

TEEN TRUTH:
An Inside Look at Body Image

DVD Version

TEEN TRUTH: AN INSIDE LOOK AT BODY IMAGE

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

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TEEN TRUTH: AN INSIDE LOOK AT BODY IMAGE

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MAIN MENU

▶ **PLAY**

▶ **CHAPTER SELECTION**

From here, you can access many different paths of the DVD, beginning with the introduction and ending with the credits.

1. Introduction
2. The Medias Influence
3. Self-Image
4. Emily
5. Kayla
6. Nolan
7. Anabolic Steroids
8. Self-Confidence
9. Last Thought

▶ **TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK**

A file of the accompanying Teacher's Resource Book is available on the DVD. To open the file, you need to load the DVD onto a computer that has a DVD-ROM and Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Right click on the DVD icon and then double click on the file titled "Teacher's Resource Book."

Body image can be defined as our own unique internal perception of how we look and how others see us. Teens are especially vulnerable to developing a negative body image—often they are struggling to come to terms with their changing bodies while at the same time they are bombarded by media images that suggest that only “perfect” bodies are capable of being popular, desirable, successful and happy.

Body image is closely linked to self-esteem. Adolescents tend to be extremely self-critical. It can be difficult for young people to accept that all different kinds of bodies are attractive, especially when they are continually presented with unrealistic images in beauty magazines, television shows, music videos, movies, billboards and even in health and fitness magazines.

Adolescents are deeply concerned with how others see them and they are often particularly sensitive to comments from others about weight, shape and appearance. A feeling of alienation from their peer group can put young people at risk for developing a negative body image, which in turn can lead to eating disorders and a host of other negative behaviors. In fact, at least half of the young people in treatment for an eating disorder report having been teased about their appearance.

In a study of over 10,000 teens, less than half of boys and a little over one-third of girls described themselves as being happy with their bodies. Studies show that boys and girls who think frequently about wanting a more toned physique are at increased risk of resorting to unhealthy means of achieving the body they desire—including falling into unhealthy eating and exercise patterns or using anabolic steroids and other potentially dangerous products in attempt to control their weight or shape. Alternatively, people with a negative body image may turn to food for comfort and engage in out-of-control eating. As many as ten million females and one million males struggle with some form of eating disorder. Their desperate lives revolve around food and weight concerns, spiraling into depression, loneliness and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

The video *Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Body Image* helps young people become aware of the dangerous attitudes and thought processes that can lead to body dissatisfaction. Candid interviews will no doubt strike a chord with viewers as real teens talk about the teasing they have endured, their fears of not measuring up in their peer group, feelings of inadequacy that result from exposure to unrealistic media images and obsessing over one’s body and its flaws. Viewers will hear stories of teens who have suffered through serious eating disorders and the dangerous, even tragic, consequences of performance-enhancing drug use. The activities in this Teacher’s Resource Book reinforce the importance of building a personal identity that is not based on how one’s body compares to others or to the airbrushed physical perfection presented by popular media.

After viewing the program *Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Body Image* and participating in the activities presented in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- ▶ gain a healthier perspective about the importance of body shape and size
- ▶ realize that self-esteem must be nurtured from within
- ▶ apply new, practical tools to develop a more positive self-image and increase their self-confidence
- ▶ productively handle others' opinions and comments about them
- ▶ practice turning negative thoughts into positive ones
- ▶ understand the importance of focusing on goals that are not related to body size
- ▶ become critical viewers of media messages that promote thinness as the key to happiness
- ▶ demonstrate compassion and empathy for those who have been targeted for name-calling or bullying
- ▶ understand the health risks of using performance-enhancing drugs
- ▶ know where to go for help if they suspect that they or a friend may have an eating disorder

The video opens with a definition of body image: *A picture of one's own physical look established by self-observation and by noting the reactions of others.*

The video introduces Emily, an attractive teen who expresses her thoughts on body image to viewers. "I'm so unhappy with myself. The world is so shallow that it has taught me that my body is who I am. My appearance is who I am. But I don't like the me inside."

Amidst flashing images of bulging biceps and six-pack abs, viewers learn that body image is a serious issue with teen boys as well as girls. Teen boys express the fact that they are never satisfied with their bodies and they always want to get bigger, stronger and more defined.

"Body image is everything... Well, not everything, probably like 90 percent," Emily states. Comments made by other teens support Emily's opinion. "It's just constantly on everyone's mind," says one teen boy. Each of the interviewed teens admits that body insecurities stem from worrying about what others think of you and worrying about getting teased by your peers. Emily says, "There's no safe spot. There's no place where people can be free with their bodies without being ridiculed."

Teens disclose the fact that comparing themselves to their peers or celebrities in the media causes them to feel unhappy and dissatisfied with their bodies. "They have the muscles, they're popular. And you're just like, 'Hmmm, maybe I need to look like that,'" says one boy about striving to look a certain way to fit in. Another young man comments on how close-ups on athletes on TV show nothing but muscle. This reinforces the idea that in order to succeed in sports, you have to have that unrealistic body shape. This mindset can ultimately drive young people to inflate their bodies with steroids.

The video cuts to a montage of fitness magazine covers, weight-loss ads, celebrity close-ups in bathing suits and athletes with cut abs and zero body fat. Teens share their opinions about what messages these images are really sending. A girl says that diet commercials and magazine tag lines like "Lose 20 Pounds in 3 Days," "How to Look Five Pounds Thinner" and "Get Flat Abs the Easy Way" are not motivating but instead serve to make teens feel worse about themselves.

Emily comments on how health magazines make money by preying upon people's weaknesses and perpetuating the idea that there is a "quick fix" for achieving the perfect body. Teens comment how the media's obsession with the perfect body causes body image to become their obsession as well. Kayla, a teenage girl remarks, "You're never good enough for yourself." A teen boy notes that when you are so obsessed with getting the perfect body by any means, you don't think about the dangerous repercussions that certain diets or supplements can have on your health.

The title screen appears: *Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Body Image*. Next, viewers are introduced to pediatrician Dr. Stephen Feder, who explains that body image plays a very important role in one's early stages of life, forming part of what he refers to as one's "development of identity." Kayla admits that body image is constantly on her mind. A teen boy remarks that while a lot of pressure does come from his peers, he believes even more comes from the media's concept of "the perfect body." Psychologist Cathy Kerzner concurs: you don't have to look far to see billboards, magazines and TV shows that promote unrealistic body images. "You don't see ugly people on TV," Kayla chimes in. "They're all really pretty or really perfect," she says.

The scene cuts to a film editor who says, "Celebrities are just normal people, and a lot of them have the same problems that every average Joe has, but they spend millions of dollars to cover them up." He shows how he uses computer software to erase flaws on celebrities' images and create a false illusion of what they really look like. "It looks seamless. People don't even question it these days."

Next, a young model is shown surrounded by a team of makeup and hair artists, and then being photographed. The photo is tweaked and airbrushed until the final outcome looks nothing like the model who walked into the studio. Kayla remarks, "You're not sitting there thinking, 'Oh, that's airbrushed, that's fixed.' You're thinking, 'Why don't I look that way?' And it does make you feel really bad." Dr. Kerzner reports, "Studies show that when you are exposed to those images, you do end up feeling worse about yourself." Emily states, "I will never spend money on a magazine again. I can't handle them, it makes me sick."

Dr. Feder says that as young people seek to develop their own identities, they go over themselves with a fine-tooth comb analyzing their flaws. Kayla talks about constantly worrying about whether she looks good not just to others, but also to herself. Emily admits she doesn't even feel comfortable alone in her own home. Another teen girl remarks on how simply wearing a pair of jeans that are fitted differently than she is used to can make her feel fat.

Next, teens reveal how hurtful comments about their appearance have a huge influence on how they feel about their bodies. Emily says, "Someone could call me an idiot and I couldn't care less, but if they said that I was getting fat or that I wasn't attractive, I probably wouldn't have gone to school for awhile." Dr. Kerzner states that teasing about weight or shape can cause young people to feel uncomfortable in their bodies, which can lead to either turning to food as a form of comfort or to dieting as a way to try to control their bodies and feel better about themselves. Dr. Feder reports that at least half of the young people treated for an eating disorder have a history of being teased, something which can leave life-long psychological scars.

As Emily continues to describe her battle with anorexia, a statistic pops up on the screen: **“TRUTH: 1 in 20 girls battles an eating disorder.”** Emily admits that she initially didn’t know anything about eating disorders. Her mother recalls how Emily would try to make food choices that she deemed “healthy.” Dr. Feder explains that those suffering from anorexia often have “defined ‘healthy’ to be the absence of food that they perceive will make them gain weight.” He cautions that low calorie diets are very dangerous for children or adolescents going through a rapid growth phase.

Emily describes how her struggle with anorexia consumed her life, and how her food intake became an obsession. “The small amount that I did eat was all that I did with my life,” Emily says. Her obsession with staying thin extended into intense exercise. She would go running two or even three times a day. This behavior is typical among those with body image disorders, Dr. Feder says. “24/7 this is on their mind—what they ate, what their weight is, what their activity level is.”

“She talked about having this gremlin in her head,” says Emily’s mother, “and the gremlin would sort of manipulate her mind into what she should be doing and what she should be eating.” Dr. Feder explains that anorexia is an illness that truly does take over a person’s mind and body. “It is an illness that will strangle them even to death if it is allowed to continue,” he says. He also asserts that people who feel like they don’t fit in with their peer group are at risk for developing an eating disorder.

Kayla describes how she put on weight after a group of her close friends turned on her. When her weight soared to 255 pounds, she became a target for constant teasing and hurtful behavior. Kids threw food at her and made hurtful comments like “Be careful, the whale might squish you.” “It was all about weight, all about how I looked, always.” As Kayla speaks, images flash on the screen of her at her heaviest. Kayla started hiding food. She admits that she turned to food for comfort and to fill the void caused by her constant sadness.

Kayla, who has since lost all the weight she gained, explains how she underwent a medical procedure that reduced the size of her stomach, making it virtually impossible to consume large amounts of food. Despite warnings from doctors about the enormous risks of the surgery, Kayla was determined. “I didn’t care. At that point, death would have been better than living my life the way it was going,” she says.

An on-screen fact is presented: **“TRUTH: nearly 10% of those who have gastric bypass surgery experience complications.”** Kayla underwent the surgery when she was only 15 years old. Eighteen months after her surgery, she had lost 110 pounds. “Even though I look different today, I still feel the way I did back then,” Kayla admits. “I really thought people would treat me better, but I’m still isolated and mistreated.” She wonders whether her situation would have been so dire if just one person stood up for her when she was being teased.

Next, teen boys describe the pressure they face in sports: “If you’re bigger, you’re stronger, you’re faster, people are going to respect you more,” one explains. “Some people associate size with performance, so kids who are trying to do well in sports always think you’ve got to get big.” The males talk about the pressure they feel from their peers to have a jacked-up, muscular body. They say that it is common knowledge that the professional athletes they admire have used supplements or steroids to get to achieve success. An on-screen fact is presented: **“TRUTH: nearly 1 in 10 retired NFL players used illegal steroids.”** One teen explains the motivation behind using steroids at a young age as a means to achieve an athletic edge. “It might be their only shot to get to where they want to be... so they are going to take all the steps necessary to get it.”

Viewers are introduced to Nolan. He says he turned to performance-enhancing drugs the summer before ninth grade while getting in shape for football. Nolan started taking a supplement called creatine after seeing his dad use it. When he noticed results, Nolan went to a local supplements store, where a clerk recommended Tren Xtreme. On-screen text reads: **“TRUTH: Tren Xtreme is considered a designer steroid.”** Nolan says, “It’s really addicting. You see the results you get... you’re one of the strongest in your class.”

Dr. Roland Winter, a sports medicine physician and orthopedic surgeon, explains that seeing results from any performance-enhancing drug or supplement is psychologically very addicting. “You’re the big person around campus and you like the adulation that comes with that,” Dr. Winter explains. Nolan says that he started taking more than the recommended dosage. “I was getting bigger still, but then I messed myself up so I stopped that,” he says.

Sports and family medicine physician William Ross explains the addictive nature of steroids and performance enhancing drugs. Because they are stimulants, when you stop taking them, you may become depressed, sad and lethargic. Nolan tells about how when he stopped taking the drugs, he immediately lost the muscle he had gained and started getting comments from his peers about his shrinking body. “That was just a depressing thing to hear because I liked the attention. I don’t want to hear bad things about me, I only want to hear positive things.”

The video shows ads for drugs like the ones Nolan was taking, The ads feature muscular, toned men lifting enormous weights. Dr. Ross says that teens have been marketed to by “less than honest groups” that do not reveal the potential dangers of performance enhancers. On-screen text reads: **“TRUTH: Nolan developed female breast tissue, aggression and depression.”** Nolan complains that no one ever told him the dangers and side effects of these drugs and complains that these products are readily sold to underage kids at health stores and online.

Action shots of a baseball game introduce the next segment. Don Hooton appears on camera to tell the story of his son, Taylor. A 16-year-old junior in high school, Taylor made the all-star baseball team every year. Despite his enormous success, a coach told him he needed to get bigger to improve his chances of making the varsity team. On-screen text

reads: “**TRUTH: at 16, Taylor was 6 feet 2 inches and 180 pounds.**” Mr. Hooton says, “Half of the guys that Taylor was playing ball with were already doing steroids, and Taylor didn’t need to look far to figure out how the other kids had met the objective. He soon began to inject himself with anabolic steroids and supplemented it with an oral form of steroids. That’s the start of the story. The end of the story was that six or seven months later, he died.” Viewers learn that Taylor killed himself one month after his 17th birthday. Doctors concluded that it is highly likely that Taylor’s death was directly related to his short-term use (six months) of anabolic steroids.

Dr. Ross explains that his goal is to help teens understand the full risks associated with steroids and educate them on how they work, how they affect performance and how they put one’s health at risk psychologically and physically. He stresses the importance of knowing what the many risks are. Viewers are shown a list of the side affects of anabolic steroids that include acne, liver tumors, muscle aches, stunted growth, increased breast growth, irreversible stretch marks, and violent, aggressive behavior.

The next segment addresses parents, who are often unaware that their children are suffering from illnesses caused by body image problems. “Parents are completely oblivious to the fact...that this is going on among our kids,” says Mr. Hooton. Emily’s mother admits she was shocked when Emily finally asked her mother if she had not noticed that she was suffering from anorexia. “How could we have not seen these signs?” Emily’s mother wonders. Kayla believes teens don’t discuss these things because they don’t want their parents to know they’re not happy. Nolan doesn’t think parents can see the impact that other teens have on kids. Kayla suggests, “Maybe if you did talk to a parent, you might at least be able to control the situation instead of feeling so lost and out of control.” Dr. Kerzner advises, “If you’re struggling with eating or body image problems or if you are aware of someone that may be, it’s really important to speak out and ask for help.”

Dr. Kerzner suggests that young people consider how they can serve as positive role models for their peers and others. Teens comment on the importance of being their own person. Emily says, “It’s more beneficial and interesting and exciting to figure out who you are rather than to have someone else tell you who you are.” Another teen adds, “It doesn’t matter what other people say because in the end, you are doing what’s going to affect you in the future.”

Taylor’s father, Mr. Hooton, says, “You can achieve your goals by doing it the right way.” Nolan says he is gaining more strength naturally through a healthy lifestyle than he was unnaturally. Emily encourages others, “If you can have the courage to stand up and make yourself your own person, people will always be drawn to you because of something that they can’t get anywhere else.” Kayla echoes, “Once you become a more upbeat person and become good with yourself, other people are more likely to come around to that.”

Emily says you know you are on the right track when you can see every single person as being special and beautiful in their own unique way. “It’s actually a really nice feeling to be able to look at everyone and not see their flaws for once,” she remarks.

The screen goes black, but then Kayla switches on the video camera to share a letter that she had written when she was eight years old to herself when she got older:

Dear Older Kayla:

How are you? I’m bad if you don’t remember. Kids pick on me for being fat. Are you popular? Do you have a boyfriend? If you’re popular, please try to include uncool people like me. Remember how painful it is to be left out.

“I think that’s kind of sad that an eight-year-old wrote that. I think it’s sad that the eight-year-old was me. Kayla laughs ruefully and addresses viewers: “Definitely try to be nice to everybody. That’s it.” She switches off the camera.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Pre/Post Test

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. **TRUE or FALSE:** Seeing beautiful people on TV and in magazines helps young people feel better about themselves. _____
2. **TRUE or FALSE:** Only girls are concerned with body image. _____
3. **TRUE or FALSE:** People who are afflicted with eating disorders often have a history of being teased about their bodies. _____
4. **TRUE or FALSE:** Very low-calorie diets are especially healthy for children or adolescents who are in a rapid growth phase. _____
5. **TRUE or FALSE:** An eating disorder is a serious illness. _____
6. **TRUE or FALSE:** Extreme exercise can be a symptom of an eating disorder. _____
7. **TRUE or FALSE:** Binge eating is a way to cope with depression. _____
8. **TRUE or FALSE:** The celebrities that we see in movies and magazines have naturally perfect bodies. _____
9. **TRUE or FALSE:** Taking steroids can lead young men to develop female breasts. _____
10. **TRUE or FALSE:** Minors cannot legally buy potentially dangerous performance-enhancing supplements. _____

The Answer Key appears on the next page.

Answer Key

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

- 1. TRUE or FALSE:** Seeing beautiful people on TV and in magazines helps young people feel better about themselves. FALSE
- 2. TRUE or FALSE:** Only girls are concerned with body image. FALSE
- 3. TRUE or FALSE:** People who are afflicted with eating disorders often have a history of being teased about their bodies. TRUE
- 4. TRUE or FALSE:** Very low-calorie diets are especially healthy for children or adolescents who are in a rapid growth phase. FALSE
- 5. TRUE or FALSE:** An eating disorder is a serious illness. TRUE
- 6. TRUE or FALSE:** Extreme exercise can be a symptom of an eating disorder. TRUE
- 7. TRUE or FALSE:** Binge eating is a way to cope with depression. TRUE
- 8. TRUE or FALSE:** The celebrities that we see in movies and magazines have naturally perfect bodies. FALSE
- 9. TRUE or FALSE:** Taking steroids can lead young men to develop female breasts. TRUE
- 10. TRUE or FALSE:** Minors cannot legally buy potentially dangerous performance-enhancing supplements. FALSE

Name: _____

We all have the right to feel good about ourselves. The better we feel about ourselves, the less likely we will be upset by harassment and the less likely we will be targeted by bullies. Think about the things that make you feel good about yourself—talents, accomplishments, abilities, good qualities, volunteer work, things you are good at, things you’ve done to help out at home, memories of people in your life who have cared about you, etc.

PART ONE: In the spaces below, make a list of the things that contribute to your own personal self-esteem. You should be able to come up with a list of at least eight examples of things that you like about yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

PART TWO: On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph about your self-esteem. What is it based on? Do you rely on external things to make you feel good about yourself? Do you give yourself enough credit for your personal attributes? Are the items on your list things that you will value throughout your life? What is most important to how you feel about yourself?

Having positive self-esteem means that you accept yourself. When you accept yourself, others tend to be more accepting of you as well. If you have been bullied and harassed for a long time, you might start to believe bad things about yourself. Don’t be a victim. Build your self-esteem and feel good about yourself.

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 3
SELF-ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this activity is to help you examine your attitudes toward physical appearance. Answer these questions honestly. You will not have to share your answers with anyone.

		Yes	No
1.	Does your weight or body shape influence how you value yourself as a person?		
2.	Are physical looks the main factor in how you respond to other people?		
3.	Do you think your looks are the main factor influencing the way others feel about you?		
4.	Would you like yourself better if you could change things about your body?		
5.	If you could change something about your body or your face, would you sacrifice five years of your life?		
6.	Do you ever have negative opinions about overweight people based solely on their appearance?		
7.	Do you believe that very thin people are happier in general than people of normal or above-normal weight?		
8.	Would you rather go to a school function with someone who looked great but was boring than with someone who wasn't great looking but was a lot of fun?		
9.	Do you often compare yourself to other people and find that you don't compare favorably?		
10.	Do you think that if a woman is thin or a man is muscular, then the person will be more respected by others?		

Re-read the questions to which you answered “yes” and consider the following:

- ▶ What do your responses tell you about your views on physical power and appearance?
- ▶ Have you set fair and reasonable standards for what people should look like?
- ▶ Do you place too much emphasis on physical appearance?
- ▶ Do you place enough importance on what is on the inside?
- ▶ What limits would you set for changing your own physical appearance?
- ▶ Do you think you maintain a healthy balance between judging others based on their looks and on their inner qualities?

If you answered “yes” to three or more questions, you may have a negative body image. For more information, consult the fact sheet on *Tips for Developing a Positive Body Image*.

Name: _____

PART ONE: What do teens really think? Ask the questions below to five teenage males and five teenage females. Be prepared to share your results with the class.

1. What characteristics do you find most appealing in someone of the opposite sex?
2. What are some characteristics that you find unattractive?
- 3a. *(for guys only)* Do guys like only girls who wear revealing, sexy clothes?
- 3b. *(for girls only)* Do girls automatically like guys who are “pumped up” and muscular?
4. What are some alternatives to obsessing over looks and fashion?
5. Do you think that the body types shown in fashion magazines, fitness magazines and music videos help teens feel good about themselves?

Survey Response Form

Record your responses on the form below. Include each respondent’s initials. Duplicate this form as many times as needed.

QUESTION #: _____

Males	Females
Response 1 (initials ____):	Response 1 (initials ____):
Response 2 (initials ____):	Response 2 (initials ____):
Response 3 (initials ____):	Response 3 (initials ____):
Response 4 (initials ____):	Response 4 (initials ____):
Response 5 (initials ____):	Response 5 (initials ____):

This activity is continued on the next page.

PART TWO: In 2002, the television station PBS aired a special segment of its award-winning series *In the Mix* called “Self Image: The Fantasy, The Reality.” This program encouraged young people to understand that developing confidence and personal style are more important than striving for unrealistic, ever-changing ideal body images that we see in films, magazines and television.

The producers of the show took a survey of hundreds of young people. They asked the same questions that you asked in your survey. The most common answers are revealed below. Read these answers and consider how your own peers’ responses compare. Did your class come up with similar responses?

1. What characteristics do you find most appealing in someone of the opposite sex?

A healthy look, physical activity and fitness, having varied interests, a sense of humor, the ability to be real, the ability to laugh at oneself, communication skills, confidence, style, giving compliments.

2. What are some characteristics that you find unattractive?

An obsession with weight, being conceited and self-centered, a habit of treating people badly, trying too hard to look good.

- 3a. (for guys only) Do guys like only girls who wear revealing, sexy clothes?

Most guys prefer clothes that are not too tight, that look good, clothes that the girl is comfortable wearing.

- 3b. (for girls only) Do girls automatically like guys who are “pumped up” and muscular?

No, everybody has different tastes; personality is more important.

4. What are some alternatives to obsessing over looks and fashion?

Alternatives include setting academic goals, watching less TV, developing hobbies and interests, creating your own self-image.

5. Do you think that the body types shown in fashion magazines, fitness magazines and music videos help teens feel good about themselves?

No, they can make young people feel insecure and inadequate.

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 6

ROLE-PLAY

Working in small groups, discuss the scenarios below and decide what you would do in each situation. Then choose one scenario and perform a role-play for the class. The information provided in the fact sheets may be helpful as you prepare your role-plays.

1

You are with two slender, healthy-looking friends at the mall. You have all just finished a meal at the food court. One of them wants to get ice cream. The other says, “Are you sure that’s a good idea? You don’t want to get fat.” What do you say?

2

You are at a birthday party. Everybody is having a good time eating pizza and snacking on other party food. Everybody, that is, except for Jenny. Jenny doesn’t eat any pizza. Instead, she has brought along a plastic bag with grapes in it. She counts out exactly eight grapes. That is all she eats the whole time you are there. At the end of the party, you ask her why she didn’t have pizza. She says, “I can’t eat that. Look at me. I’m a cow!” But Jenny is not fat. In fact, Jenny is probably the thinnest one at the party. What do you do?

3

You are on the swim team and talking with the coach, who insists that you lose five to ten pounds in the next week before the state swim meet. “You’ll be in better shape,” the coach says. “And besides, you’ll look better in a swimsuit.” How do you respond?

4

You think your friend may have bulimia. She has been driving herself crazy about her weight and goes into the bathroom immediately after a meal. One day you are in the school rest room and your hear someone come into the stall next to you and throw up. While you are washing your hands, your friend exits the stall. What do you do?

5

Justin is a high school baseball player. He has been the team’s starting third baseman since his sophomore year and has played very well during the past two years. During this time, Justin has succeeded by keeping a strict workout schedule and healthy diet. All of Justin’s friends and teammates say that he has a good chance to play college baseball. Entering his senior year, Justin really wants to impress the scouts. His coach says that using creatine may give him the extra edge he needs.

Name: _____

PART ONE: Discuss the statements below.

What do the sayings below mean? Do you agree with the statements? Do they express a healthy or unhealthy way of thinking? How do they relate to having a healthy body image?

PART TWO: Write your own sayings.

Choose three of the sayings below and write your own versions. Make sure that your sayings help people to have a more reasonable body image.

"Beauty is only skin deep."

"Pretty is as pretty does."

"It's what's inside that counts."

"The mirror doesn't lie."

"You can never be too rich or too thin."

"Thin is in."

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

***“The less judgmental you are toward others,
the more beautiful you become.”***

~ Michaela, winner of *Turning Beauty Inside Out* essay contest

We all know that “beauty is only skin deep” and that we “shouldn’t judge a book by its cover.” But do we really pay much attention to these values? Rather than being quick to judge people by looks or make a nasty remark, why not make an effort to look beyond appearance and see people for who they are inside? Consider the following questions:

- ▶ Have you ever been on the receiving end of a cruel comment about your physical appearance?
- ▶ Have you ever made cruel comments to others about their appearance?
- ▶ Have others let you know, in some way, that you’re not good-looking enough?
- ▶ Have you ever let others know that they don’t measure up in terms of physical beauty?
- ▶ Do you find clothes shopping unpleasant because of fears about how others will judge you?
- ▶ Have you ever skipped an activity to avoid comments about your appearance?
- ▶ Do you think often about dieting or taking sports supplements because of comments about your size?
- ▶ Have you considered changing your hair or other aspects of your appearance to look better to others?

Unfortunately, most of us would answer “yes” to at least one of the questions above. Picking on others because of their physical appearance—such as body size or shape, skin complexion or facial features—is cruel, yet very common. Why is it that we are so quick to judge others by their appearance without getting to know them?

PART ONE: Write an essay about someone “beautiful” in your life (it doesn’t have to be a girl). What makes that person beautiful? Do your best to dig further than skin deep.

PART TWO: As a class, create a collage that expresses beauty. Your teacher may be able to designate a portion of the classroom as a “Wall of Real Beauty” for all to see. You can look in a magazine like *National Geographic* for pictures of beauty in different cultures. You can consult books on the history of fashion or the movie industry to see how popular looks have changed over time. You can bring in magazine clippings, photos, original drawings, poems, song lyrics, etc.

PART THREE: After you view the “Wall of Real Beauty,” write your definition of beauty.

Kids have to cope with unrealistic media images of stick-thin models and actresses and super-muscular guys. Consider this: 20 years ago, the average model weighed eight percent less than the average woman. Today's models weigh a whopping 23 percent less than the average woman! Many young people grow up to dislike their bodies and become obsessed with weight, body shape and size. Some teens even develop eating disorders when they strive to achieve an impossible goal. What can you do about it?

PART ONE: Create a “Body Image Collage.”

Working in small groups, go through popular magazines and clip advertisements that include photos of people. Divide the advertisements into two groups: healthy (those that might inspire a healthy self-image) and unhealthy (those that might lead a person to feel the body image blues). On a large poster board, create two panels, one for each category of ads: healthy vs. unhealthy. Glue the pictures that you find under the correct heading.

PART TWO: Answer the following questions.

1. Was it easier to find healthy bodies that normal kids can relate to, or very thin or pumped-up bodies?
2. What products do the healthy bodies advertise? What products do the unhealthy bodies advertise?
3. Does the ratio of healthy to unhealthy ads found in one magazine have to do with the type of magazine? Why or why not?
4. Identify an advertisement with images that you believe promote an unhealthy self-image. Are these attractive body types in real life?
5. Are being incredibly thin or incredibly pumped up factors in being popular? Are they factors in being happy?
6. How could you advise your peers on ways that they can learn to tune out media messages and focus on developing a personal style that looks good on them and captures their personality?

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

PART THREE: Take it even further.

Choose one of activities below.

- ▶ Find the address of a company that uses unrealistic models in its advertisements and write a letter of complaint about the harmful body image messages it is sending.
- ▶ Identify a particular television program that sends out damaging messages about body image. Write to the producer or network to express how you feel.
- ▶ Draft a letter to a magazine in which you encourage the media to use models and actors/actresses who look like real people with believable dimensions.
- ▶ Write an article to help other teens separate fantasy from reality in terms of the images presented in the media.

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 11
VIDEO QUOTES

The quotes below are taken from the video *Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Body Image*. Choose one and write a short essay describing what the quote means to you. What would you say to the speaker?

“The world is so shallow and it’s taught me that my body is who I am. My appearance is who I am. But I don’t like the me inside.”

“Someone could call me an idiot and I couldn’t care less, but if they said I was getting fat or that I wasn’t attractive, I probably wouldn’t have gone to school for awhile.”

It becomes an obsession. You’re never good enough for yourself.”

“There’s no safe spot. There’s no place where people can be free with their bodies without being ridiculed.”

“If you can have the courage to stand up and make yourself your own person, people will always be drawn to you because of something that they can’t get anywhere else.”

“I don’t think any teenager can look in the mirror and say that they love themselves completely.”

A healthy body is a much better pursuit than the so-called “perfect” bodies you see on TV and in magazines. Think of it this way: Your ideal body weight is the one that allows you to feel strong, energetic and happy when you hang out with friends, play sports, work and study. How would magazines, movies and TV shows be different if everyone adopted that attitude?

Show the world that you respect yourself and your body by designing your very own magazine—with you on the cover!

Instructions:

1. Choose a photo or draw an illustration of yourself that shows you at your best—maybe you’re engaged in your favorite hobby, spending time with your favorite people or laughing at a hilarious joke. If you can, blow it up to magazine-cover size.
2. Think of creative “cover lines”—the words on a magazine cover that tell readers what articles are inside. Come up with cover lines for at least four articles about yourself, and then arrange them over your photo to form your magazine cover. You can use art supplies like markers, scissors and glue, or a computer design program. Don’t forget a title for your magazine!

Sample cover lines: *Secrets of Being a Great Friend: Allie Tells All*

Behind the Scenes: Matt’s Big Win at the 2008 State Speech Tournament

Alex Scores Big in Basketball Semi-Final

Cover Line Ideas: Use these to help you brainstorm articles to feature on your cover.

- ▶ your favorite sports and hobbies
- ▶ the occupation you’d like to have
- ▶ your favorite school subjects
- ▶ your friends and family
- ▶ your favorite music, books and movies
- ▶ your values
- ▶ your best features
- ▶ goals and dreams for the future
- ▶ your talents and abilities
- ▶ your proudest moments

When you’re done, display your magazine covers around the classroom and enjoy the celebration of a healthy body image!

FACT SHEETS

What is body image? Body image is the emotional and psychological perception of one's physical appearance, which may differ greatly from the perceptions of others.

Body image is not so much our actual appearance or how we seem to others, but our own internal view of how we look, how we think we appear to others, and how we feel about our looks.

~ Dr. Stephen Feder

What does body image have to do with self-esteem? Body image can be closely linked to self-esteem as kids develop into teens because they care more about how others see them and are more likely to compare themselves to others, including celebrities.

Do most teens have a positive body image?

- ▶ In a study of over 10,000 teens, slightly less than half of boys and a little over a third of girls described themselves as being happy with their bodies.
- ▶ The number of girls who have confidence in themselves and their bodies drops from 72 percent in sixth grade to 55 percent in tenth grade and to only 22 percent by age 17.
- ▶ Less than half of teenage boys are happy with their bodies.

What are the consequences of having a negative body image? Body dissatisfaction may trigger a host of unhealthy attitudes and behaviors, including:

- ▶ being overly sensitive to comments by others about appearance
- ▶ obsessing over one's body and appearance
- ▶ living in a constant cycle of weight-loss diets
- ▶ turning to artificial means to gain muscle mass (anabolic steroids or other potentially harmful substances)
- ▶ depression
- ▶ developing unhealthy feelings about food
- ▶ turning to food for comfort and to meet emotional needs
- ▶ seeing flaws in one's body that don't exist (this is called "body dysmorphic disorder")
- ▶ developing a potentially life-threatening eating disorder (e.g., anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder)
- ▶ exercise addictions

Take a look at these facts:

- ▶ Identifying with TV stars, models or athletes causes higher body dissatisfaction. The more adolescents watch TV, movies and music videos, the higher their degree of body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin.
- ▶ A study of body concerns in 16-year-old girls found that the factor exerting the strongest pressure to be thin was the media. Just when their bodies are naturally becoming rounder, girls are told by the media that thin is beautiful and their new fuller bodies are unacceptable.
- ▶ The more high school girls read beauty magazines, the more they use appetite suppressants, skip meals, intentionally vomit and use laxatives.
- ▶ One out of three girls in a national survey said they had changed something about their appearance to look like a character on TV.
- ▶ Both boys and girls between the ages of nine and 14 years who try to look like media figures are more likely than their peers to develop weight concerns, become constant dieters and begin to purge at least monthly.
- ▶ Exposure to images of unrealistically thin models is linked to depression, loss of self-esteem and the development of unhealthy eating habits in girls.
- ▶ One study found that bringing American TV programs into Fiji led to eating disorders and abnormal body image perception among adolescents there.
- ▶ Body image concerns may be important predictors of eating disorders in males, who represent approximately 10 percent of those diagnosed with eating disorders.
- ▶ Boys who read men's fashion or health/fitness magazines were two times more likely than their peers to use these potentially unhealthful products, such as steroids and unproven supplements, to achieve a more desired physique. Girls trying to look like women in the media were also more likely to consume such products.
- ▶ Ads featuring unrealistically thin models cause teen girls to feel less confident, angrier and more dissatisfied with their weight and appearance. Girls who spent the most time and effort on their appearance suffered the greatest loss in confidence.

Sources: Field, A., S. Austin, C. Camargo, et al. "Exposure to the Mass Media, Body Shape Concerns, and Use of Supplements to Improve Weight and Shape Among Male and Female Adolescents." *Pediatrics* Vol. 116 No. 2, August 2005.
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People with a negative body image have a greater likelihood of developing an eating disorder and are more likely to suffer from feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem and obsessions with weight loss.

~ National Eating Disorders Association

An eating disorder is a compulsion to eat or avoid eating that negatively affects every part of a person's life, including school, work, relationships, day-to-day activities, physical health, emotional well-being and mental health. Body image concerns are important predictors of eating disorders for both girls and boys. Below is a description of eating disorders and other conditions related to body image that involve unhealthy behaviors and obsessive-compulsiveness.

- ▶ **Anorexia Nervosa:** starving oneself out of an extreme fear of fat and an unrealistic body image—they think they are overweight, even when they are seriously underweight. They are obsessive about food and may also be compulsive exercisers.
- ▶ **Bulimia Nervosa:** a cycle of bingeing on large amounts of food and then purging by vomiting or taking laxatives or diuretics. Bulimics usually binge and purge in secret. Many bulimics also exercise compulsively.
- ▶ **Binge Eating Disorder or Compulsive Overeating:** uncontrolled, impulsive or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling full, often accompanied by shame, guilt, low self-esteem and self-hatred. Unlike those with bulimia nervosa, victims do not purge after a binge episode, but may attempt to fast or diet repetitively.
- ▶ **Muscle Dysmorphia or “Bigorexia”:** a mental disorder where the person becomes obsessed with building muscle and just can't get large enough.
- ▶ **Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD):** a preoccupation with an imagined or slight physical defect that causes significant distress or inability to function normally. People with BDD worry excessively about a physical flaw that others cannot see or a minor defect in their appearance, such as mild acne or scars. They often have low self-esteem and unreasonable fears of rejection due to their perceived ugliness.
- ▶ **Compulsive Exercising or Exercise Addiction:** when a person does not enjoy exercising, but feels guilt and anxiety when missing a workout and schedules life around exercise just like people with eating disorders schedule life around eating or not eating. Often occurs with other eating disorders.

Health Risks of Eating Disorders: Exhaustion, insomnia, muscle spasms, hair loss, anemia, blood pressure problems, loss of menstrual period, delayed puberty, stunted growth, blood sugar problems, dehydration, loss of bone mass and muscle, problems with teeth and gums, lanugo (fine hair covering the face and body from lack of protein in anorexics), kidney damage, digestive problems and death from cardiac arrest, electrolyte imbalance or suicide are just some of the possible effects an eating disorder.

What are the warning signs of an eating disorder:

Warning signs include dramatic weight loss, denying hunger, excessive exercising, withdrawing from family and friends, obsessing over calories and fat grams, going to the bathroom immediately after eating, using laxatives or diuretics and wearing baggy clothes.

If you suspect someone had an eating disorder...

Keep in mind that you cannot force an anorexic to eat, keep a bulimic from purging or make a compulsive overeater stop overeating. Eating disorders are emotional problems; the eating behaviors are only a symptom.

- ✓ Learn as much as you can about eating disorders.
- ✓ Talk to the person in private without interruptions and distractions.
- ✓ Tell your friend how much you care. Point out observations that indicate that you should be concerned about your friend's health, happiness and safety.
- ✓ Give your friend time and space to respond. He or she may deny there is a problem, be furious at you for uncovering the secret or feel threatened by your caring.
- ✓ Encourage the person to seek professional help. Medical and psychological help are needed to treat eating disorders.
- ✓ Avoid conflicts or a battle of the wills. If your friend refuses to acknowledge that there may be a problem, remind him/her that you are available as a supportive listener.
- ✓ Tell a responsible adult, such as the school nurse, a doctor, a teacher, a guidance counselor or a parent. Don't wait until the situation is so severe that your friend's life is in danger.
- ✓ Avoid placing shame, blame or guilt on your friend. Do not talk about food and calories. Rather, encourage the person to express his or her feelings.

Things to say:

- *"You deserve to get help and get better."*
- *"I think you're really struggling and need outside help."*
- *"I don't care if you're mad at me. Friends don't let friends suffer in a dangerous situation."*
- *"I won't stop caring."*
- *"I'm worried that you're trapped in a dangerous situation that's hard for you to see clearly."*

Things NOT to say:

- *"You just need to eat."*
- *"You are acting irresponsibly."*
- *"You look like a corpse."*
- *"Would you just eat already?"*
- *"Why are you doing this to yourself and everyone who cares about you?"*
- *"Just go on a diet."*
- *"It's not very healthy to throw up like that."*

Anabolic steroids are often obtained illegally by body builders to achieve a rapid increase in muscles and strength, but they will probably shorten your life expectancy.

What you should know about anabolic steroids:

- ▶ Steroids are safe for use only when a doctor prescribes them for a specific medical condition and monitors the person.
- ▶ Steroids are illegal to possess without a prescription from a licensed physician. It is illegal for individuals to sell steroids.

Health consequences of anabolic steroids include:

- ▶ greater risk for heart disease
- ▶ kidney and liver damage
- ▶ liver cancer
- ▶ high blood pressure
- ▶ reduced immune system functioning
- ▶ hyperactivity
- ▶ delusions and auditory hallucinations
- ▶ persistent bad breath
- ▶ severe acne
- ▶ mood swings
- ▶ aggressive behavior and “roid rages” (violent outbursts)
- ▶ depression
- ▶ suicidal thoughts

Side effects specific to males: baldness, development of female breasts, impotence, shrinking of the testicles, reduced sperm count, infertility, increased risk for prostate cancer.

Side effects specific to females: loss of breast tissue, changes in menstrual cycle, facial hair, male pattern baldness.

Adolescents using steroids face additional risks:

- ▶ Sexual development can be disturbed because the body is “tricked” into believing that all the necessary changes that accompany puberty have already taken place.
- ▶ Growth may be stunted because steroids cause a premature closing of the long bones that are developing in teens’ arms and legs.

These side effects can happen to anyone who uses steroids—not just people who abuse steroids for prolonged periods of time. Remember: these side effects can develop just as quickly as your muscles develop!

Name: _____

Young men with poor body images often suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. They are at risk of abusing anabolic steroids and other potentially dangerous performance-enhancing drugs.

Creatine is a popular performance supplement among athletes and can be purchased in drug stores, health food stores and supermarkets. It is a highly concentrated form of a natural substance found in meat and fish. Creatine has been linked to serious cramping, dehydration, fluid retention, kidney failure, muscle breakdown and abnormal heart rhythm. The risks of supplement-taking apply especially to young people who are still growing and developing. Many professional sports teams have banned its use. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that creatine not be used by anyone younger than 18 years.

Diuretics are commonly known as “water pills.” Diuretics act on the kidneys to increase urine output. Prescribed by doctors to treat seizure disorders, glaucoma, high blood pressure and altitude sickness, diuretics are used by athletes to “make weight.” Diuretics cause electrolyte imbalance in the body and can cause fatigue, weakness, diarrhea, cramping, tremors, heart palpitations and kidney damage.

Human Growth Hormone (HGH) is produced by the pituitary gland for normal growth and development, especially during puberty. Doctors use this hormone to treat certain conditions, but it is illegal to distribute for anti-aging, bodybuilding or athletic enhancement. Use of HGH results in enlarged extremities, distorted facial bones, colon polyps, enlarged heart, hypertension, thyroid problems, diabetes and acromegaly, which is an abnormal increase in the size of joints and the jaw. Other possible side effects of HGH include nerve pain, elevated cholesterol and glucose levels and an increased risk of cancer.

EPO (erythropoietin) is a synthetic version of a naturally occurring hormone that stimulates production of red blood. “Blood doping” enhances performance by forcing the overproduction of red blood cells, which carry oxygen, and thus increase an athlete’s endurance and performance. However, doping causes thickening of the blood and may result in clotting and even death from heart attack or stroke.

Using performance-enhancing drugs can have damaging and long-lasting effects on your body, mind and future health. So take care of your body through a healthy lifestyle and positive outlook and avoid artificial ways to improve your body.

People with a negative body image have a greater likelihood of developing an eating disorder and are more likely to suffer from feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem and obsessions with weight loss.

~ National Eating Disorders Association

How can you develop a more positive body image?

1. Focus on the qualities you like about yourself that are not related to appearance. Remember: your body size and shape have nothing to do with your worth as a person.
2. Refuse to spend excessive amounts of time worrying about food, weight and calories.
3. Don't allow your body size and shape to become your entire identity. Bodies come in all different shapes and sizes. Learn to feel comfortable in your own unique body.
4. Create a list of people you admire—people who have contributed to your life or to your world. Was their appearance truly important to their accomplishments?
5. Don't put yourself down in your own mind. Be your body's friend and supporter, not its enemy and detractor.
6. Count your blessings, rather than focusing on what you believe are flaws in your body. Make a list of all the things you are thankful for your body's ability to do: breathing, laughing, dancing, etc.
7. Remind yourself that true beauty is a state of mind, not a state of body. It has to do with letting your inner qualities shine through.
8. Surround yourself with positive people who are not overly concerned with appearance.
9. Wear clothes that are comfortable and make you feel good about yourself.
10. Be a critical viewer of the media: Do the people shown have realistic body types? Do they make you feel like you don't measure up?
11. Develop your unique gifts and talents to their fullest. Take up new hobbies and activities that don't center around your body image.
12. Develop meaningful relationships with friends and family.
13. Set goals for yourself and carry them out in stages.
14. Keep in mind that being "thinner" is not the same as being healthier and happier. Be healthy and fit! Have fun!

Struggling with body image can be extremely difficult. If you can't shake the body image blues, talk to a parent, teacher or school counselor.

Sources: *The Nemours Foundation, National Eating Disorders Association, Eating Disorder Referral and Information Center.*

Here's a short essay you can read whenever you're feeling down about yourself.

I'm Special

Author Unknown

I'm special. In the entire world, there's nobody like me.

Since the beginning of time, there has never been another person like me. Nobody has my smile. Nobody has my eyes, my nose, my hair, my hands, my voice. I'm special.

No one can be found who has my handwriting. Nobody anywhere has my tastes for food or music or art. No one else sees things just as I do. In all of time there's been no one who laughs like me, no one who cries like me, and what makes me laugh and cry will never provoke identical laughter and tears from anybody else, ever. No one reacts to any situation just as I would react. I'm special.

I'm the only one in all of history who has my set of abilities. Oh, there will always be somebody who is better at one of the things I'm good at, but no one in the universe can reach the quality of my combinations of talents, ideas, abilities and feelings. Like a room full of musical instruments—some may excel alone, but none can match the symphony sound when all are played together. Me? I'm a symphony. Through all of eternity no one will ever look, talk, walk, think or do things like me. I'm special.

I'm rare. And, just as with all rare things, I have great value. Because of my great value, I need not attempt to imitate others. I will accept—and yes, even celebrate—my differences.

Why? That's easy. Because I'm special.

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www.medialit.org

- ▶ “Beauty...and the Beast of Advertising” by Jean Kilbourne
www.medialit.org/reading_room/article40.html

Media Awareness Network

www.media-awareness.ca

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www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_girls.cfm

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www.center4research.org

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www.center4research.org/supplements.html

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www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

- ▶ “Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media”
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National Institute on Media and the Family

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www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_mediaeffect.shtml

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<i>Think Before You Click: Playing it Safe Online</i>	video/print or DVD/print
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<i>Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Bullying and Violence</i>	video/print or DVD/print
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