Love your body week
FOR SCHOOLS

CHALLENGING APPEARANCE IDEALS
FOR YEAR 8 – 10 STUDENTS

LESSON PLAN GUIDE
LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson (approximately 45 minutes) explores the role our language, dialogue and words have on both our own and others’ body confidence. Love Your Body Week encourages Australians, of all ages, to make positive changes to the relationship they have with their appearance and bodies.

One important step to gaining better body confidence is to challenge the language we use. Language that body shames or bullies, suggests that there is a ‘right and a wrong’ way to look. Societal beauty ideals have set the standard and we encourage young people to ‘BE THE CHANGE’ and challenge these unhelpful and unrealistic ideals. We are more than our bodies and appearance!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Students will be able to evaluate their language around body shape, weight and appearance.
• Students will develop strategies to combat unhelpful appearance based talk.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

This lesson could align with any of the following Australian Curriculum areas for Health and Physical Education:

• Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)
• Plan and use health practices, behaviours and resources to enhance health, safety and wellbeing of their communities (ACPPS077)
• Plan, implement and critique strategies to enhance health, safety and wellbeing of their communities (ACPPS096)

This lesson may also contribute towards meeting some of the sub-elements of Personal and Social Capability

KEY MESSAGES

• The language we speak, share, write and read all has the ability to impact:
  ➔ Our values and beliefs around thinness and beauty
  ➔ Our self-worth
  ➔ Our body confidence
  ➔ Our behaviours with food and exercise

• Appearance based talk is widely used – amongst friendship and within peer groups but also in media (TV and advertising) and online. It suggests that there is a ‘right’ and a ‘wrong’ way to look.
  ➔ It tends to reinforce societal appearance ‘ideals
  ➔ It doesn’t encourage difference or respect diversity in size, shape or colour.
  ➔ It suggests that thin/leaniness/muscles = better, more successful, more desirable, happier.
Appearance based talk is often used to normalise body image concerns, i.e. making disparaging remarks about one's own appearance, and or that of others, in attempt to alleviate one's own or a peer's body image concern. We are more than our appearance! The more we talk about appearance, the more important we make it, implying that our value as a person is strongly tied to our looks. Let's talk about our strengths, achievements, and personality instead.

LESSON – 45 minutes

You will need:

- Lesson plan guide
- Digital clip – see the link below or access from the resource portal for Love Your Body Week for schools
- Data Projector/Screen/speakers to play clip
- Students will need paper and pens (you can use butcher paper and coloured pens)

Introduction – 5 mins

- Today we are going to explore the role that the words and language that we use have on both our own and others’ body confidence.
- This lesson is an initiative of the Butterfly Foundation’s Love Your Body Week for schools. There are currently thousands of students around the country taking part in this lesson, and taking the challenge to think and talk about our bodies differently.
- The Butterfly Foundation is Australia’s largest charity supporting all Australians with eating disorders and body image concerns.

Topic overview – 5 mins

- Ask students to share what they know about body image.
  - Body image is how we feel about the way we look.
  - What things do they think can influence the way they feel about their body?
  - Our feelings can be influenced by many things – media/social media, our families, friends, partners etc. Our language and the way we talk to and about our body and other people’s appearance can either build our body confidence up, or tear it down.
  - Our words have power, when we talk to ourselves and others; face to face and online.
Screen Digital Clip – Appearance Based Talk - 1 min

Access clip here – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-DWpILyWjM

Post clip discussion points – 10 mins

- Have you heard people using appearance based talk? When/Who?
  ➔ Refer to class ground rules and try to keep the discussion generalised.

- Is it just females or do males talk about appearance too?
  ➔ We know that males and females engage in appearance based talk, but the focus of the talk is usually different. In particular, men are more likely to talk about musculature.

- Do you think appearance based talk helps people to feel good about their own appearance?
  ➔ Research shows that if adolescents use more appearance-based talk, they are more likely to become dissatisfied with their appearance.
  ➔ Although a compliment about your looks might feel good at first, compliments about your personality and achievements have a more lasting effect on the way that you feel about yourself.

- Why do you think people comment on appearances so often?
  ➔ We are visual beings, commenting on appearance is easy, and people think that it will make others feel good. Sometimes it does, but the overall effect is usually negative.

- Do you think it’s easy to challenge or shut down appearance based talk?
  ➔ No, it’s really hard because it has become so normalised in our society! The first thing to do is become more aware of how often we are engaging in appearance talk.
  ➔ Other things we could try include: stopping appearance talk altogether and seeing what impact that has on feelings about our bodies; commenting on a person’s intrinsic qualities rather than their looks; changing the conversation when you notice other people talking about looks; and promoting positive body-related talk.

The aim of this discussion is to make students aware of the damaging nature of appearance-related talk. Negative talk and teasing has an obvious negative effect. However if people constantly comment on appearance, even if it is positive, it reinforces the idea that our looks are the most important thing about us - and they’re not! Research indicates that appearance talk is linked to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating.
STUDENT LED ACTIVITY - Be the Change – 20 mins

- Encourage students to work in pairs or small groups to brainstorm and develop ONE positive strategy that could be implemented at school, in their community, or online, to combat appearance based talk (encourage students not to use images of bodies to do this).

- Students can use the key messages included in the lesson plan or shared throughout the digital clip. If they need additional prompts, strategies might include: taking a challenge to stop appearance talk; finding positive statements for every negative you might say about your own or other’s appearance; focusing on body acceptance and respect.

- Ask the students (if they feel comfortable) to present their message to the group verbally or they might like to create a poster or even create a graphic and share on social media #LYBWforshools.

LESSON CLOSE – 4 mins

This resource was developed by the Butterfly Foundation as a part of Love Your Body Week for schools, in order to promote positive body image and to raise awareness about the importance of positive, kind language around appearance.

Encourage students to TAKE THE CHALLENGE: Can they go 1 day without talking about appearance?

CONCERNED ABOUT A STUDENT?

As someone who works with young people, you may be one of the first people to notice if a student is struggling with body image issues or an eating disorder.

If you are concerned about a student (or anyone), please contact the Butterfly National Helpline, it is a free and confidential service. Counsellors are trained to respond to your concerns and if necessary can provide referral information.

Butterfly National Helpline – Monday-Sunday, 8am-midnight (AEST)

T: 1800-33-4673 (1800 ED HOPE) or support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au
NEED HELP OR SUPPORT?

1800 ED HOPE – 1800 33 4673
8:00am – midnight AEST, seven days a week, excluding national public holidays.
Email: support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au
thebutterflyfoundation.org.au