' people give a hurtful message. They give the impression that only one type of body is acceptable. We don't get to see images of people of all shapes

and sizes, yet we know that there are different body types because our moms, aunts, grandmas, and friends don't all look the same.

People also get the idea that these 'perfect' women have no problems. Is it possible to be thin, 'beautiful', 'perfect' and still have problems? Absolutely!

If the models are not allowed to look how they naturally do, how can we be expected to look like them?

What are some of the ways that we could tell a company that we like their positive messages? How could we tell them that we don't like their messages?

Answer: *Brainstorm with the participants:*

*Some ways we can show we like their messages:*

- *buy their products*
- *tell other people to buy their products*
- *write a letter to them*

*Some ways we can show we don't like their messages:*

- *not buy their products*
- *tell other people why you don't like the product*
- *write a letter and tell them why*

**Option B. Magazine activity** (15-20 minutes)

*You can use this activity with any age group. Limitations are group size (it can take longer due to "reading" of magazines) and availability of magazines.*

*For small groups, give all participants a magazine. For larger groups, have them work in pairs. Ask them to take a few minutes to flip through and look at the people in the ads. Get them to record how many are fat (or non-white, or disabled, etc.) versus how many seem to look 'perfect.' Once they have the ratio – 100 to 1, for example – discuss how it doesn't truly represent society, and in fact, perpetuates stereotypes.*

**Option C. Ad activity** (15 minutes)

*You can use this activity with as a solo, pair, or small group task.*

*Use a particularly offensive magazine ad as your example to the group. A good one features Restylane – a type of injection of a substance to remove skin wrinkles. The ad shows a beautiful woman and the (paraphrased) text reads:*

*How I Define Myself: Foundation to even my skin tone every morning, highlights in my hair every two months, and Restylane to plump my lips twice a year.*



Ask the group what is wrong with the message, discuss the dangers of superficial thinking, give them a few minutes to record some more important ways we could define ourselves, and then ask them to share their answers.

## 5. Jeopardy Style Game

(15-20 minutes)

Set up:

Create a game board on the white/black board using laminated category cards or by writing the categories on the board. Below each category, put 10, 20 and 30 (the number of points for each question). See below.

Media	Diets	Health at Every Size	Bonus
10	10	10	10
20	20	20	20
30	30	30	30

Quickly divide the group into two teams. Give each team 30 seconds to pick a team name. Write down a number on a paper between 1 and 10. Have someone from each team pick a number. Whoever is closest goes first.

Explain the rules:

- Teams take turns choosing a category and a point value.
- You will read the question for that category and point value out loud.
- Team members can discuss which team member will answer, but only the first answer counts (this will limit yelling out).
- If they can't answer or answer incorrectly, the other team can steal the points. (If answers are close, give them a chance to add to their answer).

Cross off or erase each point value as each question is answered.

Keep the game moving fairly quickly. It's important to get through it completely because it's part of the learning for the workshop. You can also adapt the point values – example: give half points if they're partly right, etc.

Use the opportunity to quickly debrief their answers. If they can explain their reasoning behind their answer, it will encourage critical thinking. If you must correct an answer, take the opportunity to reinforce workshop messages.

See the following page for the answer key.

CATEGORY	POINTS	QUESTION	ANSWER
<b>MEDIA</b>	10	True or False: beautiful people don't have any problems.	False. Anyone can have problems.
	20	Name one brand that uses a positive message to advertise their product. What is the message?	Any answer that fits with the messages of this workshop is okay, if they explain their thinking.
	30	What is one good way to tell a company that you don't like their ads?	Write a letter, send an email, start a petition, etc.
<b>DIETS</b>	10	Name one reason why diets are not healthy.	Any from the diet cycle section
	20	Pretend someone you know doesn't feel good about how they look. What can you say to help them feel better?	Answers can vary. Bonus points if they don't focus on the person's looks.
	30	Name a bad food.	This is a trick question. There are no bad foods, all foods can fit! (Although "moldy food" might get a point.)
<b>HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE</b>	10	True or False: you can be fat and healthy or thin and unhealthy.	True.
	20	Name three things that improve your health (remember this does not include dieting).	Getting enough sleep, spending time with friends, learning how to deal with stress, being active, eating a variety of foods, etc.
	30	What are two ways that you know you're healthy?	Should focus on how the person feels, or numbers other than weight (like blood pressure, blood sugars), if they're active, etc.
<b>BONUS</b>	10	True or False: thin people are never lazy.	Clearly false!
	20	True or False: your weight should stay the same throughout your life.	No, not even if you're an adult. Weight changes are normal and happen throughout our lives.
	30	List three things you like about others that don't include their looks	Answers will vary.
<b>TIE-BREAKER</b> (if needed)	30	Name one person you admire who is not a celebrity. What do you admire about them?	Answers will vary and should not focus on appearance.

**6. Workshop Wrap-Up****(5 minutes)**

Ask participants to recall the main messages of the workshop:

- Everyone has a good body.
- It's never okay to tease or restrict someone because of their appearance.
- Caring for our bodies is something we can all do with healthy behaviours like eating a variety of food, moving our bodies, getting enough rest, and cultivating healthy relationships.

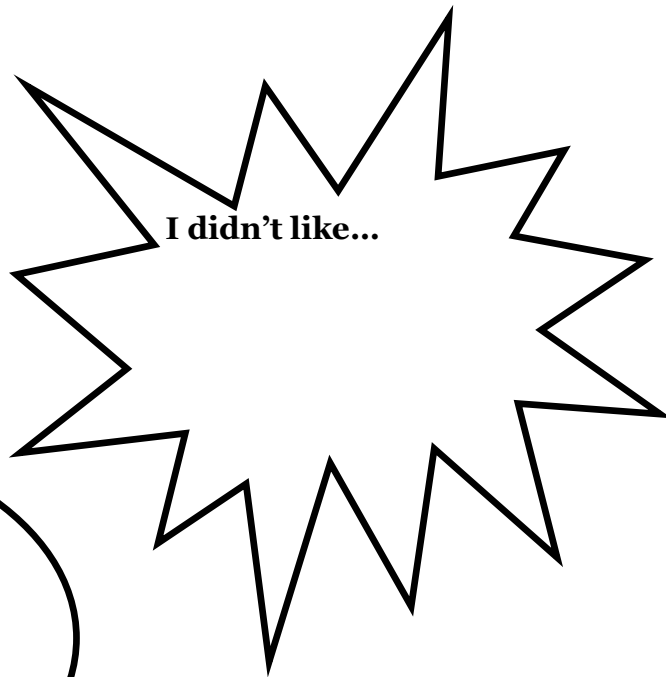
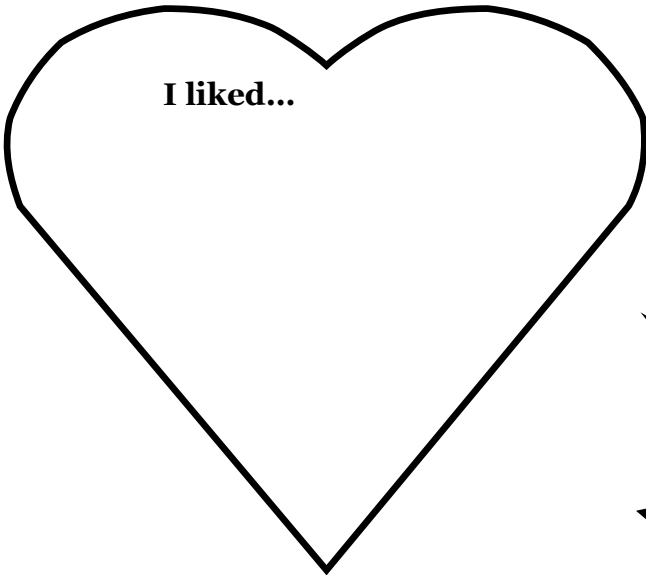
Feel free to remind them if they don't remember.

Yay, you're done!

# SAMPLE STUDENT EVALUATION

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### ***Why is there so much background information for a one-hour workshop?***

It's easier to talk about body image and self-esteem issues when you have background information about the topics, instead of just the workshop alone. We all tend to talk about topics like body image, worries about weight and size, and self-esteem from our own experiences and beliefs, and our own perspective. The background information provides a broader perspective that reflects the variety of experiences of the workshop participants. Background information also helps when they ask questions or bring up tough topics.

### ***What research backs the workshop up?***

We've included research studies in the main text as needed to illustrate a point. One excellent compilation of statistics from research studies is available through the National Eating Disorder Information Centre's website: [www.nedic.ca/knowthefacts/statistics.shtml](http://www.nedic.ca/knowthefacts/statistics.shtml).

### ***Why is this curriculum package specifically designed for northern and rural Manitoba?***

The Weight Preoccupation Community Education Program is available only in Winnipeg. The need for information and education on body image and self-esteem issues exists everywhere. This curriculum package allows us to share information about these issues with people with their own knowledge and experience of the issues of the youth in their communities.

### ***How does this work?***

To keep this workshop as clear as possible, it is written for audiences ages 9-13 years old. The information can be adapted for older or younger groups as well. The appendices give suggestions on workshops to do with other age groups.

### ***Why focus on body image instead of eating disorders or obesity?***

Body image issues affect people of all shapes and sizes. Feeling bad about ourselves can lead to unhealthy behaviours from dieting to binge eating, to the extremes of eating disorders that need treatment. We hope the focus on body image and self-esteem will help pre-empt issues before they become serious health concerns.

### ***Is this also eating disorder prevention?***

Preventing eating disorders is tricky because no one knows exactly what causes them. There are a number of traits and situations that can increase the likelihood of developing an eating disorder:

- perfectionism
- a need for control,
- no other coping mechanisms
- being teased
- belief that being thin is better than being fatter
- belief that dieting will make a person thin

Traumatic situations like experiences of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or mental) are also contributing factors, as well as a variety of physical, emotional, social, and family issues.

The idea behind eating disorder prevention is that if it's possible to change some of the conditions that can lead to eating disorders (such as poor body image and low self-esteem), then it might be possible to prevent them from developing. Eating disorders may begin with preoccupations about food or body shape, but most often they are about a lot more than food.

### ***Shouldn't people who are overweight or obese try to lose weight for their health?***

The idea that lower weight equals better health is considered common sense. However, studies have shown that diets do not work for long-term weight loss, and 90-95% of people who lose weight on a diet will gain it (and often more) back within five years<sup>3</sup>.

Instead of dieting to lose weight, some of the ways we can improve our health are:

- eating a wide variety of food
- being physically active
- learning to deal with stress and our mental health
- getting enough sleep
- having regular medical check-ups.

These might not necessarily change our body weight or shape, but will improve our health.

Losing weight does not necessarily mean that a person will be healthier than if they stayed at their heavier weight and ate well and were active<sup>4</sup>. More health professionals are recognizing this and changing their health advice. Dieting also increases risk of developing disordered eating; girls who diet frequently are 12 times as likely to binge as girls who don't diet."<sup>5</sup>

For more discussion of research, check out the resources page of the Association for Size Diversity and Health at [www.sizediversityandhealth.org](http://www.sizediversityandhealth.org).

<sup>3</sup> R.L. Weinsier et al. "Do Adaptive Changes in Metabolic Rate Favour Weight Gain in Weight-Reduced Individuals? An Examination of the Set-Point Theory," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2000) 72, 1088-1094.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne C. Miller, "Fitness and Fatness in Relation to Health: Implications for a Paradigm Shift," *Journal of Social Issues* (1999) 55:2, 207-219.

<sup>5</sup> Deborah Neumark-Sztainer, *I'm, Like, SO Fat!* (2005) New York: the Guilford Press, 5.

## OTHER RESOURCES FOR BODY IMAGE AND SELF ESTEEM

 identifies Canadian resource

***Beyond Images: Body-image and self-esteem curriculum for boys and girls***   
National Eating Disorders Information Centre (NEDIC)

Using a current media literacy curriculum for Grades 4 - 8, teach how media messages are constructed both mechanically and symbolically, then help students to make their own media messages about beauty beyond the obvious. Beyond Images meets students where they're at and takes them further, while understanding and delivering on teacher's classroom needs. Included is a comprehensive curriculum package with assessments and evaluations.

Email [nedic@uhn.on.ca](mailto:nedic@uhn.on.ca) or call 1-866-NEDIC-20 (1-866-633-4220) to get the curriculum you need.

### ***The Body Positive***

A program of educational videos and workshops for children and youth from kindergarten to grade 12. They have DVDs, books and a curriculum for putting on your own body image workshops.

Website: [www.thebodypositive.org](http://www.thebodypositive.org)

### ***Dove "Evolution" video***

The *Evolution* video is one tool that may be used in the workshop to demonstrate typical changes that advertisers make from a photo of a real person to what appears in an ad, including hair, make-up and digital changes. Sometimes this is available on the Dove website, or it can be found on YouTube.

Website: [www.dove.ca/en/default.aspx#/cfrb/selfesteem](http://www.dove.ca/en/default.aspx#/cfrb/selfesteem)

***Eating Disorders: Best Practices in Prevention and Intervention***   
Manitoba Health, 2006

This document presents evidence on the prevention, identification and treatment of eating disorders. Especially helpful for teachers and school staff are the sections with background information, prevention and identification.

Website: [www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/docs/bppi.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/docs/bppi.pdf)

### ***Girls Making Links: A Guide for Facilitators***

A downloadable curriculum to facilitate a pre-teen girls' group to build creativity, self-esteem, positive relationships, and skills for leadership and personal safety. Designed as 13 modules with each session focused on specific topics and activities.

Website: [www.swfic.org/GirlsMakingLinks.pdf](http://www.swfic.org/GirlsMakingLinks.pdf)

### ***Healthy Body Image: Teaching Kids to Eat and Love Their Bodies Too!***

Kathy Kater, 1998, Seattle: National Eating Disorders Association.

Offers 11 scripted lessons for grades 4-6 that challenge the unrealistic drive to be thin, the diet mentality, eating and fitness habits that contribute to unhealthy fitness, and prejudice about size and shape.

Each lesson has background information, a discussion guide, activities and handouts. Students learn to:

- appreciate inner strengths more than appearance
- understand the history behind today's body image attitudes
- understand weight gain during puberty
- be aware of the dangers of dieting
- develop incentives for healthy eating and an active lifestyle
- consider their choice of role models.

### ***Liking the Me I See in the Mirror: An Educational Resource Manual for Teachers on Body Image and Self-Esteem***

Suzanne Hare and Dianne Drummond, 2001, Alberta: Grey Nuns Community Hospital.

A resource manual with six lessons to help teach ways to develop and maintain positive self-image. It is aimed at helping students understand the importance of self-esteem based on what's inside, rather than on physical attributes. It includes lesson plans, background information, handouts and activities.

### ***Reflections of Me: The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario Body Image Project***

A comprehensive, field-tested curriculum for Grades 1-8. While many teachers integrate it into the language arts curriculum, it can be integrated into other areas of the elementary school program. Most effective when delivered as a whole-school project. The curriculum focuses on different themes for different age groups:

- Grades 1-3: Accepting diverse bodies
- Grade 3-6: Promoting body acceptance and building resistance to body-based harassment



- Grade 7-8: Questioning adherence to body norms.

[www.etfo.ca/IssuesinEducation/BodyImage/](http://www.etfo.ca/IssuesinEducation/BodyImage/)

### ***Sheena's Place***

Sheena's Place is an eating disorder treatment and education centre in Toronto, Ontario. With registration they offer a downloadable speaker's toolkit for presenting a workshop on body image and self-esteem, and a self-help toolkit for a person dealing with eating problems.

Website: [www.sheenasplace.org/index.php?page=toolkits](http://www.sheenasplace.org/index.php?page=toolkits)

### ***The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size***

A teacher training module for grades 4-6 designed to help teachers (and parents) learn about the factors that trigger unhealthy dieting among children, and ways to prevent it. Created by a team at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto.

Website: [www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp](http://www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp)

### ***Teaching Tolerance***

An American website with activities and lessons focusing on discrimination including racism, homophobia, gender roles and stereotypes, size bias, and ability. Not specific to body image or self-esteem, but it is easy to make connections. Highly recommended.

Website: [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

NOTE: Gurze books is a good source for body image resources. Visit [www.gurze.com](http://www.gurze.com)

## GLOSSARY

### **Dieting:**

A class of eating behaviours primarily motivated by the goal of reducing body weight and/or changing size or shape. Dieting is not an innate human behaviour but is learned and typically involves ignoring or controlling the body's internal cues of hunger and satiety.

Yo-yo dieting: weight cycling from going on and off diets (as described in the diet cycle)

### **Disordered eating:**

Abnormal eating that can include some of the behaviours seen in eating disorders, on-going restricted eating (dieting), ignoring the body's cues of physical hunger and satiety, compulsive eating and other irregular, chaotic eating patterns. Disordered eating has negative results on health and can lead to eating disorders or malnutrition.

### **Eating disorders:**

Clinical eating disorders are medical conditions with specific diagnostic criteria. They include anorexia nervosa, binge eating disorder, bulimia nervosa and eating disorders not otherwise specified.

**Best practices state not to discuss the specific symptoms/behaviours of these conditions with general groups of students as this increases risk of students learning how to behave in an unhealthy way.**

More information can be found through the Manitoba Health Document, Eating Disorders, Best Practices in Prevention and Intervention at [www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/docs/bppi.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/mh/docs/bppi.pdf)

### **Health at Every Size:**

The idea that people of all shapes and sizes can be healthy (as measured by typical medical numbers such as blood pressure, blood sugars, triglycerides, cholesterol, resting heart rate, VO<sub>2</sub> max, etc) due to behaviours they engage in, including healthy eating, enjoyable exercise, attention to other health-increasing acts (decreasing stress, getting enough sleep, time with friends, etc) and accepting that all bodies are good.

### **Obesity:**

Defined by the World Health Association a body mass index at or greater than 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> which may be associated with negative health effects (depending on a number of other factors including activity level, food choices, blood pressure, blood triglycerides, stress, etc). Obesity is not an eating disorder, although some obese people may have eating disorders.

### **About Women's Health Clinic:**

Women's Health Clinic has provided education, intervention and treatment related to body image, weight preoccupation and disordered eating for over 20 years. We believe that self-acceptance and education are important steps to help people move beyond negative body image and weight preoccupation.

### **In the clinic:**

Women and girls (13 years and older) can access a range of related services:

- nutrition counselling with our dietitian
- consultations with medical staff for concerns about disordered eating issues
- low-cost or free counselling for adult women
- free counselling for teens
- weight preoccupation support groups for adult women

### **In the community:**

Through body image workshops, our volunteer speakers program challenges the social ideal of a thin body for girls and women, and explores the social and cultural factors that perpetuate it. We facilitate discussion and questions through interactive learning and promote the development of healthy self-image, encouraging friendly relationships with our bodies and with food. We promote eating and activity for energy, pleasure and wellness. We discourage dieting.

In Winnipeg body image workshops can be booked by calling 204 947-2422 ext 114, or e-mailing [commmed@womenshealthclinic.org](mailto:commmed@womenshealthclinic.org)

If you have questions or comments about this lesson please send them to [commmed@womenshealthclinic.org](mailto:commmed@womenshealthclinic.org)

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