



Susan Allen

Mirror, mirror

We're better together

We help you connect to other people, learn about yourself and develop honest and mutually fulfilling relationships.



visionworks

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Tutor Notes

Duration guide

1-2 twenty-minute sessions

You will need

- a board/flipchart to collect brainstorm words
- to clear a large space in the classroom.

The purpose of this session is to think about our obsession with body image.

Introduce the session by reading the information box out loud. (You may wish to research in advance and use other statistics.)

Activity 1

Collate the words students come up with as they brainstorm how it might feel to be 100% confident about the way we look. Keep the result for the end of Activity 2.

Activity 2

Clear a space in the classroom. Tell students to imagine a line running down the middle of the space – one end represents 'strongly agree', and the other represents 'strongly disagree'.

If possible, only reveal one statement at a time, or you may choose simply to read them out.

Go through the statements one by one – in each case students stand at a point on the line that represents their views. Once they have chosen their position randomly ask students to talk about why they have chosen that place. Or ask for volunteers or both.

Encourage students to be honest about what they think and to talk about their opinions. Allow students to challenge each other's positions, as some statements are deliberately contradictory. It might be a loud session, but it should be fun and thought-provoking.

Finally, lead the discussion summing up what students have learned or observed. Encourage them to absorb the Food for Thought section, and maybe add their own tips to it.

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Student Activity

The purpose of this session is to think about our obsession with body image.

In 2007, BBC Radio 1's Newsbeat and 1xtra's TXU asked 25,000 people, mostly teenagers, how they felt about their bodies. Half of the women questioned said there was "lots they would change" about their bodies - and more than 10% "hated" what they looked like. It is also reported that up to 15% of men are dissatisfied with the way they look.

Why are we so obsessed with the way we look?

Three reasons:

- | Thanks to the media, we have become accustomed to extremely rigid and uniform standards of beauty.
- | TV, billboards, magazines etc mean that we see 'beautiful people' all the time, more often than members of our own family, making exceptional good looks seem real, normal and attainable.
- | Standards of beauty have in fact become harder and harder to attain, particularly for women.
The current media ideal of thinness for women is achievable by less than 5% of the female population.

Activity 1

What would it feel like to be perfectly 100% happy and confident with the way you look right now, wherever you are and whatever you are doing - at home, at school, or out with friends?

Take a few minutes to brainstorm some words to describe how you would feel. Your teacher or a volunteer will write them down as you think of them.

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Activity 2

We are going to look at some beliefs about our appearance.

Imagine a line, where one end represents 'strongly agree' and the other end represents 'strongly disagree'.

Taking each of the following statements in turn, stand at a point on the line that best represents your views. Be honest about what you think and about how your thoughts about your own or other peoples' appearance affect your life.

Be prepared to explain your position!

- | How people look reflects how valuable they are to society.
- | The way I look is a big reason why I am not achieving what I want in life.
- | Everyone deserves to be treated equally well no matter what they look like.
- | People will notice and think poorly of me if I have a spot on my face.
- | The only way I could ever be happy with the way I look is if I could change several of my physical characteristics.
- | If I can just look the right way, then I can have the relationships, job, joy, and peace that I want.
- | Beautiful people have the best of life.

Afterwards, discuss the activity in the group. What did you notice or find out about yourself and about the group?

Look again at those words you brainstormed at the beginning.

Every one of us felt that way once; at some age, at some stage, we were all perfectly comfortable with every aspect of ourselves. We might not remember the details, but we remember our lack of self-consciousness. We were more excited and curious about the outside world (learning to walk and talk for example) rather than being preoccupied with ourselves.

How can we feel that way again?

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Here are 3 tips for recovering and keeping a positive self-image:

- | Reach out. Who around you needs your help? Focus on something or someone beyond yourself.
- | Look out for what you say to yourself. Don't put yourself down. Our internal messages can become true.
- | Handle what others say to you. Don't take it personally – it is entirely to do with them and how they are feeling.

Food for Thought:

Can you think of any more tips for recovering and keeping a positive self-image?