



BODYkind

Toolkit for Facilitators

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Guidelines for Facilitators

A stylized illustration of a person with vibrant red hair. Their face is a light peach color and features a simple black question mark. They are wearing a black top. The background is a solid light gray.

Destination Kindness

Using This Toolkit

Introduction to Body Image

Teaching Body Confidence

Your Understanding of a Safe Space

Creating a Safe and Supportive Space

Destination Kindness

Have you ever considered what it might be like to be in a different body? What would it be like to be the tallest person in the room? To have a different skin colour? What does it feel like to have the wind blowing through long hair or to have no hair at all? What would it be like to be colourblind? Or blind? We experience and learn about the world through our bodies – essentially, we are our bodies. Other people may have feelings and experiences that we could never fully comprehend because our bodies differ. Some bodies may be more privileged than others, and that's something we aim to change.

No one should feel less valued or less capable of realising their potential because of their appearance. Achieving this demands some inner work and societal change. To appreciate our bodies is to trust ourselves, and from that comes the power to make a difference in our lives and our communities.

Educator Susan Bauer writes that 'young people know little about their bodies, but ironically, they are intensively focused on their bodies, often in unhealthy ways. They think about their appearance, weight, physical skills, and how their peers perceive them. With all this focus on their bodies, the actual study of the body is mostly omitted from the school curricula. The silence around the body is of concern for young people since the body is a source of positive and negative self-esteem.'

The BODYkind project aims to transform educational practices where bodies and body image of learners are neglected. We wish to break the silence Susan Bauer is writing about. This toolkit offers ideas and methods to lead conversations with young people about their bodies and body image. It has been prepared in cooperation of non-formal education trainers from Czechia, North Macedonia, and Latvia and tested with groups of individuals aged 15 to 22.

In the following pages, you will find outlines of eight modules covering various body image-related topics, along with brief input and guidelines for facilitators. The toolkit is based on the principles of non-formal education. The essential element of all the activities is young people learning from and supporting each other.



Through our work, we aim to encourage young people not to avoid particular activities or situations because they dislike their physical appearance. While it is common to have negative feelings about our looks, these feelings should not get in the way of accepting ourselves and enjoying everyday life.

Providing young people with a safe space to explore body-related issues enhances their well-being and mental health. The opportunity to reflect on sources of pressure and body shaming, and understand how social media shape their perception can be important for enhancing young people's competencies and empowering them to talk about their experiences living in their bodies and their interactions with other bodies.

We consider it important to turn the attention of young people to these topics and make them aware that they can contribute to societal change through various forms of activism.

Furthermore, cultivating awareness about our bodies, being able to set boundaries, standing up against body shaming, and showing kindness and empathy are essential steps in building societies that respect the differences and diversity among all of us and our bodies.

We have developed this toolkit for several audiences, and below, we have outlined additional reasons why we believe it is important and relevant to explore this topic.

FOR TEACHERS

It is rather common to prioritise learners' minds over their bodies in school settings. However, this may come at a high cost; therefore, it is important to understand how bodies and their movement can influence learning. When young people feel comfortable in their bodies, they are more likely to focus on pursuing their career and academic goals, free from distractions caused by insecurities. Moreover, addressing body-related issues in the classroom can be one of the steps towards creating a more inclusive learning environment and preventing bullying in schools. The BODYkind toolkit can be used as a resource to spark discussions on body-related issues. You can use the **videos** as a starting point, watching them with your students and facilitating discussions.



FOR YOUTH WORKERS

Are you familiar with how body and movement-based work can be used to support young people in developing their self-esteem and self-confidence? Do young people in your activities feel comfortable expressing themselves and discussing their insecurities? Do you challenge your own stereotypes?

Exploring body-related issues can be challenging, even in non-formal education. The BODYkind activities can assist in understanding how we, as youth workers, can empower young people to make choices based on critical thinking and belief in themselves, fostering their passions, and pursuing their interests, rather than being concerned about meeting ideals of beauty and physical look.

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

You probably come across discussions about bodies and related topics, such as health and sexuality, in various places. Unfortunately, these topics might not be as common in the spaces where you spend most of your time: school and family. Let's change that! Watch the **videos** that are part of this toolkit, explore BODYkind's **social media** profiles, and initiate discussions with teachers, family members, or peers. Tackling body-related topics is important, and you might be the one to start the conversation. If it seems complicated, you may consider something as simple as watching movies or series with friends. Consider shows like 'Sex Education', 'Euphoria', 'Atypical', or 'Special'. You know much better than we do which characters resonate with your experiences.

This toolkit has been designed for use in educational settings. The primary goal of the toolkit is to raise awareness, educate, and foster critical thinking and peer support among young people. It is not intended to solve problems that require intervention from a health professional, psychologist, or psychiatrist. We recommend gathering information about experts and institutions in your surroundings that provide support to young people dealing with body dysmorphic disorder, eating disorders, depression, and other mood disorders, or self-harm. Share this information with young people and encourage them to seek professional help.



BODYkind activities can also be used to embrace yourself. Cultivating a healthy relationship with the body is not only a challenge for young people but also for adults. They, too, struggle to figure it all out. Creating a healthy relationship with your body is a lifelong journey, and we would appreciate the chance to accompany you on this path for a while.



Using This Toolkit

The BODYkind project does not offer one-size-fits-all solutions. This is less a cookbook than a toolkit presenting a collection of ideas for activities and questions for reflection. It does not seek to dictate a strict course of action; instead, it offers flexible, interlinked tools that practitioners can choose and combine in their own ways.

The toolkit consists of eight modules tackling a variety of topics. Each module includes several activities to explore the topics and a set of questions for reflection. There are additional supportive materials that you might use, such as presentations, worksheets, audio exercises, and videos. Some modules also include images and files for printing.

Each module is designed to be presented to participants as a single session. Some modules include more activities that cannot be realistically included in a single session, providing you with multiple activity options to choose from. Additionally, you can combine and mix activities from several modules to create a more extended programme or even a short training course that can take place over a weekend. The suggested duration of each activity is approximate and varies based on the group's size and their level of activity and willingness to share. At the end of each module, there is a list of additional questions for reflection, which can be helpful in situations where activities are completed faster than expected.

We have tried to avoid focusing solely on young people's body image issues. How bodies are presented, represented, organised, and controlled reveals much about our culture – norms, values, and social relationships. Therefore, with these activities, we aim to bring in social aspects and promote more inclusive and participatory attitudes and behaviours among young people and in educational settings.

The first module **INTRODUCTION TO BODY IMAGE** offers a review of the topic and importance of body image. It will help initiate a conversation about body image challenges and explain key terms. You can choose one or two activities or implement all of them.

The second module **BODIES IN MEDIA** is focused on media and social media and their impact on body image. It aims to enhance



critical thinking skills, media literacy, and invites young people to create their own BODYkind content.

The third module **BODY STEREOTYPES** will allow you to explore body-related stereotypes and implicit biases. You can use it to improve understanding of connections between body perception and social inclusion.

The fourth module **SHAME AND BOUNDARIES** tackles the topic of body shaming and setting one's boundaries. Many young people have requested to include this topic in the programme of workshops and short training courses, as it offers some practical solutions on how to stand up for oneself and peers.

The fifth and sixth modules **EMBODIED ARTS** and **FINDING YOUR MOVEMENT** offer activities to improve one's body image through intuitive and creative exercises. The activities from these modules can be incorporated into arts and even sports lessons.

The seventh module **BODY IMAGE AND IDENTITY** explores how bodies are connected with developing and expressing our identities. It invites young people to reflect on who they are, what their values are, and how they present all that to the rest of the world.

In the eighth module **BODY AS A PROTEST**, we suggest utilising all the learnings about our bodies and their relations to social norms, values, culture, inclusion, equality, identity, and community to bring about change in young people's schools, organisations, and communities.

Additionally, you will find the notes for facilitators as part of the modules of this toolkit. We have identified activities that might trigger painful memories and negative feelings. However, it is important to be aware that even the simplest exercise might evoke difficult emotions because when you touch – literally or figuratively – someone's body, you are also touching their soul. It is a beautiful process, but make sure to have your own support team to be able to hold space for this to happen safely and beneficially for the participants.

We encourage you to review all the modules, even if the topics and issues do not immediately catch your attention. Explore the activities, issues covered, and tools proposed. Once you become familiar with the modules, consider the needs and interests of your participants,



the number of participants, the activity settings, and the timeframe. Then, set learning objectives based on the young people's needs and interests. Return to the modules and choose activities that align with your objectives. You can combine activities from various modules and incorporate tools learnt elsewhere. There are no limits when it comes to using this toolkit.

At the beginning of the workshop, you may want to spend some time reflecting on the guiding principles to ensure that participants feel comfortable with each other. You can incorporate a name game or use name tags if they meet for the first time. Tailor the introduction and guideline-setting section based on your available time and the group. This toolkit does not include name games and icebreakers since numerous resources are available for such activities, and you may also have your favourite ones.

If the participants know each other, you may skip name-learning and ice-breaking activities. However, we still encourage you to take a few minutes to establish the guiding principles and encourage participants to share what's important to them when discussing their bodies.

After the opening section, you may proceed with the exercises, bearing in mind that the toolkit provides approximate durations for each activity. The actual duration will depend on how the group engages with the content and how you tailor each exercise. There are a lot of questions for reflection offered that will enable you to offer more content in case exercises end earlier than expected.

Plan time for group reflection, evaluation, and closing of the session. Similar to the ice-breaking activities, this toolkit does not include concluding exercises but you can find ideas on other sources.

USING VIDEOS

The toolkit includes several **short videos**, each associated with one of the modules. You may use these videos to initiate discussions with young people – watch them together and discuss the issues addressed in the videos. Videos can be helpful if group members are hesitant to share their own experiences and opinions.



USING AUDIO EXERCISES

This toolkit features also **audio exercises**. These exercises are not linked to a particular module; rather, they have been designed for the facilitator's personal practice. Considering that you may have your own body image struggles, these exercises aim to enhance your awareness and connection to your body, foster mindfulness, acceptance, and a celebration of your body. This tool is also valuable in the facilitation process – our bodies help us to sense and influence the room's atmosphere, to empathise, communicate, and deliver our message more effectively. To use these powers, however, you may need to renew and strengthen the connection to your body, and the audio exercises facilitate this process at your own pace.

USING CARDS

The BODYkind Toolkit features four sets of versatile cards designed to enhance participants' experience with the training modules. The cards can be used from both sides and most of them are tied to specific exercises within the BODYkind training modules. The remaining sets are supplementary, crafted to inspire conversations and offer fresh ideas for creative individual or group activities.

Interested in getting your hands on these cards? Reach out to us on Facebook or Instagram to check their availability - we'll be happy to send them your way!

Below, you'll find a quick overview of each card set, along with suggestions for how to use them.

SET I

Influences

These 30 cards are designed for the 'Influences' exercise, which explores the various factors shaping young people's body image. You can find a detailed description of this activity in the module 'Introduction to Body Image'.



The Road Trip

These cards feature photos of 30 individuals, good for use in the 'Road Trip' exercise within the module 'Body Stereotypes'. Additionally, these image cards can complement other activities, such as 'My Inner-Outer Self' in the module 'Body Image and Identity'. They are also suitable for any exercise where facilitators use images to encourage reflections on mood, emotions, or self-perception.

SET II

Creative Prompts

These 30 cards provide inspiration for creative writing, drawing, and photography exercises. While not tied to specific activities within the learning modules, they are designed to boost self-esteem, foster self-awareness, and encourage reflection on one's relationship with their body. Made for individual or small group activities, these prompts can also help you explore your own body image in a creative way.

You can check out examples of completed exercises on our Instagram. If you'd like to share your creations, post them with the hashtag #BODYkindCreations, and we may feature them on our account.

My Inner-Outer Self

These cards include images of diverse individuals and are specifically designed for the 'My Inner-Outer Self' exercise in the module 'Body Image and Identity'. The cards can also be used as associative tools in other activities, helping participants delve into the connections between identity and appearance.

SET III

Conversation Starters

This set features 30 lighthearted questions designed to help participants ease into activities. Each question ties into one of the eight training modules, with the corresponding module cover image displayed on the back of the card. You can use them as conversation starters in pairs or small groups, or as part of getting to know each other.



These cards are versatile: in longer training programs, they can be used to introduce modules. They're also good for informal gatherings, sparking meaningful conversations among friends, family, or community groups.

SET IV

Reinventing the School

This set contains 30 keywords that represent various aspects of our bodies. It is specifically designed for the 'Reinventing the School' exercise, part of the module 'Body as a Protest'. These cards can be used also in other body-awareness activities, encouraging participants to explore the unique features of their bodies and how these traits shape their experiences and interactions.

Inspirations

This set features thought-provoking quotes from various authors, offering diverse perspectives on the political nature of bodies. These quotes are central to the 'Inspirations' exercise in the module 'Body as a Protest'. They can be used to start reflection, foster discussion, and inspire brainstorming on how to use our bodies as instruments of protest and expression.



Introduction to Body Image

Body image refers to a person's perception, thoughts, and feelings about their physical appearance. It includes the way a person views their body size, shape, and other physical attributes, as well as their feelings about their attractiveness and self-worth. If you are wondering about your body image, you might ask yourself the following questions: 'How do I see my body? What do I feel towards my body? How do I perceive the bodies of others? How do I talk about my body and the appearance of others?'

Body image is not static, and it can change throughout life. It is influenced by cultural and social expectations, personal experiences, and media representation. Media, social media, and advertisements may set unrealistic expectations regarding our bodies. Comments from peers and family members also impact body image. It can also change over time, influenced by the changes occurring in different life stages (puberty, pregnancy, menopause).

Body image plays an important role in various aspects of young people's lives. It can have positive, negative, or no effects on social interactions, school experiences, meeting new people, friendships, family relationships, physical activities, self-esteem, confidence, and overall life satisfaction.

Importantly, there is no standard body. Discussions about bodies should include considerations of diverse sexual and gender identities, chronic illnesses, and disabilities.

Regardless of their appearance, people can have a positive or negative body image or a more complicated perception of their body. They might like some parts, be more critical of others, or feel confident about their ability to perform well in some sports but be insecure about their looks. It is also important to point out that people may see themselves differently than others do. For example, you can have negative thoughts about your appearance even if others see you as beautiful.

On the other hand, negative body image may be linked to excessive self-criticism, comparisons with others, and dissatisfaction with one's



appearance. Negative body image can cause emotions like disgust, anger, frustration, envy, and shame. It may also lead to interpersonal anxiety, as individuals unable to accept their looks might assume others share the same dislike. Fearing social rejection, they may even avoid situations where they might feel that they will be judged for their looks.

The British Government's Equalities Office's overview of body image studies suggests that negative body image is prevalent across all age groups. Age is not as important as gender and sexuality – heterosexual men tend to exhibit higher body satisfaction than homosexual men and heterosexual women. During adolescence, low body satisfaction is linked to low mood and teasing, while in adulthood, it correlates with decreased physical activity. The consequences of negative body image may include low self-esteem and depression, with potential links to eating disorders and risky sexual practices. Individuals with low body satisfaction may be more likely to report thoughts of suicide, attempts at suicide, or self-harm.

People who lack body confidence are likely to have less confidence in general, potentially setting them back from realising their full potential. For example, the Dove Global Survey found that six out of ten girls discontinue activities they love or that would benefit them due to negative feelings about their appearance. A study by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, encompassing women and girls from seventy countries, reported that forty-five per cent of respondents believe low body confidence prevents girls from assuming leadership positions.

On the other hand, positive perceptions of the body can foster positive characteristics, such as increased optimism, self-esteem. However, similar to happiness not merely being the absence of depression, positive body image is not merely the opposite of negative body image. Its meaning varies among individuals, and limited research has explored its impact. The few studies that did delve into the impact of a positive attitude about the body suggest that individuals who like and respect their physical appearance may extend that respect to their emotional well-being and engage in different self-care behaviours. Some people become more physically active and enjoy hiking, swimming, or group sports. Others may dedicate time to reading or meditation. Even seemingly routine activities like regular medical check-ups can be considered acts of self-care. Moreover,



it may contribute to increased self-compassion, confidence to try new things without fear of failure, and a greater understanding and caring for others. It may even inspire volunteering or active support for causes one cares about. The benefits are numerous and come in various forms.

When discussing body and body image, one of the aspects to consider is the relationship between body image and the pursuit of career goals. A study conducted by Horizon Media specifically examined the link between positive and negative body image and career development and compensation. Horizon's study found that individuals who believe their body has positively impacted their career are 40 per cent more optimistic about their future compared to those who believe their body has negatively affected their career. Moreover, those with positive body confidence are 75 per cent more likely to express a strong sense of success in their career and are twice as likely to feel very content with their progress and achievements.

The public discussion on body image has evolved in two different directions:

BODY NEUTRALITY: This approach centres on accepting the body as it is and appreciating it for what it is capable of, rather than how it looks. A significant aspect of body neutrality involves respecting the body's abilities and limitations and understanding that feeling positive about one's body is not always possible. Body neutrality encourages individuals to recognise that their value is not tied to their appearance.

BODY POSITIVITY: This approach promotes loving and celebrating all body types, including those facing stigmatisation. It advocates for self-love and self-care. Body positivity addresses issues such as negative self-image, body shaming, and discrimination.

The BODYkind team does not exclusively endorse either body neutrality or body positivity. Instead, we encourage you to explore both approaches and introduce them to young people, allowing them to find their own path.



Teaching Body Confidence

Body confidence can be developed. As educators, we can help young people develop healthier relationships with their bodies, and there are a number of tools to achieve this – perhaps you are already familiar with and using some of them.

However, when a negative body image is causing serious difficulties, **seeking therapeutic support** would be the most appropriate choice. In such cases, a young person should receive assistance from a psychologist who can facilitate improvements in how they feel about their appearance. This support can help them identify the underlying causes of a negative body image, set goals for change, and build skills to manage emotions, behaviour, and thinking patterns.

In this chapter, we have outlined five general principles that, based on the outcomes of various studies, can help us boost young people's body image and even support them in dealing with unsatisfactory body image in the context of non-formal education.

FOCUS ON STRENGTHS

Professor Thomas F. Cash concludes that the more invested people are in their appearance, the more it occupies their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. Individuals most resistant to body image difficulties are those who are not overly invested in their physical appearance for their identity and self-worth. If you are dedicating significant hope, energy, and effort to being physically attractive or looking different than you do, your sense of self-worth will be limited. **Appearance should not be a building block of one's self-worth**, as it makes people more vulnerable to body changes and problems in their lives.

It is crucial to raise the understanding that **looks aren't everything and don't affect everything**. A person's worth is not dictated by conformity to some societal standard of physical perfection.

Almost all the young people we have met in our work are particularly interested in all kinds of activities that help them understand



themselves better. Teenagers should be allowed to learn about topics they are interested in. They are searching for themselves and their place in the world. Any method that helps them identify their strengths, discover, and practise their talents will contribute to developing body confidence, shifting their focus away from the appearance and allowing them to develop solid self-esteem. **Adolescents with a secure sense of self as competent and lovable are less likely to fall prey to social pressures.**

It is also important that young people develop positive expectations towards interactions with others – that others will accept them and the time together will be fun and rewarding. Positive group experiences are crucial. Therefore, consider seeking opportunities to create pleasant experiences involving young people, for example, a well-managed exchange project abroad or organising events in collaboration with schools, youth centres, or organisations. Be mindful of the importance of ice-breaking and team-building activities.

AVOID AVOIDANCE

Cash identifies three fundamental approaches individuals employ to navigate challenges to their body image. The first is **Appearance Fixing** – entailing mental and behavioural attempts to change one's looks: exercising, dieting, trying to conceal certain aspects with the help of clothes or make-up, getting a new hairstyle, or manicure, all in the pursuit of feeling better.

The second approach is called **Experiential Avoidance**. This involves efforts to block out negative body image emotions and distracting oneself from upsetting experiences, including avoiding social events and activities like sports and parties. While avoidance might provide temporary relief, it perpetuates body image difficulties.

There might be various practices, places, and persons that young people choose to run from. They might forbid themselves to do certain activities, thus hoping to avoid feelings like shame, anxiety, or embarrassment. **Encouraging people to take control of these avoidant behaviour patterns is crucial.** There is a lot of scientific evidence suggesting that individuals can overcome their anxieties by gradually exposing them to whatever they avoid because of anxiety.



Unlike the first two strategies, a healthy approach is known as **Positive Rational Acceptance**. It involves learning to be aware of and accept feelings of discomfort rather than attempting to deny, avoid, transform, or allow them to dictate one's actions. Acceptance means perceiving things as they are, in the present moment. It entails recognising emotions like discomfort without trying to suppress or judge them. One way to practise acceptance is through mindfulness.

Mindfulness is a way of directing attention or awareness – a conscious step back to observe inner experiences in the here and now. Body scans are one of the methods to learn mindfulness and acceptance. The basic body scan exercise is included among the **audio exercises** in this toolkit. Body scans can be performed in any setting, such as in the shower, during walks, or while sitting in the classroom. Also, check out the activity called 'Comfortable with Discomfort,' providing a chance to face and accept feelings of anxiety and discomfort.

DEVELOP MEDIA LITERACY

Most of the content presented in the media contributes to various body image difficulties. Teaching critical thinking is essential for different domains of life and is also needed to help young people feel more confident in their bodies. It is important to encourage young people to think critically about media content and its impact on them. Moreover, opening a conversation about how this content relates to societal values, norms or perceptions is equally important. When addressing body issues, critical thinking can assist us better understand the power of different narratives and media representations and their impact on our self-confidence and beliefs.

One of the first steps of a person's body image journey can be drawing a timeline of their body history and noting all the situations and individuals that have contributed to their doubts and dislikes regarding their bodies. Who are the people whose messages have harmed them? What are their intentions? Are they trustworthy?

Similarly, we can analyse media content. Who is communicating? What are their goals? What do they want the audience to do? How is their content created? What the media does not show? **Media literacy is one of the most important competencies that young**



people need to learn, not only to feel confident in their bodies but also to avoid buying into messages that promote exclusion and hate against certain bodies.

CELEBRATE

Our body image involves a relationship between us and our bodies. While we can learn to be less critical and demanding, it is not sufficient. **Similar to any good human relationship, a successful partnership requires more than the absence of negative experiences.** Have you ever felt fulfilled in a friendship solely because your friend didn't humiliate you? Good things happen in good relationships. They thrive as a result of rewarding experiences. Therefore, creating situations where young people can enjoy being embodied beings is important. What could these situations be?

Professor Thomas F. Cash speaks about **mastery and pleasure as two ways of celebrating our bodies**. Mastery involves setting and achieving goals, such as running a marathon or climbing a mountain. Sports or dance classes can provide a great context for teaching body confidence. We have observed this in courses where young people engage in acrobatic exercises in pairs and groups. Some individuals, attempting this activity for the first time, discovered that their bodies are capable of much more than they could have imagined before, contributing to their self-love. Setting and achieving physical goals provide a good challenge and great satisfaction. Unfortunately, in many countries, experiences in sports classes are rather harmful towards young people's body image, as pupils are asked to meet certain standards that do not consider their abilities or differences. Additionally, bullying, including from teachers, can occur in classes. If you lead sports, dance, or other movement classes, refer to the chapter about creating a safe environment and see how it can be applied in your classes. In a safe environment, sports, dance, outdoor activities, and other movement disciplines can be powerful tools for enhancing young people's body image and shifting the focus away from their appearance. You can incorporate these activities into various non-formal learning programmes and projects. Adventure education, for example, is an excellent approach for building teamwork, soft skills, and confidence.



What Cash means by pleasure is simply having fun. This may involve having a massage or a sound bath, dancing to your favourite music, enjoying a nice meal, and so on. There are plenty of possibilities for finding happiness through our bodies. You can easily include activities such as cooking, singing and dancing together, playing games, or having a refreshing swim in various non-formal education courses and programmes.

WALK YOUR TALK

Educators and parents can contribute to young people's negative body image by being too invested in their own appearance or making negative comments about their own or others' looks. It is important to be mindful of our language and behaviour in front of the group or class. **Leave the focus on appearance or meeting specific standards and norms outside the classroom door.** Instead, speak with young people about their dreams, goals, passions, strengths, and contributions. When discussing politicians or celebrities, focus on their work, ideas, and talents, rather than their clothing choices, hairstyles, or diet plans.

For more ideas and principles, together with the young people, you can watch the video featuring tips from the BODYkind team members. Afterwards, you can open a discussion on the role of volunteering in the process of building self-confidence, fostering empathy, and shifting attention from our bodies to societal issues.

We encourage you to ask young people to share their ideas on increasing body confidence. What do they do to feel more confident in their bodies? What obstacles do they face? Remember, young people are a heterogeneous group, and what works for one may not work for another. Nevertheless, the key is to establish a dialogue and allow them to express themselves and share.



Your Understanding of a Safe Space

All the activities where bodies are discussed, touched, or made visible may not be beneficial and, in some cases, even possible if participants feel unsafe with each other and the facilitator. When such activities happen in an unsafe atmosphere, participants may experience emotions ranging from discomfort to panic, hindering their willingness to share and discuss. Furthermore, touching upon personal and sensitive topics could lead to more abuse among group members. Our bodies store all kinds of memories and emotions, and as facilitators, we need support from the group to navigate all these stories and histories. Therefore, establishing and maintaining a safe space is crucial. Before you start using the modules and activities, we invite you to reflect on the need for a safe and supportive space in which young people can work and on creating such a space. For this reason, we provide a few tips and points to consider.

Before we share our reflection on the elements of a safe and supportive space, please take a few minutes and write down its characteristics as you understand a safe space.

TASK 1: Reflect on the question: **'What does a safe space mean for you as a youth worker, facilitator, or teacher?'** Take a moment to think about it or write down your definition of a safe space and its characteristics.

TASK 2: Once you are ready with your definition and characteristics, we encourage you to **review our [checklist](#) and reflect on each item.** What are the similarities and differences from your list? What are you doing now to create a safe group atmosphere? What should you do more or differently? Did any of the characteristics trigger you? Why?

TASK 3: Identify five characteristics that you would like to improve because you consider them to be the most important when you engage in body image-related workshops and activities. Take a moment to think about how you could work on these characteristics. It might include additional research, attending workshops and training courses, or learning new methods and tools.





Worksheet 0.1

SAFE SPACE CHECKLIST

Participants feel confident to share.

Participants and facilitators respect the confidentiality of sharing.

Participants do not feel pressured to take part in activities.

Participants respect the different perspectives of their peers.

Facilitators and participants do not undermine each other.

The session has a clear objective set and communicated.

There are at least two facilitators or a support person present.

No judgement and hate speech are tolerated during the activities.

Facilitators and participants treat each other as equals.

Active listening is practised.

Self-reflection on one's own beliefs and opinions is encouraged.



Worksheet 0.1

SAFE SPACE CHECKLIST

Admitting that I do not have the answer to that question.

Having a dialogue, not a debate.

Awareness of our own stereotypes and prejudice.

Paying attention to non-verbal communication.

Using inclusive language.

Introducing preferred pronouns and respecting them.

Expressing opinions without stigmatising certain groups.

Respecting each other's boundaries and asking for consent.

Facilitators avoid microaggressions.

There is no emotional or physical abuse among group members.

Facilitators only use methods they are qualified to use.

Creating a Safe and Supportive Space

Amidst current armed conflicts and climate change anxiety, along with difficulties in families and the challenges of prolonged screen time, young people are seeking safe spaces. This is crucial for them not only for learning but also for expressing themselves, taking action, and experiencing a sense of belonging. If you can create such a space in a classroom, youth centre, or during a single workshop, it will be highly significant for the young people attending, especially for those struggling to find such a safe space elsewhere. Therefore, the steps below are worth considering in various contexts, not limited to body image workshops.

STEP 1: HAVE A CLEAR GOAL FOR EACH ACTIVITY

Whether you decide to realise all modules, just one module, or even a single activity, when making these choices, you may consider the following:

- **Your facilitation experience and knowledge of the topics covered in the modules.** Start with the topics that you feel comfortable with.
- **Your knowledge of your participants.** If you are working with young people you know well, creating a safe space and tailoring activities to their needs may be more manageable. Nevertheless, do not make assumptions about their needs and interests. If you select participants through an open call, we recommend that you learn about their expectations and any issues they may or may not want to talk about. You can create an online form and ask them to fill it out. Understanding participants' backgrounds helps prevent unintended stigmatisation during examples and simulations. It is worth mentioning that even if you opt for an online questionnaire, it may not provide complete information. Thus, paying attention to non-verbal communication and interaction during activities



is important. It is necessary to notice whether participants are feeling comfortable and if the working space remains safe.

- **Your motivation as a facilitator.** Why are you conducting this workshop? What is your goal? What are your objectives? Be clear about what you want to achieve and why it is important and relevant – open a discussion, raise knowledge and awareness, or change attitudes and behaviour.
- **Your and your participants' needs.** Do not hesitate to adjust the activities proposed in this toolkit. It is important that you feel comfortable and confident about them and that these activities serve your participants well.

Be aware that participants can react differently than expected, for example, they can bring up points you plan to explore in another activity. It is important to be open to changes. We encourage you to **have a Plan B** – an additional activity, a different closing and reflection activity to finish the session in another way than planned, extra questions for sharing in case the activity takes less or more time, or it does not encourage the reflection on the issues as you had planned.

STEP 2: COMMUNICATE THE GOAL OF THE ACTIVITY CLEARLY

Young people may be interested in joining activities addressing body image topics for various reasons and may have different expectations, including therapeutic ones. We recommend communicating that there is a boundary between therapy and the workshop and that you, as an educator, cannot meet these therapeutic expectations. Nevertheless, you can offer contacts and information on organisations and professionals working on the issues.

When organising one of the workshops on body image, in the application form, we asked the participants to review the programme and share their expectations and questions they would like to tackle. When reviewing the forms, we noticed that in several cases, their key motivation was to address their eating disorder. We contacted them, reflected on their motivation to participate, and shared our



plan. We clarified that we could not address their needs because our aims differed. We provided them with information on organisations working on the issues concerning them. A few of them eventually chose not to participate in the activity upon learning that we could not respond to their needs. We recognised that we could not address their specific issues and guided them towards the more professional support they needed.

Being transparent about your motives and voicing a clear goal of the group work reduces possible confusion and increases participants' trust in the process and you.

STEP 3:

GET TO KNOW YOUR PARTICIPANTS

Activities require adjustments, and any of us can have a sensitive area and be hesitant to talk about certain topics or issues. The same goes for your participants. We encourage you to get to know your participants before the activity, for example, through anonymous online forms. The participants might feel uncomfortable sharing personal information, especially if they do not know the facilitator yet and have not established a trusting relationship; thus, anonymous online forms might be the way.

Alternatively, you can ask the participants to anonymously write down on a piece of paper which topics they are interested in and which issues they are struggling with at the beginning of the session. You can read them out loud to make the group aware of the issues and interests or go through them alone to better understand the group.

STEP 4:

INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLANNING

Share the proposed program and plan for the workshop or training with the participants. Ask them to comment and give suggestions for topics and issues they want to raise. You might also ask them to give feedback on topics or issues they would not feel comfortable sharing. The participants' involvement in creating the activity empowers them and leads to an activity that meets their needs better.



STEP 5: BUILD A TEAM

You can work alone, but if possible, we recommend working with another facilitator or having a technical support person. Especially if you are starting as a facilitator, delivering activities in tandem can be beneficial. With two facilitators, you can observe participants' involvement and interactions more effectively. Moreover, if any issues arise, one of you can step out of the working room to address them.

What could go wrong?

- **Technical issues:** malfunctioning projector, connectivity issues with speakers – it is always better if there is another person to handle such issues so you can fully concentrate on the group;
- **Health issues:** participants can start to feel sick, get allergic reactions, etc. Prior to the session, confirm the availability of first aid on the premises. Ask participants about any health issues, allergies, and emergency contacts;
- **Misunderstandings and conflicts among participants:** activities may lead to misunderstandings or conflicts despite initial agreements to respect each other's opinions and established guiding principles. You need to decide whether to address the conflict with the entire group or to take the individuals involved in the conflict to a separate space for resolution;
- **Triggers:** the participants can get triggered by a particular topic or conversation, potentially recalling past traumas and negative experiences. It may be beneficial to address the issue of triggers when discussing guiding principles. It is essential to establish a safe way allowing the participants to express discomfort, whether by abstaining from the activity, discontinuing it, or leaving the working space. It may also be useful to discuss mechanisms participants can use to cope with feelings of being stuck, anxiety, and fear. These mechanisms could include the practice of journaling or having some scribble posters somewhere in the corner of a room, for drawing or expressing thoughts and emotions, providing water, ensuring access to fresh air, and allowing opportunities to walk, stretch, or lie down.



When working in tandem, it is advisable to agree on the division of roles and establish a method for expressing your opinion or indicating unclear directions. Facilitators have different styles, so if you have not worked together previously, review the plan and discuss possible scenarios before the activity begins.

STEP 6: AGREE ON THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE ACTIVITY

Even if participants know each other, we recommend taking a moment to discuss the main principles to establish clear guidelines for creating a safe space. You might start by asking the participants what they would need from each other to feel comfortable taking part in the activities. They can either share their ideas verbally or write them down. When reviewing the suggestions, encourage them to be precise. Saying 'Respect each other' is great, but what does 'respect each other' look like when working together? How can we respect each other's opinions while working in pairs or groups?

What other points to address when establishing guiding principles:

- **The privacy issue:** what participants say stays in the room. The same goes for taking photos. Double-check with participants if they agree to have their photos taken and published, and how they feel about using phones during the activity. Do they think having phones in their hands impacts their active listening skills or the process of creating a safe space?
- **Voluntary participation and the right to say 'NO':** participants should be allowed to engage in activities voluntarily and possess the right to decline participation. For instance, they should be able to choose not to share their opinions during group sessions or opt out of activities that make them uncomfortable. Do not shame young people for choosing not to participate in something, and be aware if you are creating pressure to say or do something with your behaviour. That might happen even unintentionally;
- **Speaking for oneself and not others:** encouraging the participants to use 'I' statements, 'I think...', not 'We think', or 'You think';



- **Active listening:** miscommunication happens quickly, so stress the importance of active listening, rephrasing, and asking for clarification if needed;
- **Valuing perspectives of others:** highlighting that we come from different backgrounds and have diverse experiences. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the value of our opinions.
- **Avoiding discriminatory language:** communicate that discriminatory language is not welcomed. This includes language that can offend, exclude, or stereotype individuals, certain social, ethnic, or national groups. Discriminatory language is also language that excludes certain groups of people through assumptions (e.g., assuming that the white population is the norm). Avoid statements unkind to someone else based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or religious beliefs. For example, if the projector is not working, instead of saying, 'Maybe someone from the boys knows how to fix it?', ask for help without gender stereotypes: 'Does anyone know how we could make it work?'

Kindness is a general guiding principle. When discussing body image, numerous personal stories may be shared or kept private, yet they are still part of us. It is important to remind participants to recognise the vulnerability associated with discussing such a personal topic and to approach each other with gentleness.

STEP 7: OBSERVE AND ENCOURAGE DON'T JUDGE

Thinking about body image will bring up a lot of different feelings. Some might be pleasant, while others might be uncomfortable, confusing, and painful. That is normal. Encourage young people to become more aware of their feelings and to own them.

It is important to observe the process and encourage the active participation of all group members. Facilitators should refrain from judging the participants' opinions, and we should strive to help participants not judge each other.



When it comes to encouragement, the group may consist of participants who feel comfortable sharing their stories, opinions, and ideas in the group, as well as those who are not comfortable with it.

We encourage you to adjust the activities to the needs of the group. If sharing in the group is challenging, consider asking participants to share initially in tandems or trios to build trust and encourage them step by step.

Avoiding judgement is crucial when paraphrasing or summarising participant's opinions and reactions, for example, during debriefing. Facilitators should restate participants' words, capturing what they are trying to convey, and what we think they want to convey, all the while maintaining respect and avoiding judgement.

STEP 8: FIND YOUR APPROACH TO CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

If you get to know the participants before the activity, engage them in the planning process and observe their reaction during the activity, you might be on the path to ensuring that everyone is involved and participating; however, keep the following in mind – participants may have a difficult time engaging.

Participants may not respect each other, even if they took part in the discussion on the rules of cooperation and working together.

Some participants may disturb the group process.

Various situations may arise during facilitation, and how we address them can be influenced by our diverse experiences as facilitators. Nevertheless, we believe it is always important:

- **To follow the principle of voluntary participation.** In the introduction, consider discussing what non-participation might look like to ensure it is not disruptive for others. For example, participants who choose not to engage in the activity stay in the working space as observers or have the option to leave the space. Nevertheless, the facilitator should clarify that participants are welcome to return and rejoin once the activity is concluded.



- **To show respect for participants.** There could be various reasons why someone chooses not to engage in certain activities. It could be due to a lack of confidence to discuss the topic, personal history with the issue covered, or discomfort within the group. When working with a group for a shorter duration, it can be challenging for facilitators to 'decode' the relationships within the group.
- **To consider the gender perspective when selecting activities.** In non-formal education settings, it is common to use energisers. While these short games can be fun for most young people, it is important to be mindful of potential gender stereotypes in some of them. To practise what we preach, we suggest avoiding energisers that perpetuate stereotypes or involve unconsented touch. Ensure that your language and facilitation style does not support negative stereotypes and prejudices. This is essential to prevent conflicts within the group, between participants and you, and to avoid participants losing trust in you.
- **To allocate time for individual conversations with each participant.** In the event of any group issues, participants might feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions in front of everyone. In one-on-one conversations, people tend to be more open to sharing their actual thoughts on the process and their personal experience with the topic and the group dynamics. This is particularly feasible during activities that last multiple days.
- **To provide the participants with an opportunity to reflect on what was implemented and offer suggestions for upcoming activities.** For a day-long workshop, consider including a moment to reflect once the morning activities are done. The reflection might include the following questions: What did you like and find useful? What would you change and how? What was missing? What other topics would you like to cover? You can review the feedback and reflect on it at the beginning of the afternoon programme. We know that making significant changes to the plan may be challenging, so you can simply acknowledge the feedback. For example: 'In the feedback, you mentioned that you would like to discuss this topic, and you prefer to work in a group.' 'Thank you for the feedback, and based on it, we will include the topic in the group discussion.' This creates a sense of ownership, and if the group jointly agrees on a way the challenges should be addressed, there is a higher chance they will respect it. For



example, gather the group and describe the situation: 'I see that, even if you agreed not to use phones during the sessions, you are on your phones. Can we reflect on this and agree on a solution?'

- **To take a break.** In some situations, taking a short break is the way to bring 'fresh air'. Even if you did not plan a break in your initial plan, including a breather can be beneficial. The break can also serve as an opportunity for a short reflection. For example, consider asking participants to divide themselves into trios or pairs and allocate 10 minutes for them to reflect on the cooperation and the atmosphere and provide feedback, either in written or verbal form. Participants can write down their feedback on a piece of paper and give it to the facilitator (no need to be signed). The facilitator can read them and provide comments. If there are any recurring issues, the facilitator can initiate a discussion to explore potential solutions. The methods and formats of giving and addressing feedback may vary based on the group's mood and size. Nevertheless, the key is consistently returning to and reflecting on the feedback.

We believe that you should feel confident and comfortable with your approach to dealing with the challenges that arise in the learning process. Our tips from experience aim to help develop your own approach.

STEP 9: BE AWARE OF YOUR STEREOTYPES AND TRIGGERS

None of us is stereotype-free. It is normal to have stereotypes, yet it is important to question and reflect upon our beliefs. Before starting the activities, we encourage you to take a moment for self-reflection on the issues that you plan to address. For example, when it comes to social media, think about your behaviour on social platforms. Consider who you follow on social media, how you react to body-shaming comments, and what comments you personally find shameful, when you see content presenting different bodies.

Your perception can certainly be different from that of young people. Be aware of this. For example, in Module 2, we encourage you to



explore influencers on social media who are popular among young people. Check out articles, studies, and podcasts, or other toolkits and guidelines to challenge your perspective and gain different viewpoints.

When working with young people, challenge your assumptions about them, as they are not a homogeneous group. Involve them in the process by asking for suggestions and feedback. Additionally, we encourage you to try out the audio exercises included in this toolkit. These audio exercises might help you improve your self-awareness, helping you better understand your triggers, assumptions, and biases.

STEP 10: ACKNOWLEDGE THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

During the workshop, you might notice 'the elephant in the room'. Participants may hesitate to share their thoughts and ideas. In such situations, it is beneficial to acknowledge it directly. For example: 'I have noticed that the conversation is not progressing. Can we reflect on that? Should we rephrase the questions?' or 'I noticed you are not sharing within a larger group. Should we start sharing in smaller groups? Will you feel more comfortable?' 'What do you think is the reason, is it fear of being judged by others?' On the other hand, if 'the elephant in the room' causes an unproductive discussion, the facilitator should be able to reflect on the situation, comment on it, and offer a solution. For example: 'I see that the discussion is going around in circles. Let's split into groups and approach it from a different angle.' The ability to point out the issues that might appear during the facilitation and offer solutions is important for guiding the participants through their learning process.

STEP 11: ADJUST THE PROCESS OF FACILITATION

You may notice that the activities during the workshop are not going as planned. The group might require more time for a task, or, on the other hand, it might respond quickly, completing tasks faster than



anticipated. Every group is different, so predicting their reactions can be challenging. As facilitators, we need to be ready to adjust the facilitation process to the group dynamics. We recommend considering different scenarios when preparing for your workshops, and if necessary, feel free to modify the plan. You may use a different tool or method to give the group more time to reflect on the issue. The ability to improvise is a valuable skill as a facilitator, although a very challenging one. Be aware that situations may not always unfold as expected, and don't let such instances undermine your confidence in your facilitation skills.

STEP 12: USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Language holds significant power, either verbal or non-verbal. The facilitator pays attention to both aspects, including gestures, postures, and vocabulary. Take a moment to reflect on your body language and your vocabulary.

When starting an activity, we encourage you to introduce the topic of gender-sensitive language and employ gender-neutral terms, such as 'people' instead of 'guys'. We also recommend challenging gender stereotypes and avoiding language that reinforces them, such as 'boys do' and 'girls do'. When discussing relationships, consider using 'parent' instead of 'mother' or 'father'.

Culture is equally important. Therefore, pay attention to the cultural context of your group. Be open and ready that the group may include participants of different religions, genders, and ethnicities, each with varying levels of understanding of these terms. Encourage the participants to learn from each other and explore each other's realities.

STEP 13: REFLECT AND EVALUATE

We may have great intentions and plans, but we never know how participants will experience the activities, the group, relationships, and the facilitators. Incorporate reflection and evaluation activities into your plan. If you are meeting the participants for the first time,



and you are uncertain about their willingness to provide direct verbal feedback or there are introverts present who might be hesitant to talk in front of the entire group, offer them the chance to share written feedback. Even in a brief workshop, you can ask them to reflect and write down their feelings during the activity and how it contributed to their personal development and understanding of the topics.

For longer activities, consider implementing more structured methods of giving feedback, such as questionnaires.

In addition to evaluating the activity and the facilitators' performance, we encourage you to provide participants with the opportunity to give feedback to each other. This could be a simple task: pair up with another person in the room, share your perspectives on the activity, and reflect on both differences and similarities.

Why is reflection important? Simply put, reflection is an essential element of the learning process. It allows us to recognise what we have learned and understand the impact of the activity on our knowledge, skills, and attitudes. When addressing body-related topics, we not only gain insights into issues like body and activism or body and stereotypes but also become more aware of our own stereotypes and question our attitudes, such as those towards body shaming.

For facilitators, reflection is essential for understanding how the activity has impacted participants and improving our facilitation competencies. It serves as a means to better grasp participants' perception of the activity and a source of new ideas for future activities. Reflection may involve questions like: What was missing? What would you include? What other topics should we tackle?

If you seek additional information on the role of reflection in learning, we encourage you to explore Kolb's experiential learning cycle. This cycle highlights the importance of going through all four phases: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Without reflection, Kolb's cycle, and indeed any other learning process would remain incomplete; thus, it is crucial to incorporate reflection into your planning.



STEP 14:

CHOOSE A SUPPORTING PLACE

Give preference to a venue that is welcoming, comfortable, and inclusive for different bodies. We understand that options can sometimes be limited. If you are working at a school for the first time, invest enough time in discussions with teachers to find a suitable place. If you are a teacher, consider relocating your students to different settings outside your classroom to create a more open space. Typically, we arrange a circle with chairs, exercise mats, or pillows to allow participants to see and listen to each other. Also, provide at least water for drinking if your budget does not allow for refreshments and other drinks.



14 STEPS TO CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Have a clear goal for each activity.

Communicate the goal of the activity clearly.

Get to know your participants.

Involve the participants in the planning process.

Build a team.

Agree on the guiding principles of the activity.

Observe and encourage, don't judge.

Find your approach to challenging situations.

Be aware of your stereotypes and triggers.

Acknowledge the elephant in the room.

Adjust the process of facilitation.

Use inclusive language.

Reflect and evaluate.

Choose a supporting place.

Useful Resources

BOOKS

Sonya Renee Taylor (2021) - **Your Body Is Not an Apology Workbook: Tools for Living Radical Self-Love**

An action guide that gives us tools and structured frameworks we can begin using to deepen our radical self-love journey.

Susan Bauer (2018) - **The Embodied Teen: A Somatic Curriculum for Teaching Body-Mind Awareness, Kinesthetic Intelligence, and Social and Emotional Skills - 50 Activities in Somatic Movement Education**

Susan Bauer presents a curriculum for teaching teens how to enhance kinesthetic intelligence and develop their inner resilience. Students learn the basics of anatomy and physiology, and unlearn self-defeating habits that impact body image.

Renee Engeln (2018) - **Beauty Sick: How the Cultural Obsession with Appearance Hurts Girls and Women**

Combining scientific studies with the voices of women of all ages, author reveals the consequences of our obsession with girls' appearance on their emotional and physical health and their wallets and ambitions, including depression, eating disorders, and disruptions in cognitive processing.

Julia V. Taylor (2015) - **Body Image Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help Girls Develop a Healthy Body Image in an Image-Obsessed World**

Practical exercises and tips that address the most common factors that can lead to negative body image, including comparison, negative self-talk, unrealistic media images, societal and family pressure, perfectionism, toxic friendships, and a dread of disappointing others.

Thomas Cash (2008) - **The Body Image Workbook: An Eight-Step Program for Learning to Like Your Looks**

This workbook presents a complete approach to dealing with body image issues. It includes new evidence that confirms the effectiveness of its cognitive behavioural approach.



RESEARCHES

Horizon Media (2020) - **Our Bodies At Work**

Horizon Media explored the topic of body image and the impact it has for people in the workplace. Specifically, how body image impacts people's confidence at the office and in regards to their career.

Mental Health Foundation (2019) - **Body Image: How We Think and Feel About Our Bodies**

This report builds on one of the largest UK surveys ever completed to capture how we feel about our bodies.

Tracy Tylkaa, Nichole Wood-Barcalow (2015) - **What is and What is Not Positive Body Image? Conceptual Foundations and Construct Definition**

Complementing what positive body image is, this article further details what positive body image is not.

Jacalyn McComb, Marilyn Massey-Stokes (2014) - **Body Image Concerns Throughout the Lifespan**

The article will help to understand the development of body image difficulties and be knowledgeable about body image assessment techniques and effective prevention and intervention programs.

Nina Burrowes (2013) - **Body Image - a Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Literature**

Summary of key research findings on various aspects of body image.

Angie Strickland (2004) - **Body Image and Self-Esteem: A Study of Relationships and Comparisons Between More and Less Physically Active College Women**

The purpose of this study was to compare more and less physically active college females related to a number of factors in body image and self-esteem. Results of this study showed a positive correlation between exercise level and self-esteem.



TOOLKITS

Dove (2021) - **Self-Esteem Resources For Youth Groups**

Several programs aimed at getting young people talking about body image and boosting their self-esteem. Toolkit includes activities, tips for facilitators, videos and handouts for running sessions with young people.

Centre for Health Promotion Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (2011) - **Absolutely Every Body**

A practical, easy to use resource to help schools implement a range of activities relating to healthy body-image.

YMCA - **Body Confidence Campaign Toolkit for Schools**

This toolkit is designed to help schools develop body confidence in students aged 11 to 16, because body confidence has a direct impact on students' academic performance and general wellbeing.

PSHE - **Teacher Guidance: Key Standards in Teaching About Body Image**

This guidance offers teachers advice about safe and confident teaching of body image.

California State University - **Get REAL! about Media and Body Image: a Digital Media Literacy Toolkit**

This toolkit features interactive activities to think critically about the body image messages we see, hear and read in the digital media culture every day.





LEARNING MODULES

Introduction to Body Image

Bodies in Media

Body Stereotypes

Shame and Boundaries

Embodied Arts

Finding Your Movement

Body Image and Identity

Body as a Protest

Module I

Introduction to Body Image

How your body appears on the outside does not have to determine how you feel on the inside

The way we perceive ourselves is essential for our self-confidence and well-being. Developing a positive relationship with our bodies is a long process, often challenging, especially during periods of bodily changes and external pressures.

This module introduces key terms and explains the relation between body image, learning, and participation. It initiates a discussion about our individual perceptions of our own bodies and the factors that have shaped them.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Raising awareness of the importance and potential impacts of one's body image.

Clarifying the main concepts and terms.

Exploring individual perceptions and relationships with our bodies, and understanding what influences them.

Encouraging curiosity about historical and cultural approaches and attitudes towards bodies.

ACTIVITIES

Body Statements

Positive and Negative Body Image

Influences

Ideal Body Through the Centuries

Bodies in Public Spaces

History of Your Body

Comfortable with Discomfort

How to Feel Confident in Your Body

Body Statements

Materials and time

You will need printed **Worksheet 1.1**: one per participant, or one for the facilitator depending on the variation of the exercise. Statements can be also shown to the participants using projector and slides.

The length of the exercise depends on the number of statements. The optimal length is 15 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

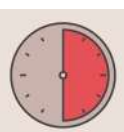
Participants work individually. The facilitator gives participants a printout with statements and five minutes to reflect on them. Once the time passes, the facilitator goes through the statements: reads the statement aloud, and participants are encouraged to share their comments.

The facilitator has the flexibility to choose the number of statements to be addressed based on participants' knowledge or group dynamics. Providing each participant with the opportunity to express their opinion during the sharing is preferable. There is no need to go through all the statements.

Variations

If the group feels comfortable, the activity can take a more interactive format. Participants can be asked to position themselves in the room depending on their agreement or disagreement with each statement. Once participants take their positions, the facilitator invites a few of them to share comments.

In this activity, participants are instructed on where to position themselves in the room if they agree with the statement, have a



neutral opinion, or do not agree. The facilitator reads the statements one by one, and after each statement, participants physically position themselves based on their opinions. The participants who agree with the statement can stand in the right corner of the room. The participants who neither agree nor disagree can stand in the middle, and participants who do not agree can stand in the left corner. Once participants have taken their places, the facilitator invites a few participants to share their opinions in front of the group. For example, the facilitator may ask: 'Why do you agree with the statement?', or 'Why did you decide to take a neutral position?'

Questions for reflection

Please refer to the questions for the concluding discussion at the end of the module.





Worksheet 1.1

BODY STATEMENTS

This is the first time I am participating in an activity related to body topics.

I know where to find information related to body topics.

I am familiar with terms such as body image, body neutrality, and body positivity.

I discuss body-related topics with my friends.

Bodies are an important part of our identities.

Social media strongly influences how young people feel about their bodies.

Body shaming and body bullying are relevant topics for young people.

I have had the opportunity to discuss body shaming and bullying with someone, such as a teacher, parent, or expert.

I take care of my body.

I know someone who has struggled with physical or mental health problems because of their appearance.



Worksheet 1.1

BODY STATEMENTS

I am aware that people of certain body types face negative stereotypes.

I do not body shame myself.

I do not engage in group body bashing of others.

I do not compare my appearance to anyone else.

I wear clothing that fits my body and makes me feel good.

I post realistic, unedited photos of myself on social media.

All bodies are beautiful.

Sometimes I choose to be less active because I do not like my appearance.

Being beautiful makes life easier.

Sharing how we feel about our bodies is helpful.

Positive and Negative Body Image

Materials and time

You will need sheets of paper, pens, printed **Worksheet 1.2** and **Worksheet 1.3** for group work. The exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator assigns each participant the task of individually writing down their definition of 'body image.' Participants then form small groups to compare and reflect on their individual understanding of the term. After the small group discussion, the facilitator may conclude this opening part of the activity by reviewing participants' opinions and sharing the definition of the term from one or more authors. It is advisable to leave these definitions visible for further reference on a flipchart sheet or blackboard.

In the next step, the facilitator divides participants into two or four smaller groups depending on the total number of participants. One or two groups are tasked with defining positive body image, while the other one or two groups define negative body image using **Worksheet 1.2** and **1.3**.

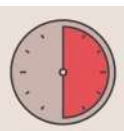
After the group work, participants can present the outcomes of their work and reflect on the questions below.

Questions for reflection

Do we all perceive the concept of beauty in the same way?

How much is your self-esteem connected with your body image?

Do you focus more on your body characteristics that you dislike or like?



Can we be neutral towards our bodies? Is it possible to be neutral towards the bodies of others?

Who do you compare with when it comes to your body?

Do you have any body idols or ideals? Do you believe these ideals are realistic? What makes you think so?

Do you think having a positive body image is possible, considering that we are all affected by external and internal beauty pressures?

What steps can we take to have a more positive body image?





Worksheet 1.2

POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

What does a person with a positive body image **think**?

What does a person with a positive body image **do**?

How does a person with a positive body image **behave** with family, friends, and at school?

What does a person with a positive body image **look like** - physical appearance and thoughts?



Worksheet 1.3

NEGATIVE BODY IMAGE

What does a person with a negative body image **think**?

What does a person with a negative body image **do**?

How does a person with a negative body image **behave** with family, friends, and at school?

What does a person with a negative body image **look like** - physical appearance and thoughts?

Influences

Materials and time

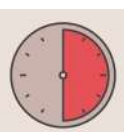
You will need **Worksheet 1.4** printed out for each group, post-it notes, pens. These keywords can be found in the BODYkind Cards set as well. The exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

Participants work in groups sitting in a circle. The 'Body image cards' are placed in the middle of the circle. Participants are asked to look at the cards and write comments and opinions on post-it notes related to the actors mentioned on the cards and their influence on young people's body image. Once done, they stick their post-it notes on the respective cards. The post-it notes can be anonymous. In the next step, the facilitator reviews the cards and goes through participants' comments. A discussion on the influence of different persons on young people's body image follows, during which various types of influences can be pointed out.

The discussion can include a moment to reflect on the impact of verbal comments that young people hear from adults, including parents and teachers. It may also include reflection on the impact of comments from random people that young people meet. Besides verbal statements, the discussion can explore the role of societal norms and values and how they shape the discussion about body image. Overall, there can be many different ways in which groups or individuals can affect young people and their body image. The facilitator can preview the cards before the activity to gain a better understanding of potential topics and issues that could be addressed during the discussion.

Examples: Parents may comment on the appearance of their children, weight, body changes, etc. Parents may demonstrate a negative relationship with their bodies, which can impact their children not only through direct comments but also through their behaviour at



home and in public, for example, commenting on other people's appearance, being critical towards their looks, weight, etc. Schools may have rules related to dress code. Celebrities and influencers may affect young by how they dress and talk about their bodies.

Variations

Several copies of the cards are prepared. Participants can choose to work individually or in smaller groups, trios, or pairs. The facilitator asks participants to think about the impact that the actors on the cards have on young people's body image. After having a moment to reflect on the task individually, or in a group, the facilitator arranges the cards depending on the level of impact that these actors have: from the least to the most influential one. Once individuals or their groups are ready, they can present their work and reflect on the similarities and differences. The facilitator encourages participants to reflect on the differences and similarities of their choices. They might explore the following questions: What makes someone have a bigger impact on young people? How does it change with age? For example, young people might be more influenced by their parents at a younger age, but as they grow older, the influence might shift towards their peers.

After working in smaller groups, pairs, or trios, participants meet up and reflect on the following questions as a group.

Questions for reflection

Who do you think had or has an influence on your body image?

Which of the actors on the cards express harming tendencies towards bodies, e.g., which actors are giving hurtful comments, judge appearance, comment on body changes?

Which ones are liberating and encouraging to young people?

How would you describe their influence?

How could you help others develop a more positive body image?

How can you deal with individuals who negatively influence your self-perception?





Worksheet 1.4

BODY IMAGE CARDS

RELATIVES

EMPLOYERS

PARENTS

POLITICIANS

ROMANTIC PARTNER

DOCTORS

SIBLINGS

NUTRITIONISTS

FRIENDS

PSYCHOLOGISTS

CLASSMATES

YOUTH WORKERS

INFLUENCERS

SPORTS COACHES

CELEBRITIES

ATHLETES

JOURNALISTS

PEERS

TEACHERS

FILMMAKERS

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

ENTREPRENEURS

MARKETING EXPERTS

BODY POSITIVITY ADVOCATES

RANDOM STRANGERS

Ideal Body Through the Centuries

Materials and time

You will need access to the internet for the research phase, downloaded videos that can be presented after the group work, sheets of paper, glue, magazines, newspapers, scissors, and colourful markers. Links to the videos:

[Real Women - Beauty Through The Decades The Realistic Way](#)

[How Men's Perfect Body Types Have Changed Throughout History](#)

[Women's Ideal Body Types Throughout History](#)

The exercise takes around 45 minutes.

Instructions

Participants are divided into groups, each assigned a specific time period – 1920s, 1980s, 2020s, and so on. The groups are asked to create a representation of what was seen as an ideal body in their assigned period. To research the given period, participants need to have access to the Internet. Participants are encouraged to research and visually present the ideal body. They can draw and make collages using digital tools or magazines if you can provide them for the particular time period. Each group presents their work to the peers.

Questions for reflection

Why do you think body ideals change over time?

Who influences the current body ideals?

What are your thoughts on the changing body ideals through the centuries and the real bodies?

What might be considered the ideal body in 50 years?



Bodies in Public Spaces

Materials and time

You will need phones for taking photos if possible, sheets of paper, pens. During this activity, participants should go outside for about 40 minutes.

Instructions

Participants are divided into groups, each assigned a specific time period – 1920s, 1980s, 2020s, and so on. The groups are asked to create a representation of what was seen as an ideal body in their assigned period. To research the given period, participants need to have access to the Internet. Participants are encouraged to research and visually present the ideal body. They can draw and make collages using digital tools or magazines if you can provide them for the particular time period. Each group presents their work to the peers.

Questions for reflection

In which places did you find a presentation of the body?

Were these presentations appropriate, surprising, or not adequate to the context?

Did anything surprise you regarding the presentation of bodies in public space?

Why do you think someone presented the body in such a context?

What types of bodies did you not see at all?

What difference does it make if some types of bodies are not presented in arts, media, advertisement, fashion, and popular culture?



History of Your Body

Materials and time

You will need a large sheet of paper for each person, drawing materials, glue sticks, scissors, and photos of the participants – ask them to prepare in advance. The exercise takes 60 to 90 minutes.

Instructions

Participants work individually. Their task is to draw a timeline tracing events from their birth date to the present moment and chronologically include all the important events related to their bodies. This may include moments when they noticed that their bodies were changing, starting or discontinuing certain sports or movement activities, injuries, illnesses, accidents, first kisses, and so on. They can also add events like reading books, watching movies, and meeting people who have greatly impacted them. Participants may include their photos at different ages if they wish so.

Once participants have completed their timelines, they may also mark the three moments that have most significantly influenced their body image, whether positively or negatively. The facilitator may introduce additional questions to encourage reflection on the impact of these moments: 'If there was a negative event in your life, think about what good came from it.' or 'What have you learned from it?'

Then, participants present their timelines in groups of three to four participants. The facilitator concludes the activity by bringing the entire group together, addressing some of the questions below.



Questions for reflection

What was it like to create the timeline?

What was it like sharing the history of your body with others?

What was it like listening to the stories shared by others?

What have been the biggest influences on your body image?

In 30 years, what three things do you think you will love about your body the most?



Comfortable with Discomfort

Materials and time

You will need a timer. The exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

This activity is based on the idea that we can learn to accept and manage situations in which we feel emotional discomfort by exposing ourselves to what causes us discomfort. It aims to create an uncomfortable situation and practise becoming comfortable with it.

Participants pair up and sit facing each other in a comfortable spot and position. The facilitator sets a timer for 3 minutes and instructs participants to look into each other's eyes without talking. The following guidelines are applied throughout these 3 minutes:

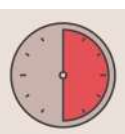
“As soon as you become aware of any discomfort, pay very close attention to it. Notice where the feelings are located in your body. Name these sensations without expressing them aloud. Is there tension, tingling, hotness, shakiness, or any other sensation?

Delve into each sensation as much as you can. Aim to feel its character, its texture. Describe each of them while maintaining a gaze with your partner. Make a mental note of as many details as you can.

Let the awkwardness build up. How does it manifest physically? Do you feel tightness in your jaw? Is there any tension in your stomach? What else is there?

Imagine yourself as a scientist investigating this experience. Observe your sensations as objectively as you can. Avoid making judgements and conclusions. Observe and mentally describe.

When you feel the urge to laugh, talk, or relieve the discomfort in any way, resist it. This is your chance to practise delving into sensations, not avoiding them.”



Once the time has passed, participants share with their partners how it felt to do this activity. They can exchange how the discomfort manifested in their bodies. While keeping eye contact may cause discomfort for most people, it can be valuable to hear their points of view and what helps them feel comfortable with this task. Participants can also share their strategies to cope with discomfort. One common reaction during this exercise is to start laughing together, but there might be others too.

Questions for reflection

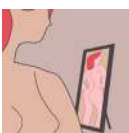
How did you feel in each other's presence?

Have you avoided certain people, places, or activities because you thought it would mean facing uncomfortable emotions related to your body image? For example, avoiding swimming on a hot day because it would destroy your hairstyle and people would judge your appearance or skipping a party because everyone else would look better than you.

What were the results of that avoidance?

If you faced the emotion or situation you've been avoiding, what might the result be?

What techniques could you practise through everyday activities to expand your comfort zone?



How to Feel Confident in Your Body

Materials and time

You will need a projector, a screen, speakers, and the **video** of this module. This exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator introduces the video that offers several tips for building self-confidence and improving one's relationship with their body. Participants watch the video and then engage in a discussion. The facilitator can use the questions below for the discussion.

Variation

After the discussion, the facilitator divides the participants into small groups. Each group brainstorms tips on how to boost self-confidence and encourage young people to critically analyze the influences shaping their body image. Once the groups have formulated their tips, they share them with the others. These tips can be presented either verbally or in the form of short videos.

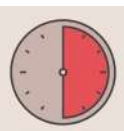
Questions for reflection

What do you think about the tips shared in the video?

Who impacts the way you think about your body? Do people around you positively affect how you feel about your body? If so, how?

What activities do you enjoy thanks to your body?

In the video, we discuss volunteering as a confidence booster. What are other ways young people can boost their self-confidence?

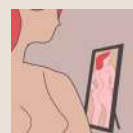


Notes for Facilitators

Before facilitating the session, check out the guidelines for facilitators at the beginning of this toolkit and the slides for this module. These materials will help you better understand the main concepts explored in this module. Additionally, keep in mind that in non-formal education, we may not have all the 'right' answers; therefore, feel free to develop your own definitions and understanding of various terms and issues through ongoing dialogue with participants.

The activity 'History of Your Body' may be challenging for some participants. If you have any transgender participants, it is important to learn about feelings of body dysphoria and acknowledge their gender identity. Please note that these participants may be navigating a particularly sensitive period in their lives, and they may prefer not to include pictures of themselves before transitioning. Participants who have experienced violence may also find the activity difficult. Therefore, it is important not to pressure young people into participating. Allow them autonomy in deciding how to document their personal history and how much to share. If you propose activities like this one, it is important to have individual discussions with each participant about their individual experience during your workshop to ensure it has not triggered memories or emotions they may not be ready to confront.

The 'Comfortable with Discomfort' activity may be challenging for many participants and could be perceived as very unpleasant or even threatening. Participants may react by chatting or laughing during the activity. These are normal responses to dealing with unpleasant emotions. Allow them without judgement or attempts to silence them. Furthermore, the activity is not suitable for young people who are autistic, at risk of developing eating disorders, or experiencing developmental trauma. We would not recommend this activity to groups of young people you are not well familiar with. If uncertain, consider reducing the duration of participants looking at each other or offer a gradual extension, starting with half a minute, then a minute, then 2 minutes, and so on. Afterwards, you may also discuss and reflect on how the gradual approach helped to build resilience.





CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

What is body image?

What and who influences your body image?

Do you notice any correlation between negative body image thoughts and your actions?

What does a positive body image mean to you? Be specific.

How can we cultivate a positive body image?

How does body image change while we grow up?

How do society and culture impact body image?

What are the current beauty ideals for male and female bodies? Who experiences more pressure – men or women? Why?

Do young people face more pressure to look in a certain way than adults? Why?

Useful Resources

BODY AND CAREER

Kim Elsesser (2019) - **The Link Between Beauty And The Gender Gap**

According to Forbes, there is a link between beauty and the gender gap. When exploring the topic, researchers found that when people thought women had a chance at attaining equal status with men, they were likely to think that women should spend more time on beauty. The researchers also found that women in high-power occupations were more likely to be expected to invest time and effort pursuing beauty, and more so than men in these occupations.

Dani-Elle Dubé (2017) - **Do your looks determine your salary at work?**

According to the research there is a link between the wages and the looks. What do you think about it? Maybe, it is a topic for discussion with young people.

Sjoberg & Tebelius (2020) - **What is the Grooming Gap?**

Women in professional settings are held to different expectations regarding personal appearance than men. They are judged more critically regarding their appearance and feel pressure to spend more time and money on grooming and beauty products.

BODY IMAGE AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Statista Research Department (2021) - **Teenagers who perceive their bodies to be too fat in Europe**

In 2018, 52% of girls 15 years of age and 31% of boys 15 years of age from Poland perceived their bodies to be too fat, the highest share across Europe. In every European country surveyed, female teenagers had worse body image perceptions compared to males.

Jake Linardon (2024) - **Body image problems need to be taken seriously**

The article contains various statistics on body image, demonstrating the importance of addressing body image issues.



BODY IMAGE AND CHILDREN

Christine Byrne (2022) - **Survey Suggests Two-Thirds of Kids May Struggle With Body Image**

The article illustrates the importance of addressing the body image issues of children.

BODY IMAGE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Viktoryia Karchynskaya, Jaroslava Kopcakova, Andrea Madarasova Geckova, Daniel Klein, Andrea F de Winter, Sijmen A Reijneveld (2022) - **Body image, body composition and environment: do they affect adolescents' physical activity?**

A study conducted in 2018, in Slovakia, suggests that adolescents' physical activity is associated with both body-related and environment-related factors. These associations are stronger in girls and older adolescents. Adolescents who perceived their body as not too fat were more likely to be physically very active rather than inactive.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KINDNESS

Melissa Brodrick (2019) - **The heart and science of kindness**

The article reflects on the importance of kindness to yourself and others.

POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

Nichole Wood-Barcalow, Tracy Tylka, Casey Augustus-Horvath (2010) - **“But I Like My Body”: Positive body image characteristics and a holistic model for young-adult women**

This study analyzes interviews from 15 college women classified as having positive body image and five body image experts. Many characteristics of positive body image emerged, including appreciating the unique beauty and functionality of their body, filtering information in a body-protective manner, defining beauty broadly, and highlighting their body's assets while minimizing perceived imperfections.



Module II

Bodies in Media

Critical thinking about societal standards presented in the media is a must

Media and social media can have a significant impact on body image. Young people are constantly exposed to textual and audiovisual content that can create unrealistic beauty standards, increase their insecurities, and lead to low self-esteem. Studies have shown that people who spend more time on social media are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction and may feel ashamed that their bodies do not fit the beauty standards.

The main aim of this module is to enhance the critical thinking skills of young people regarding media and social media content, to make young people aware of the potential negative effects of media and social media exposure, and to encourage them to shape the conversation on social media and become advocates who promote realistic and diverse notions of beauty.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Improving young people's skills to deconstruct and critically analyse media messages.

Empowering young people to challenge media narratives and bias by creating their own media messages.

Equipping young people with knowledge and skills to resist the negative impact of media on their body perceptions.

Encouraging young people to promote realistic and diverse bodies in social media.

ACTIVITIES

Media and Social Media Checklist

My Body vs. My Media Body

Body in Pop Culture

Who is Missing?

Raising Voices for Our Bodies

Hearing the Voices of Young People

Media and Social Media Checklist

Materials and time

You will need a printed **Worksheet 2.1** for each participant. It can also be presented as an online questionnaire or as slides with the questions. The exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

This exercise can serve as an introductory activity for the workshop about bodies in media and social media. Participants receive the checklist. At first they go through it individually. After completion, the group shares and reflects on the questions below.

Questions for reflection

How do media, social media, movies, and video games influence your body image?

Does media and popular culture have a greater impact on your body image than your family members and peers? Why?

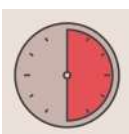
Which media products, channels, or persons have made the most significant impact on your body image?

What standards do you set for yourself regarding your body? Do media and social media influence these standards?

When it comes to body presentation on social media, do you analyse what you see? For example, do you ask yourself if a filter was used?

What types of poses do you see in the media? Do you prefer to see edited photos or photos that are not edited? Why?

Do you miss 'your real body' in social media, series, video games, or movies? Why do media tend to represent only certain body types?



Worksheet 2.1

MEDIA CHECKLIST

Can you easily name your favorite body part?	YES	NO
Do you alter your images before posting?	YES	NO
Do you pose in pictures to make your body conform to the appearance ideal?	YES	NO
Have you untagged yourself from a picture you didn't like?	YES	NO
Do you believe that media and social media set the standards of beauty or perfection?	YES	NO
Do you make comments about your friends' appearance on their photos?	YES	NO
Have you refrained from liking a friend's photo because it wasn't flattering?	YES	NO
Does receiving 'likes' give you a boost of confidence or higher self-esteem?	YES	NO
Does receiving 'likes' on your body-related posts impact your emotions?	YES	NO
Do you compare your appearance to your followers?	YES	NO
Do you regularly check your notifications after posting a picture, tweet, or status related to your body?	YES	NO
Do you feel that people with your body type are accurately represented in TV series or movies?	YES	NO

My Body vs. My Media Body

Materials and time

You will need sheets of paper, pens, markers, magazines, scissors, glue, an internet connection, and mobile devices for research. The exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

Participants work individually. Each person draws an outline of their body on a sheet of paper, which can be A4, A3 sized sheets. Then, each participant writes down their thoughts about their bodies and body parts, and lists topics they would like to learn more about or discuss regarding their bodies.

As the question: 'What do you think about your body?' might be challenging for some young people, the facilitator can also ask, 'How do you see yourself?'. The facilitator can also suggest being as objective as possible when describing one's body and simply write down what young people see when they look in the mirror – brown hair, a big nose and so on.

After the individual work, participants form groups of four to five people. Their task is to create 'media and social media bodies' of young people of their age.

In the first step, participants analyse media content from various sources (such as magazines, newspapers, and social media) relevant to them, their age group, sex, and gender. In the second step, participants create 'media and social media bodies'. The participants can draw them, or make collages.

Once the 'bodies' are completed, participants reflect on the differences between their bodies and body-related topics they are interested in, and young people's bodies and body issues as represented in the media.



Questions for reflection

What is the difference between your own body, body experiences and interests, and media representation of young people's bodies?

Do you think media and social media offer a realistic portrayal of bodies? How so, or why not?

Why do social media and media portray people's bodies in such ways?

Who creates media content and messages, and what may be their interests?

Does the media influence how you care for your body? For instance, do you watch and follow tutorials on TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube?

Do you think that media and social media shape beauty standards? How?

Are the body-related topics that interest you (that you wrote about earlier) discussed on social media?

What kind of body-related content would you like to see more of on mass and social media?



Body in Pop Culture

Materials and time

You will need internet to access the songs, videos, or series to analyse. Print the list of songs in **Worksheet 2.2** and the lyrics included in it for the second variation of the activity.

The list of songs includes tracks with positive body messages as well as those carrying misogynistic messaging, such as 'Fine China' by Chris Brown, which refers to a woman as an inanimate object that can be purchased. This aims to encourage critical thinking and discussion on the impact of popular culture. The list also features a song by female artist Nicki Minaj, which can lead to a discussion on the role of female artists.

The exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

Variation 1

Participants write down their favourite songs, music videos, series, games, and movies. They can make one list as a group. Once the list is finalised, participants can work divided into pairs or small groups. They select one song or series and analyse it based on the following questions:

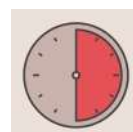
How are bodies and body issues represented in the given media product?

Does this media product represent your body type?

Are the bodies presented realistically?

What are the possible positive and negative impacts of these body representations?

Is this media content empowering?



Variation 2

The facilitator selects one or two songs from Worksheet 2.2. or other songs popular among young people. Participants watch the music videos, receive the lyrics of the songs, and analyze them based on the questions provided above.

Questions for reflection

Do you think listening to songs, watching series, and playing games impact your body perception? How?

Why is it important to have different body types represented in popular videos, series, and movies?

What do you think about the songs of female artists such as Nicki Minaj? Does Nicki Minaj control the narrative?

Are artists responsible for the messages conveyed by their work? What do you think, for example, about Snoop Dogg's songs and sexism?



Worksheet 2.2

BODY IN POP CULTURE

Beautiful

Christina Aguilera

Confident

Demi Lovato

Beautiful

Eminem

Content warning: strong language

Scars to Your Beautiful

Alessia Cara

Beautiful People

Ed Sheeran

This Is Me

The Greatest Showman Cast

I'm Special

Adi Yacobi

My Skin

Lizzo

I Love Me

Demi Lovato

Freckles

Lawrence

Freckles

Natasha Bedingfield

Anaconda Song

Nicki Minaj

Content warning: strong language

Fine China

Chris Brown

Set It Off

Snoop Dog

Content warning: strong language

Who is Missing?

Materials and time

You will need magazines, newspapers, internet for research, sheets of paper, pens, flipcharts, and **Worksheet 2.3**. Adjust the proposed list to reflect the realities in your country. Many groups could be included, such as young migrants, LGBTIQ youth, and religious minorities.

The exercise takes 30 to 40 minutes.

Instructions

Participants work in teams of three or four. Each team receives a specific group of young people to research based on Worksheet 2.3. Participants search for information, articles, interviews, and any media and social media presence, as well as influencers related to the given group of people. The facilitator can propose the following guiding questions:

How frequently is this group presented?

How is the group portrayed (negative, positive, neutral)?

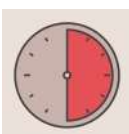
How do media and social media discuss this group?

What vocabulary do they use?

What stereotypes do you notice in media content?

What are the issues and topics associated with this group?

Participants gather information and prepare a presentation to sum up key findings on a poster or prepare a Padlet board with links. Once the groups are ready, they share their findings and then engage in a discussion based on the questions below.



Questions for discussion

How was the process of looking for information for you? Was it easy or difficult?

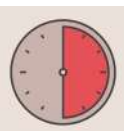
Do you believe that people from the group you researched are being represented in the media as equally as any other group? Why or why not?

How is this group represented? Do you think that the way it is presented supports certain stereotypes and prejudices? (Please see Module III for additional information on stereotypes, if necessary.)

Who, in your opinion, decides who and how will be represented in media and social media?

Do you believe something would change if the group you researched is represented differently or more often in media and social media?

What action could you, as young people, take to change how certain groups of young people are represented?





Worksheet 2.3 WHO IS MISSING?

Young people with a mobility disability, for example,
young people who use a wheelchair

Young people with alopecia or living with another
illness that has impacted their physical appearance, for
example, vitiligo affecting a person's face

Young people with a mental disability, for example,
young people with Down syndrome

Queer youth

Young people who identify with a particular subculture,
such as punk, metal, or anime, and express their
belonging through their appearance, and behaviors

Young people representing an ethnic minority in your
country, for example, the Roma community

Raising Voices for Our Bodies

Materials and time

You will need sheets of paper, pens, mobile phones, markers, magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue. The exercise takes 40 to 60 minutes.

Instructions

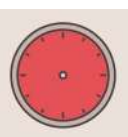
Participants work in groups of four to five people. Their task is to create media message(s) addressing important issues and share them through media and social media, aiming to encourage their peers to join the conversation on body-related topics.

For example, if participants are from the same school and the school has a newspaper or online magazine, they can be encouraged to write articles and conduct interviews to address issues related to body image in their school media. Participants can also create social media posts for Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook to address the issues if it is more suitable.

The facilitator should encourage participants to think about body-related topics and choose an issue of their interest. The target group of the newly developed content should primarily be young people. Nevertheless, if participants consider it essential to share body-related messages, for example, with parents or other adults, they could be given the option to create messages targeting a group of their choice.

Depending on the time available, participants can create either one post or a series of posts. They can choose to create an article, podcast episode, video, or comic, depending on their preference.

Once the media content is ready, they present their work, followed by a discussion based on the questions below.



If possible, it would be great for the facilitator to meet with participants after they've shared their media messages outside of the group and reflect on the reactions they've received.

Additionally, an event can be organised where all media messages are presented, and all target groups can be invited – parents, friends, media representatives, or decision-makers.

Questions for discussion

How did you choose the issue to address?

Why is it important to talk about it?

How should media content related to our bodies change? What topics should be covered more? Which groups of people should be represented more? What would you like to see less in the media?

What do you think will be the reaction to your content from your peers, parents, and teachers?

How would you feel if the reactions were positive? How about negative? Would you, as an author of the content, react in any way to either type of reaction?

What role can you as a young person have in creating a more accepting environment for diverse bodies and promoting positive body image? What changes can you make as an individual or a small group of young people?



Hearing the Voices of Young People

Materials and time

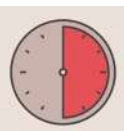
You will need projector, screen, speakers, and **video** for Module II. The exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator introduces the video, explaining that it showcases the perspectives of three young girls from North Macedonia on their social media routines. Participants watch the video, followed by a discussion. The facilitator may incorporate questions from other activities in Module II for the discussion.

Variation

After watching the video, participants are encouraged to take a break from social media. For instance, they might agree to limit their social media use for one week or even go completely offline during school or daily activities. Once the period begins, the social media break commences. After it concludes, participants meet with the facilitator (or with peers in a small focus group discussion) to reflect on their experience. During this session, they share their impressions, discuss lessons learned, and consider any adjustments they would like to make to their future social media habits.



Questions for reflection

Have you ever taken a longer break from social media? If so, why?

If you did take a break, have you noticed any changes, such as in your daily habits, how you spend your time, or how you communicate with friends and family? If not, what stopped or blocked you from giving yourself an online break?

Do you believe you can take a break from social media if necessary, or do you feel addicted to them?

Before joining social media networks and platforms, did you feel adequately informed about the potential impact they could have on your life?

Have parents, teachers, youth workers, or peers talked to you about social media content's potential positive or negative impact on your self-confidence and body image?

What recommendations would you offer to young people before they connect to social media?

Is there any information you believe would be useful to know about how social media operates? For example, do you understand enough about social media algorithms?



Notes for Facilitators

Before planning the session, check out the module's **video** about young people and social media. You can use it to start a discussion with young people and open the topic of media, social media, and body image.





CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Do you feel that you can unfollow someone who shares unrealistic pictures of themselves on social media?

Do you feel that you can stop watching series that make you feel uncomfortable when it comes to your body image?

Do you feel that you can stop comparing yourself to others on social media?

Do you feel that you can share realistic pictures of your own body on social media?

Do you feel that you can stand up for your body and topics that concern you on social media?

Do media and social media offer realistic and sufficient representation of young people's issues?

Are there topics and issues you would like to discuss but are missing in media and social media space?

How can YOU draw attention to these topics and issues?

Useful Resources

SOCIAL MEDIA AND BODY IMAGE

Emma Giberson (2022) - [Effects Of Social Media On Body Image In Young Adults](#)

Society is used to the negative impacts of impossibly thin, airbrushed models on the covers of magazines. Even if people know it is not realistic, it sets a precedent for beauty standards - it feels like something people should strive towards. But what happens in a digital age with consistent opportunities for comparison?

The Learning Network (2022) - [What Students Are Saying About How Social Media Affects Their Body Image](#)

The New York Times explores students' perspectives on social media's impact on their body image.

Helen Thai, Christopher Davis, Wardah Mahboob, Sabrina Perry, Alex Adams, and Gary S. Goldfield (2023) - [Reducing Social Media Use Improves Appearance and Weight Esteem in Youth With Emotional Distress](#)

Teens and young adults who reduced their social media use by 50% for just a few weeks saw significant improvement in how they felt about both their weight and their overall appearance compared with peers who maintained consistent levels of social media use, according to research published by the American Psychological Association.

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

European Parliament (2023) - [The influence of social media on the development of children and young people](#)

The key observations of the European Parliament's study reflect on the influence of social media on the development of children and young people.



Module III

Body Stereotypes

It is normal to have stereotypes and perceptions of what is good and beautiful. The important part is to be aware of our stereotypes, question them, and act out of kindness towards ourselves and others

The Oxford Dictionary defines stereotype as 'a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, race, or community.' Prejudice, on the other hand, refers to how we act upon the stereotype, what we think and say, and how we perceive people based solely on their race, gender, or looks. We might be unaware of many stereotypes we hold, yet they might impact how we see or treat others, termed as hidden or implicit bias. These biases are often unintentional and can influence our behaviour, even if we believe in fairness and impartiality. Hidden biases are formed based on societal and cultural influences and can be deeply embedded. Therefore, when it comes to looks, we might have a particular bias toward people who are, for instance, over or underweight, have tattoos, are much taller or shorter than average, or have blond hair or different skin colour from ours. With this module, we invite young people to reflect on their stereotypes and biases, and their impact on how they treat others and themselves.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Raising awareness of how we perceive others depending on their looks.

Raising awareness of how stereotypes, prejudices, and biases influence our treatment of others.

Analysing the stereotypes we hold related to appearance.

ACTIVITIES

Body Statistics

Stereotypes in Movement

The Road Trip

First Impressions

Assumptions

Going to Peru

Body Statistics

Materials and time

You will need a chair for each participant. This exercise can take 5 to 15 minutes, depending on the participants' interest and group dynamics.

Instructions

The facilitator instructs participants to sit in a circle. One person stands in the middle and asks others to change seats based on whether they 'wear jeans', 'paint their nails', 'want a tattoo', 'have been punished for their appearance', 'feel more belonging with people who look similar to them', 'love fashion', 'like to challenge appearance related social norms', etc. All statements should relate to external appearance. Then, while others are changing seats, the person in the middle tries to sit in one of the unoccupied chairs before someone else takes it. After each round, one person always stands in the middle and continues making statements.

This exercise can be used as an energizer without any further discussion, or the facilitator might ask some of the questions below.

Questions for reflection

Was there something more rare or more common in this group than you expected?

Were there any statements that made you feel uncomfortable? Why?

Did this exercise reveal any stereotypes or assumptions you have about others based on their appearance?

Did this exercise help you understand your peers better?

How do you feel your appearance impacts the way others perceive and treat you?



Stereotypes in Movement

Materials and time

You will need a large space for participants to move around. The exercise takes around 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator instructs participants to walk around the room at various speeds, then asks them to walk as far away from each other as possible and afterwards as close as possible. Then, participants are asked to secretly choose one person to stay close to and another to stay far away from, experiencing the dynamic of maintaining different distances.

Once they have warmed up, the facilitator asks them to walk in a way perceived as feminine. While walking, they say aloud what movements and looks they observe in the room. Next, participants are asked to walk in a way perceived as masculine and again vocalise what they see. The facilitator repeats the process instructing them to walk as old and young people.

Afterwards, participants are asked to pair up, and each pair designates one person as the sculptor and the other as the sculpture. The sculptor creates a sculpture that would define 'beauty'. They might use their hands to shape the sculpture or just their voice. The facilitator asks pairs to agree on whether touch is allowed during this activity. This aspect of consent is important when activities involve physical contact to address boundaries and personal space. If the group facilitator is uncomfortable with touch, they can explicitly state that using only verbal guidance is entirely acceptable.

Once the sculptures are completed, sculptors can walk around and see other sculptures. Then the pairs switch roles, with sculptures becoming sculptors and vice versa. Sculptors are then asked to shape their sculptures in positions that communicate 'being



comfortable in your skin'. Again, sculptors can walk around and see other sculptures. This warm-up activity deserves a short debrief, so the facilitator might ask some of the following questions.

Questions for reflection

What did you notice?

Was there anything surprising in what you saw and experienced?

Did you notice any patterns in how we perceive gender and age?

What kinds of notions about beauty does this exercise reveal?



The Road Trip

Materials and time

You will need to prepare a diverse set of people's portraits. You can cut them from magazines or print **these images** which are also available in the BODYkind Cards set. Participants will also need sheets of paper, markers, and pens. The exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

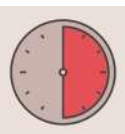
The facilitator divides participants into small groups of four or five people and provides each group with a set of photos. Participants will also use these photos in discussions during the second part of the workshop.

The facilitator explains that their task is to imagine going on a two-week-long trip for a school project, starting from Riga and then continuing to Prague and Skopje. Therefore, they need to choose three people they would like to travel with and three people they would least like to travel with.

Each participant individually notes the companions they would choose and those they would certainly not. Participants share their individual choices in small groups and discuss them. Afterwards, as a group, they have to come up with a joint list of the most pleasant and least pleasant travelling companions.

In a big group, the facilitator asks participants to present their choices and share the reasons why they chose or did not choose a particular person to travel with.

The debriefing may vary based on the group dynamics, but below are some questions that might help guide the discussion. It is also important to address why participants thought that a person might have a positive quality, as there can be positive stereotypes attached



to particular looks and life choices. For instance, the assumption that all sporty people are fun or that individuals with tattoos are brave. The facilitator should challenge all assumptions, whether positive or negative.

Questions for reflection

How did you choose whom to travel with and whom not to? How did you create the group list? What approach did you use?

How easy or difficult was it to reach an agreement within the group, and why?

Did you think of factors such as someone playing a musical instrument and making noise or someone praying during the trip?

Did you consider what you might learn from someone you have never met while spending so much time travelling together?

What assumptions did you have about the people in the photos?

How can we challenge and change negative stereotypes related to appearance?

How can we continue these conversations beyond this exercise?



First Impressions

Materials and time

You will need the set of images from the previous activity. This exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator asks participants if they have ever heard the term 'stereotype' and if they know what it means. This is followed by an explanation of the concept of stereotypes.

Participants work in small groups, and they may be the same groups as before. Each group is given one photo of a person from the previous activity. A discussion follows, guided by the questions:

What are your first impressions of this person?

How would you react if you saw this person in the street?

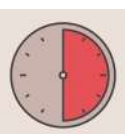
What difficulties may this person face in interactions with others?

What difficulties could this person experience regarding their self-image?

Are there any advantages this person might have due to their appearance?

How would you feel and act if you were in this person's shoes?

During the discussions, the facilitator may encourage participants to acknowledge their negative stereotypes and be curious and critical of their assumptions. The facilitator then asks the group to summarise their discussion in three sentences or conclude the discussion within one minute.



Questions for reflection

What do you think is the purpose and function of stereotypes?

Where do you think our perception of what is beautiful, ugly, average, and acceptable comes from?

How would you react if someone commented on somebody who looks different from them?

How does the person who is exposed to stereotypical comments feel?

What can we do to be more critical about our first impressions and body stereotypes?



Assumptions

Materials and time

You will need a projector, **test** prepared, access to the internet, sheets of paper, markers, pens. The exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator instructs participants to individually take the test on implicit bias available **here**. The test is only available in English, so the facilitator must ensure that all participants have a sufficient understanding of English to be able to take the test.

The facilitator chooses a test that is likely to be most appropriate and interesting for participants to discuss. There are tests on bias, age, disability, and weight – topics that can be used for further discussions. Once participants have filled out the test, the facilitator asks them to share their experience, discuss whether they agree or disagree with the results, and explores the origins of these implicit biases. It is important to explain that all individuals have implicit biases, and by raising awareness of these biases, we can actively promote inclusivity towards diverse bodies.

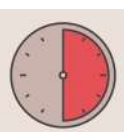
Questions for reflection

Can you recall situations in your life when you made assumptions about someone based on their looks?

Has anybody made assumptions about you based on how you look?

Have you ever made assumptions about others? When were your assumptions accurate, and when were they proven wrong?

How can we work on our assumptions? How can we change them?



Going to Peru

Materials and time

You will need projector, screen, speakers, **video** for Module III and **this photo** of Vangel Trkaljanov, as well as papers and pens. The exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator shows a photo of Vangel Trkaljanov and asks participants to write what they imagine are the answers to questions such as:

Who do you think this person is?

What are his characteristics?

What does he do in his free time?

What is his job?

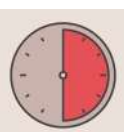
Participants have time to write down their answers. Once they are ready, they are asked to share them with the group. After sharing, participants watch the video and a discussion ensues.

Variation

Participants work individually. Their task is to describe their everyday life. In the next step, they should consider their bucket list. Once they are ready, they can share with the group. After sharing, the facilitator asks:

Do you think a wheelchair user could do everything you do every day? Why or why not?

Do you think wheelchair users have the same dreams and wishes on their bucket list? Why or why not?



After the discussion, the participants watch the video with Vangel Trkaljanov, and reflection follows.

Questions for reflection

What are your thoughts on the power of first impressions and stereotyping after watching the video?

Did anything surprise you while watching the video?

In your view, how do you perceive or approach wheelchair users?

Do you have any experiences you'd like to share regarding interactions with people who use wheelchairs or have different physical disabilities?

Do you believe you live in an inclusive environment where a wheelchair user your age could participate in activities similar to yours?



Notes for Facilitators

While planning the session, check out a [video interview](#) with Vangel Trkaljanov tackling the topic of stereotypes and prejudices towards people with physical disabilities. You can use the video to introduce the topic.

The first two activities in the module serve as warm-up activities, and it is recommended to select one of them.





CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

What stereotypes does society attach to certain looks?

How does society treat people with particular looks?

Which groups of people experience unfair treatment?

Why do we find some external features ugly or beautiful?

How do stereotypes and implicit biases affect us?

Useful Resources

IMPLICIT BIAS

Diversity Campus (2020) - [Training Video on Unconscious Bias](#)

This video helps us understand how unconscious biases are formed in our brains and their impact on organizational success. It explains what unconscious biases are, how unconscious biases and distorted perceptions are created, and where conscious management of unconscious bias is necessary in organizational contexts.

Hank Green (2019) - [The Very Real Consequences of Weight Discrimination](#)

Weight discrimination has significant health consequences, particularly when medical professionals are among the most common perpetrators. This video explains what weight bias and weight discrimination entail.

Anderson (2012) - [Beauty Bias Hidden Camera Experiment](#)

Studies show that individuals considered more attractive are likely to receive more attention, compliments, and positive evaluations from others. They may find it easier to make friends and build social connections, contributing to increased popularity and social success. Here is an experiment that demonstrates how attractive people might receive more assistance.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

Michael Zhang (2018) - [Portraits of Tattooed People, With and Without Clothes](#)

Studies show that people with tattoos may be perceived as untrustworthy, aggressive, impulsive, and less professional in their jobs. Here is the work of a photographer who challenges these stereotypes. His work serves as an example of how stereotypes can be challenged using art.



Module IV

Shame and Boundaries

Our words and actions impact the self-esteem of others. Building relationships free of body shaming is an essential step in creating an inclusive society

Many of us have received hurtful remarks about our bodies. Body shaming is deeply rooted in society. By examining history, we can see how beauty standards have evolved and what comments were directed at bodies that didn't conform to 'the ideal'.

Images in social media and popular culture, as well as judgmental comments from people around us, can trigger feelings of shame about our own bodies. Finding strategies to respond and cope with these comments is not an easy task.

However, we can raise awareness about the harm of body shaming. This module aims to increase self-acceptance and promote a more inclusive and realistic notion of beauty, fostering empathy and kindness towards ourselves and others.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Raising awareness of the roots and consequences of body shaming.

Understanding the impact of body shaming on an individual's self-esteem and mental health.

Exploring various ways to set boundaries, reflect on our actions, and stand up against body shaming.

Cultivating empathy as an essential step in creating an inclusive environment that embraces body diversity.

ACTIVITIES

Body Shaming: Forms and Responses

Building Confidence Against Body Shaming

Random Acts of Kindness

Dealing with Negative Comments

Responding to the Pressure

Tips for Setting Boundaries

Body Shaming: Forms and Responses

Materials and time

You will need sheets of paper, pens, flipchart sheets, markers. This exercise takes around 30 minutes.

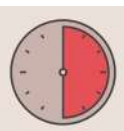
Instructions

The activity starts with an optional mind-mapping exercise focused on the word 'shame'. The technique is presented in the slides of this module. Participants engage in individual mind mapping. After completing the task, participants share their mind maps and reflect on the elements they have noted. This is followed by a discussion on both differences and similarities.

In the next step, participants create drawings of the human body. They can work individually, in pairs, trios, or smaller groups. They are invited to write down any comments they have heard about other people's bodies from people around them or seen and heard in the media on the drawing. This includes encouraging, positive, negative, and neutral comments, as well as comments they consider to be body shaming. Participants can also write down comments they have personally received if they feel comfortable doing so. Once participants are done, the facilitator introduces the definition of body shaming:

Body shaming is the act of saying something negative about a person's body. It can be about one's own body or someone else's. The commentary can be about a person's size, age, hair, clothes, food, or level of perceived attractiveness.

Nevertheless, when introducing the definition of body shaming, the facilitator points out that comments do not necessarily need to be negative to cause anxiety. For example, comments such as 'You look good today' or 'You have lost weight' can create pressure to be



'perfect'. When discussing body shaming, it is important to open up the debate about the impact of various comments on us, what they provoke in us, and how we can reject them if needed.

After reviewing the definition, participants can exchange their drawings. Each participant or group receives a drawing of another. They review the comments, highlighting the ones they consider body shaming. They discuss and write down how a person could respond to these comments. Once the groups finish, they are encouraged to share both the body shaming comments and their suggested reactions with others.

Questions for reflection

Have you heard the term 'body shaming' before?

Have you ever witnessed body shaming directed at others?

Who tends to receive body-shaming comments more often – men or women? Why could it be so?

Have you personally experienced body shaming?

Can body shaming come from friends or family?

What role does social media play in perpetuating body shaming?

What are potential responses to body shaming?

How can we educate others about the harmful effects of body shaming?

How can we create a culture of acceptance in society, in our school, or organisation?



Building Confidence Against Body Shaming

Materials and time

You will need paper, pens, markers. The exercise takes up to 45 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator asks participants to draw a picture of themselves. They should write at least five positive their own comments about their body and one negative. Once ready, they form pairs or trios depending on their preference. The facilitator encourages them to share in pairs or trios and give each other more positive comments. The comments do not have to be related to the body. They may reflect other personal characteristics.

After the sharing, they should return to their list, individually reflect on it, and try to write a short appreciation for the body part they had previously commented negatively on.

Questions for reflection

How did you feel writing down positive and negative comments during this task?

How did you feel about receiving a positive comment or affirmation?

How did it feel to give a positive affirmation?

How did you feel when the negative comment was transformed into a positive affirmation?

How often do you receive and give positive comments to other people?

How can we boost our self-confidence and confidence in others?



Random Acts of Kindness

Materials and time

You will need sheets of papers, pens, internet for research, a jar, and post-it notes.

This activity is suitable for a group that can meet again after 1-2 weeks following the first session. It will require approx. 30-40 minutes to brainstorm and decide on the act of kindness. After 1-2 weeks, another 30-40 minutes will be allocated for sharing experiences and reflecting on them.

Instructions

The main aim of the activity is to encourage participants to reflect on their impact on others.

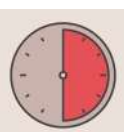
At the beginning, the facilitator asks participants to think about the last time:

They did something good for themselves. It can be related to their bodies and also to other aspects of themselves. Facilitator stresses that even small things count, such as walking in nature or doing sports with friends.

They did something good for anyone around them, such as supporting a friend in a difficult situation, doing volunteer work, or helping a random stranger. Again, the facilitator points out that even small acts count, such as giving a seat to someone on the bus.

Once participants are ready, the facilitator invites them to discuss how small acts of kindness can impact us and the people around us.

After sharing, participants are asked to brainstorm ideas about small acts of kindness they could do for other people.



The group lists their ideas together. The facilitator might suggest thinking about certain places or situations; for example, what could be done at the school, youth centre, shopping mall, park, and so on. The facilitator can also share information about local organisations and charities, as well as their needs and opportunities available.

Once the participants complete the list, the facilitator encourages everyone to go through it and keep it in mind for the upcoming period, for example, the next two weeks until your next meeting.

During the period between the meetings, the facilitator can place a jar where participants can leave post-it notes. Participants are encouraged to write about their acts of kindness and how they felt after doing them, and then leave the notes in the jar. They do not need to share their names.

In the next meeting, the facilitator can start by reading the notes from the jar. After reading the notes, the facilitator encourages reflection. If participants did not participate, the facilitator encourages them to share their reasons for not doing so, for example, they did not feel confident enough.

Questions for reflection

How did it feel to participate in the challenge?

Was it easy or challenging to act kindly?

What held you back from taking part in this challenge?

How can we cultivate kinder human relationships?



Dealing with Negative Comments

Materials and time

You will need sheets of paper, pens, and a copy of **Worksheet 4.1** for each group. This exercise takes around one hour.

Instructions

Participants receive a sheet of paper. The facilitator instructs participants to draw themselves and, around the drawing, write down the names of all the individuals they feel put pressure or make them feel uncomfortable about their bodies. This could include a random stranger making an uncomfortable comment about their body weight, a grandmother urging them to eat more, or posts on social media.

Once ready, participants form pairs or trios to share their lists and discuss the situations.

In the following steps, participants choose a situation they want to explore more deeply through comics. Considering the time, the facilitator might limit the number of scenes of the comics, for example, 6 to 9 scenes. The facilitator might use **Worksheet 4.1** as the base for the comics. The comics should start with the chosen situation and lead to a solution. They should include steps that others can follow to deal with similar situations, making them feel less alone.

Once the groups are ready, they present their work, and participants can go and check them out. Discussion on the stories captured in the comics might follow.



Questions for reflection

How can we communicate to others what is comfortable or not?

What can we do if someone is unaware that their actions or words make others uncomfortable?

Who do you typically discuss negative body comments with?

Have you ever reported negative body comments, and if so, whom to or where? For example, reporting it to a schoolteacher. How well were they prepared to deal with the situation?

When reflecting on the experiences and choosing the story, how did the stories of others make you feel?

Why did you decide to create comics about that particular situation?

How did you decide on the story and, in the end, the solution?

After going through the comics, what do you think is most important for young people when dealing with such situations?





Worksheet 4.1

CREATING COMICS

1. KEY MESSAGE

WRITE DOWN A SHORT MESSAGE YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONVEY WITH THIS COMIC.

2. MAIN CHARACTERS

DEVELOP CHARACTERS: THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, CLOTHING, TRAITS, VALUES.

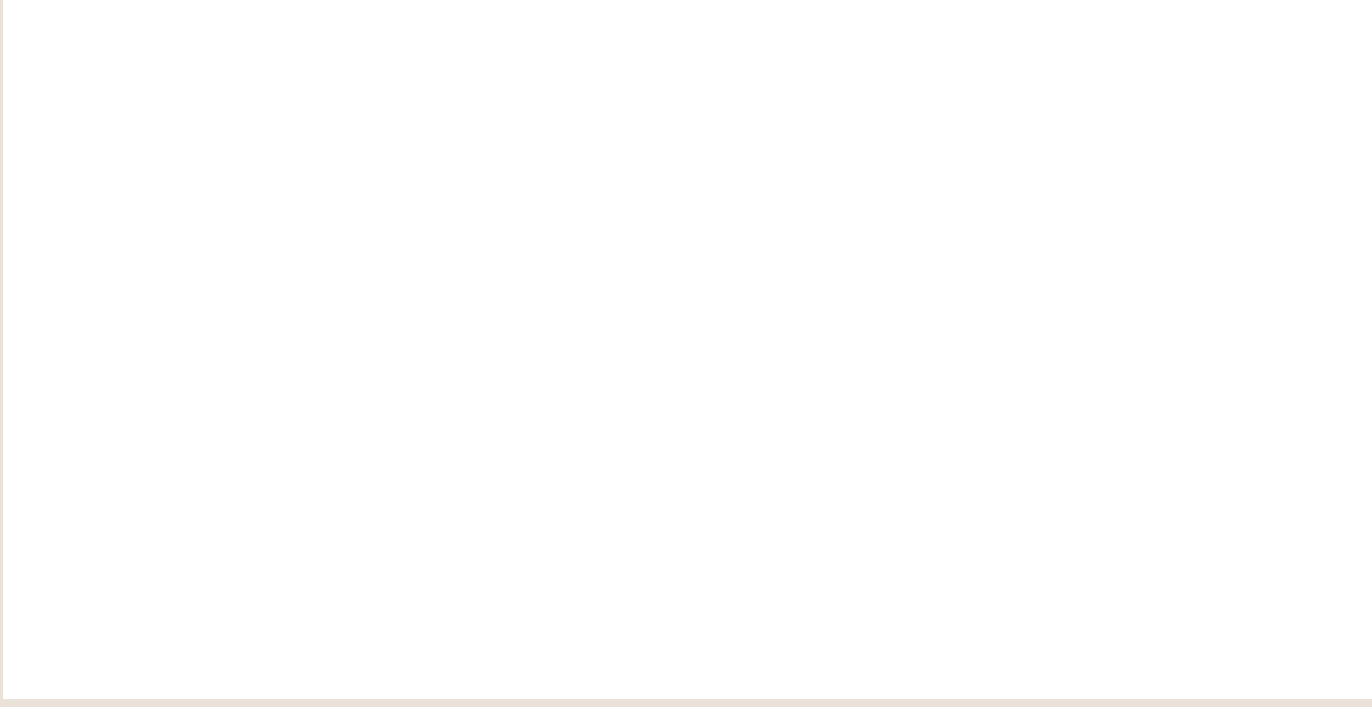
3. SETTINGS

DESCRIBE THE PLACE AND CONTEXT WHERE THE STORY WILL HAPPEN.

4. PLOT LINE

DEVELOP THE STORY BASED ON THE SELECTED SITUATION. WRITE IT DOWN AND DIVIDE INTO SCENES.

SCENE 1



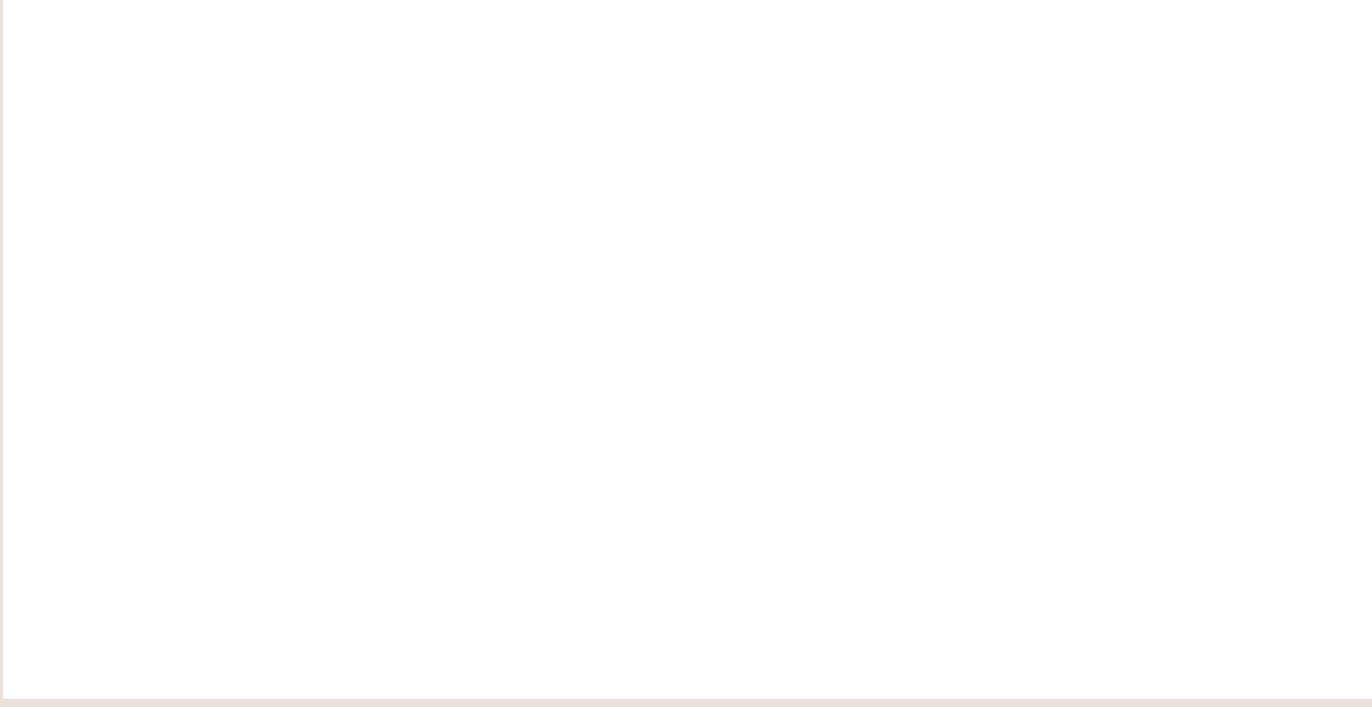
SCENE 2



SCENE 3



SCENE 4



SCENE 5



SCENE 6



SCENE 7



SCENE 8



SCENE 9



Responding to the Pressure

Materials and time

You will need a flipchart sheet for each station, pens, sheets of paper, magazines. The exercise takes around one hour.

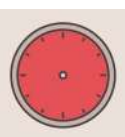
Instructions

This activity is based on participants' input from the exercise 'Dealing with Negative Comments.' Participants work in groups of three to four people. The facilitator chooses five to seven different pressures based on the comments highlighted during the previous exercise.

Each group receives one pressure. If the previous activity was not implemented, please see the variation and **Worksheet 4.2**. It contains a list of pressures on which participants can reflect.

The group's task is to reflect on the given pressure and discuss their potential responses. Based on their discussion, they should come up with practical tips for young people facing a similar situation. The tips should be written as short messages; the facilitator may give 'a tweet' as an example. The tips should be concise, clear, and understandable. Once completed, participants can write down their tips on a flipchart or share them, for example, via the board created in Padlet. After gathering the tips in one place, participants review their work, and the debriefing follows.

Before starting the task, the facilitator encourages participants to be specific in their responses. Instead of saying: 'I would tell something like...!', the answer should be: 'I do not like your comments on... It makes me feel...!'. The facilitator also asks participants to consider various types of reactions. For example, verbal responses, involving another person or an expert, walking away, reactions that lead to a positive outcome, reactions that lead to a negative outcome, making it public, sharing it on social media, and reporting it to relevant authorities.



Variation

If there is no opportunity to use participants' comments from the previous task, the facilitator can choose from a list of situations in the **Worksheet 4.2**.

The facilitator can suggest that participants choose a pressure either directed at them or someone they know (if they feel uncomfortable sharing their personal experience in front of the group).

The facilitator can use the questions below to guide the discussion. Depending on the group's experiences, knowledge and age, the facilitator can include additional questions related to sexism, homophobia, and ableism. What are the roots of sexism, homophobia, and ableism? Are sexism, homophobia, and ableism connected with feelings of control or showing superiority? Are sexism, homophobia, and ableism discussed in society and media? How can we address these systemic issues?

Questions for reflection

Do some people face more body shaming and pressure than others? If so, what characteristics do these people have in common?

Are certain ways of dealing with negative comments and body shaming more effective than others?

What competencies – knowledge, skills, attitudes – are necessary to respond effectively to body shaming?

How can you develop these competencies?

Do you think that not reacting is a good response? In what situations?

Would you agree that not taking a stand against body shaming means supporting it? Why might someone hesitate to confront body shaming and pressure?

How can this person be supported?



A stylized illustration of a person's face and hand. The face is pink with a wide, open mouth showing a red tongue. The hand is also pink and is positioned in front of the face, with fingers spread. The background is a solid red color.

Worksheet 4.2

RESPONDING TO THE PRESSURE

Random strangers make unpleasant comments on the bus.

A family member always gives advice about one's body during family events.

A teacher comments on the body weight of the students.

A young person receives judgmental comments under their social media posts.

Friends make jokes about one of their group members. Their jokes and comments are hurtful.

One's partner negatively comments on their appearance, making the other person feel insecure.

A restaurant manager requests a young waitress to lose some weight.

Tips for Setting Boundaries

Materials and time

You will need projector, screen, speakers, and **video** for Module IV. The exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator introduces the video by explaining that it includes several tips for dealing with negative comments and bullying. Participants watch the video, and a discussion follows.

Questions for discussion

What do you think about these tips?

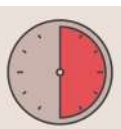
Can you use these tips in situations you encounter?

Reflect on a time when you successfully set boundaries with someone who was body shaming you. What strategies did you use, and what was the outcome?

Regarding body shaming and bullying, what changes can be made at school or in your youth space? Is there anything you would like to change to make reporting such behaviors easier?

When it comes to online bullying, do you know how it can be reported?

One of the tips in the video emphasizes the importance of focusing on what we like. How can we create an environment where we can focus on what we enjoy? Do you have any suggestions for teachers and youth workers?



Notes for Facilitators

Before the session, we suggest you to prepare a list of websites and contacts of organisations or individuals that support young people in dealing with bullying. If your school has a crisis assistant or psychologist, you might refer participants to them. We may not be aware of the scale of the situation, especially when working with the youth for a limited time. Offering references to where they can seek help demonstrates that they are not alone and provides accessible places to contact.

Dealing with pressure or negative comments can bring various emotions. These emotions can manifest physically as muscle tension, an increased heart rate, or even pain in certain parts of the body. What types of physical manifestations have you noticed when experiencing such emotions? You can also ask this question to the young people you work with, and explore together with them methods, such as exercising, muscle relaxation, or breathing techniques, to reduce and transform these emotional responses.





CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

How do you distinguish between constructive criticism and body shaming?

How do you set your boundaries?

How do you feel when setting your boundaries?

How does setting boundaries with strangers differ from setting boundaries with familiar people?

Have you ever crossed someone else's boundaries? How did they react? How did you feel when you realised it?

If you experienced body shaming and bullying, who can you turn to for support?

How can schools and communities create safer spaces to address and prevent body shaming?

Useful Resources

ORIGINS AND IMPACT OF BODY SHAMING

Ariane Resnick (2023) - **The Impact of Body Shaming and How to Overcome It**

The article reflects on the impact of body shaming and proposes several strategies to overcome it.

Emma Hanson (2020) - **What a Shame: The Origins of Body Shaming**

Author explores the long history of the changing 'ideal' body type, and how it's linked to society's ideas of class and status.

Afreen Khan (2019) - **Body Shaming: Prejudice or Prerequisite**

Body shaming is the sad truth of our society but what if it becomes a mandatory step to health? This talk gives us an eye opener about how a prejudice like body shaming has become our gateway to health.

BODY SHAMING AND INSTAGRAM

Ashleigh Kane (2015) - **Has Instagram become the ultimate tool for body shaming?**

The article reflects on Instagram as a tool for body shaming and what happens when photographers choose not to follow conventional notions of beauty.

OVERCOMING BODY SHAMING

Alice E. Schluger (2024) - **Body Shaming: The Effects and How to Overcome it**

Hearing negative comments about their appearance can leave young people feeling anxious and self-conscious. This author proposes several efficient ways to manage fat shaming and other critical comments, and achieve body acceptance.



Module V

Embodied Arts

Words might not be enough to describe our emotions and sensations. Art opens a new door to being more aware and prouder of the bodies we are

In our daily lives, we are not used to talking about our bodies. Not really. We talk about their shape or our satisfaction or dissatisfaction with them, but we do not speak about how it is to live in our bodies. How it is to breathe every few seconds, digest, and experience love or fear. Perhaps this is due to the lack of words for such a description. However, there is one form that allows us to have a glimpse into how we feel inside our bodies – and that is art.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Creating a positive shift in the attitude, appreciation, and acceptance of our bodies through the creative process.

Increasing participants' self-awareness.

Gaining a deeper understanding of how creative expression improves overall wellbeing.

ACTIVITIES

Body Scan

My Body is...

An Inner Dialogue with My Body

An Art Piece of My Own True Body

Body Scan

Materials and time

You will need a mobile phone or computer to play the **audio exercise**, speakers, mats or blankets for sitting or laying down on the floor, if available. This exercise takes around 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator plays the audio exercise that guides participants through a body scan meditation to promote relaxation and encourage focused awareness on various points of the body.

A brief sharing session can follow the exercise using few of the questions below.

Questions for reflection

How did you feel during this exercise?

Were there any specific areas of your body that held more tension or relaxation?

How easy or difficult was it for you to stay focused on different parts of your body?

Did you feel any emotional responses while focusing on different areas of your body?

Were there any surprising sensations or observations you made about your body?

How do you feel after completing the exercise compared to before you started? What differences do you notice in your mental and physical state?

How can you apply the sense of mindful presence you experienced during this exercise to your daily life?



My Body is...

Materials and time

You will need paper and a pen for each participant. The exercise takes up to 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator instructs participants to finish the sentence: 'My body is...' with at least 20 different endings. This activity is for individual reflection, with no sharing or discussion afterward. The aim is to encourage participants to think about their own bodies and their perceptions of them.

The writings from this exercise can inspire individual work during the exercise 'An Art Piece of My Own True Body.'

You might ask some questions from the list below if you used this exercise in a different session flow and context.

Questions for reflection

Were there any common themes or patterns in your responses?

Which of your responses felt the most true or significant to you?

How do you think societal views on body image influenced your responses?

What positive affirmations about your body emerged from this exercise?



An Inner Dialogue with My Body

Materials and time

You will need a space allowing participants to sit in a circle on the floor or chairs. The exercise takes around 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator instructs participants that they will engage in a guided fantasy to connect more deeply with the needs of their bodies. Before the facilitator provides guidance, participants are encouraged to sit comfortably and take a few deep breaths. Once the atmosphere in the working space is calm, the facilitator gives the following instructions, allowing the participants to think about each question for a few moments:

‘Find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and imagine your body sitting on the chair in front of you; what do you see? How do you feel seeing your body in front of you? Ask the body what it needs. Ask the body how it feels, ask if it is being treated okay, if something hurts. Ask the body for advice on how it wants to be treated.’

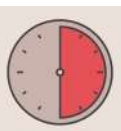
If needed, the instructions can be repeated. The facilitator gives participants a few moments to reflect on the activity once the guidance is over. Participants can then share their feelings and discoveries in the circle.

Questions for reflection

What emotions came up when you saw your body in front of you?

What advice did your body give on how it wants to be treated?

How can you listen to and respect your body’s messages better?



An Art Piece of My Own True Body

Materials and time

You will need various artistic materials based on your preferences and budget, such as watercolors, oil paints, palettes, pencils, thin markers, drawing charcoal, glitter, colorful tapes, natural materials, and heavyweight drawing paper. Ensure you have a suitable working space, such as a desk or at least a drawing pad.

This exercise takes around 45 minutes including the time for sharing and reflection.

Instructions

The facilitator instructs participants to express their bodies through art, such as drawing, painting, or writing a poem. They should focus on how their body feels, rather than how others or they themselves see it. They can choose to focus on a specific body part if they wish. The facilitator reminds participants that the art doesn't have to look realistic or perfect. What matters is capturing their bodies based on their emotions.

Variation

There is a method called 'Body Paint', which involves people painting their skin with harmless natural colours. If the group members know each other very well or the facilitator finds it appropriate for the occasion, modifying and performing this activity is also an option.



Questions for reflection

How do you feel? Participants can respond one by one, using just one word.

Show us your art piece and explain, if you want to, why you have created it in this way? Each participant can describe their body drawings, one by one.

Was it challenging to find a way to represent the body or its parts? If so, why?

Can you see any similarities in the room? What are they? Is there a meaning to these similarities?

Next time you see yourself in a mirror, will anything change about your approach or opinion of your appearance?

If you were to place your creation in your room as a reminder of this experience, what message would it convey to you?

If this art piece was created by your best friend, what would you say to them about it?



Notes for Facilitators

It usually takes time for the entire group to reflect on the process they have been through, but it is worth it because it shows how participants feel about their bodies. The facilitator should remind participants to discuss without judgments, and that we offer each other and ourselves only active listening and support.

For some participants, sharing can be challenging and even disturbing. In such cases, the facilitator can create a safe space for those who may be uncomfortable expressing themselves verbally. They can share by using only one word or drawing a symbol.

Participants can receive sticky note papers and pens to make some notes for themselves before sharing with the group. Also, the facilitator can write key takeaway messages from the discussion on a flipchart.

The activity 'An Inner Dialogue with My Body' was suggested by Ana Poprizova, a psychologist and Gestalt therapist who contributed as an external expert, offering feedback on the draft version of the toolkit.



The background features a dark grey field with a large, soft-edged pink shape in the upper left. Two stylized, minimalist figures are depicted. One figure, in the center, is wearing a red top and a grey long-sleeved shirt, with arms extended in a dynamic pose. Another figure is partially visible on the left, also in a dynamic pose. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

How does creative expression help you connect with and understand your body?

What changes when you focus on how your body feels rather than how it looks?

How does being more aware of your body's needs and sensations impact your overall well-being?

How can creative activities like drawing, painting, or writing serve as tools for improving body acceptance?

What aspects of your body are you most grateful for, and how can you celebrate them?

Useful Resources

BENEFITS OF ART THERAPY

Arlin Cuncic (2023) - [The Benefits of Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy](#)

The article introduces the concept of mindfulness-based art therapy. Numerous benefits of mindfulness-based art therapy have been identified through empirical research. Some of the psychological issues that have shown promise in terms of their response to mindfulness-based art therapy include anxiety disorders, eating disorders, substance abuse, depressive disorders, stress, and anger-related issues.

Kendra Cherry (2023) - [What Is Art Therapy?](#)

The creation or appreciation of art can be used to help people explore emotions, develop self-awareness, cope with stress, boost self-esteem, and work on social skills. If you are looking for answers to the question, 'What is Art Therapy?' this article might provide them.

Daria Halprin (2008) - [The Expressive Body in Life, Art, and Therapy: Working with Movement, Metaphor and Meaning](#)

Daria Halprin describes the body as the container of one's entire life experience and movement as a language that expresses and reveals our struggles and creative potentials. Interweaving artistic and psychological processes, she offers a philosophy and methodology that builds upon the transformational capacity of the arts.

BODY PAINTING

Createlet (2023) - [How To Body Paint: Key Steps To Brilliant Results](#)

If you are thinking of trying body painting, this article introduces a few key steps to bring your wildest imaginations to life.



Module VI

Finding Your Movement

While moving our bodies, we move our minds. Embracing movement can help us to establish positive connections between our body and soul, offering life-long benefits to our overall selves.

Movement is a natural human need, just as is breathing or eating. However, unlike hunger or thirst, our bodies do not signal the need for a walk or a stretch; or maybe we've stopped listening. So, let us find our movement. This module will help learners understand how to care about their bodies in a nurturing way and how to incorporate movement in a positive way into their daily lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Becoming familiar with methods and tools for body care.

Recognizing different ways of moving the body and identifying which suits me.

Understanding the benefits and importance of regular body movement.

Outlining a self-care plan to continue practising after the workshop.

ACTIVITIES

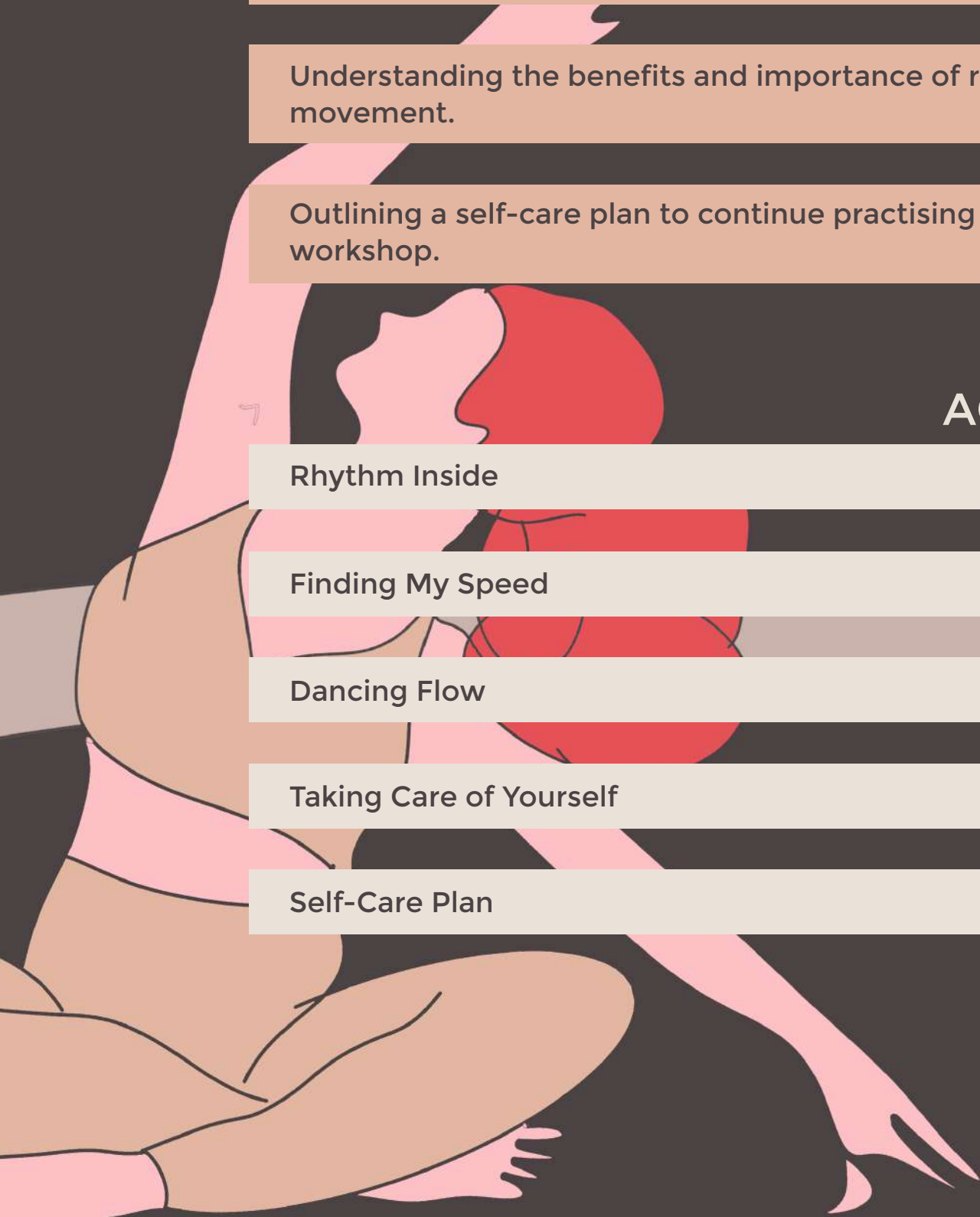
Rhythm Inside

Finding My Speed

Dancing Flow

Taking Care of Yourself

Self-Care Plan



Rhythm Inside

Materials and time

You will need a computer, speakers, a projector. The exercise takes 3 to 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator shows a video [Top Cutes Babies Dancing Compilations](#) with the following question: 'Can you remember when you were a baby?'.

The facilitator introduces the session by emphasising that we all have a rhythm inside us. To find this rhythm, we just need to remember what it was like to be a baby and dance freely without shame or fear of criticism or judgement. The facilitator encourages participants to let their inner child express itself, allowing movement to guide them revealing their need to move naturally.

This activity is not necessary, but it allows participants to connect with themselves and enjoy a funny start. There is nothing super serious about it. It is alright sometimes to do silly stuff and look ridiculous.

Questions for reflection

This is a warm-up exercise that doesn't require reflection, but below are some questions that can help to further explore this experience:

How did it feel to let your inner child express itself during this exercise?

What did you notice about your body and emotions when you allowed yourself to move freely and without judgment?

Did you feel any hesitation or self-consciousness while participating in this activity? If so, what do you think caused these feelings?



Finding My Speed

Materials and time

You will need a computer, speakers, and a spacious room for the entire group to walk freely, or preferably, an outdoor space. The exercise takes 5 to 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator invites all participants to walk around the room in silence until the moment when the facilitator feels that the group has calmed down and participants focus on themselves.

The facilitator explains that regular walking is considered speed number 4, and lets them see what will happen if the walking speed is number 3, 7, 1, or 10? After a while, when participants seem more confident and settled in the movement, the facilitator asks them again to walk at speed number 4, their natural speed, and proceeds to the next part. The facilitator might play soft background music to ease the mood in the room and introduce something to focus on while walking, such as **Inspiring Cinematic Ambient**.

While walking at their average speed number 4, the facilitator initiates reflection by asking the questions below.

During the walk, the facilitator can remind the participants to be silent and answer the questions honestly within themselves. The facilitator can also use different walking speeds or give other instructions to bring participants' focus back on themselves if they get distracted, to get more comfortable, and then start to ask questions (by walking fast, slow, stopping, etc.). The simpler the questions, the better. The facilitator can repeat the question to have more impact on participants.



Questions for reflection

Do you exercise and move in ways you love?

Do you get enough sleep?

What do you think about your eating habits?

Do you take care of your health?

When was your last visit to the doctor? Do you plan to go anytime soon?

Do you take care of your well-being?

Have you stretched your body lately?

Are you familiar with grounding? If so, have you tried walking barefoot as one of the grounding techniques?

Have you taken a walk in the past week without having a specific destination?

Have you cooked a meal for yourself early in the morning, enjoyed breakfast, and had coffee while the city woke up in the past week?



Dancing Flow

Materials and time

You will need a computer, speakers, a spacious room for the entire group to walk freely, or preferably, an outdoor space, and **these five songs**. The exercise takes around 30 minutes.

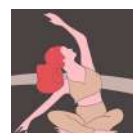
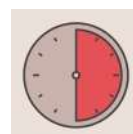
Instructions

The facilitator instructs participants to maintain their walking pace and find a spot in the room where they can move freely. Five songs are played, during which participants are encouraged to move around the room without speaking and to find their natural movement.

The activity is based on this selection of **songs** (totalling ten minutes). Participants are invited to explore if they feel more in flow with slower or faster rhythms, swaying and more natural movements, or more artificial expressions.

The task is NOT about being a pop-star class dancer, but about discovering one's own expression, an embodiment of their personality. To follow the rhythm and not create what looks the best. The facilitator encourages participants to make movements they have never experienced, exploring unusual body positions and experimenting with their bodies.

The participants might need some encouragement to perform this task. They might need more time to get into the task. They might not feel comfortable enough if they haven't seen each other perform, or if it's their first time taking part in a movement exercise. The facilitator sets an example by expressing themselves and providing verbal guidance, for example, by pointing to different parts of the body that can lead the movement (such as the chin, belly button, right or left heel, or hair), or by directing attention to the steps and how big or small they can be, or to other elements of movement.



After listening to all five songs, the participants lie on the floor and reflect on the questions below.

Later on, the facilitator asks participants to form trios and share their experiences of the activity.

Variation

If participants face difficulties engaging in the task, an alternative version may be introduced to ease them into it. Initially, participants are encouraged to imagine an animal. The facilitator plays music, and participants are asked to synchronise their movements with the music, acting as if they were the chosen animal. They could be butterflies, elephants, snakes, etc. There are no restrictions. Imitating an animal can be easier for participants than solely dancing. The facilitator can use this variation as the first step of the activity to make participants feel more relaxed.

Questions for reflection

How do I feel?

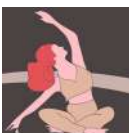
What happened? How did it go?

What felt natural to me? Which movements are more in tune with my personality and which are not?

What made me uncomfortable?

What did I find out about myself? How can I use this experience in my daily life?

Am I open to experimenting with and trying new movements in my life?



Taking Care of Yourself

Materials and time

You will need flipchart paper and markers. The exercise takes around 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator asks the participants to think about the following questions:

What kind of movement do you engage in regularly? Do you like it, and if so, what do you like about it? What does it bring to you? What has been the best moment in your life involving movement?

Additional questions:

How do physical education classes make you feel? Do you have any favourite sport? Why do you like it? Is there any sport or activity that you do not enjoy? Why is that? Have you done sports or physical activities as a child, and if so, do you still do it? Why or why not? What holds you back if you are considering returning to sports or trying new sports?

After a few minutes, the facilitator initiates a group discussion. The facilitator can take notes on a flipchart, or one of the participants can volunteer to visually capture the highlights of the discussion:

What does self-care mean to you? How do you practise self-care?

Additional questions:

Has anyone ever discussed body self-care with you? If so, in what way? Do you know how to take care of your body's needs? Do you sense when your body needs rest, movement, lying down or breathing fresh air? How do you know that you need these things? What do you think you need to be able to take care of yourself? How often do you mindfully address your body's needs, and is it enough?



Self-Care Plan Involving Movement

Materials and time

You will need pens and a printed copy of **Worksheet 6.1** for each participant or one per group. The exercise takes around 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator introduces both sides of the worksheet and goes through it to address any misunderstanding or questions. It is designed for individual reflection, allowing participants to think about their habits and practices. Still, it can also be easily turned into a peer-to-peer activity or small group discussion depending on participants' needs and their abilities to go through the checklist.

The facilitator can support or acknowledge participants' efforts during the individual work by asking, 'How are you doing with your plan?' or 'Can I support you in any way?'. Background music can be played to inspire reflection, such as: **Inspiring dream** or **Calm chill**.

The facilitator can conclude the activity by reviewing the worksheet as a group and inviting each participant to contribute by commenting, sharing, or asking questions. While sharing can be pretty personal, some participants might be willing to contribute and inspire others. The facilitator decides whether individual sharing will be incorporated into the debriefing or not.

Questions for reflection

Which part of your self-care plan are you most excited to implement?

What challenges do you anticipate in sticking to your self-care plan?

Who or what could help you stay accountable to your self-care goals?



Worksheet 6.1

DEVELOP YOUR SELF-CARE PLAN INVOLVING MOVEMENT

What kind of movement
would you like to try?

Assess your needs

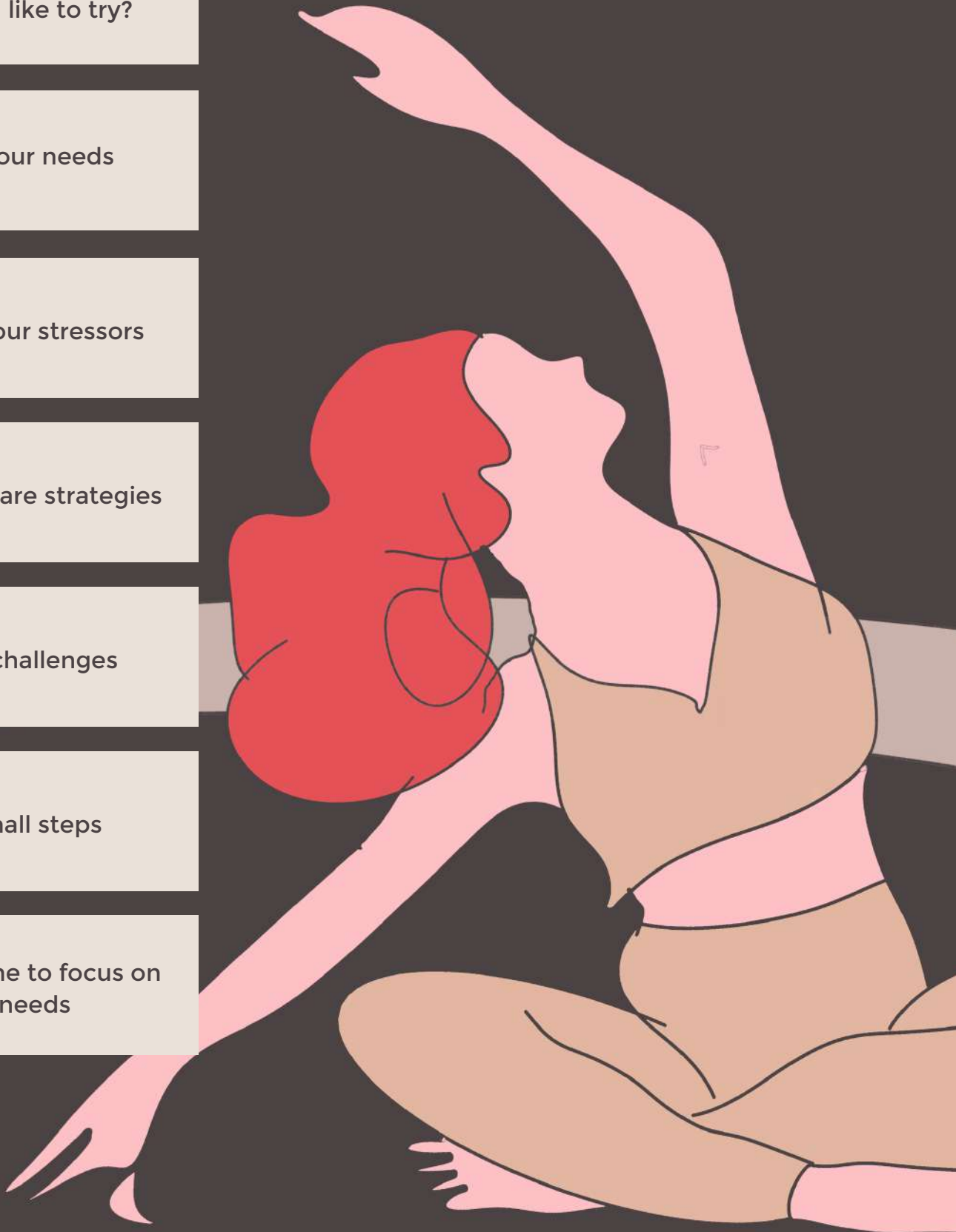
Consider your stressors

Devise self-care strategies

Plan for challenges

Take small steps

Schedule time to focus on
your needs



Worksheet 6.1

LIST OF ACTIVITIES INVOLVING MOVEMENT AND SELF-CARE

Different sports and movement activities: dance, running, team sports, tai-chi, pilates, yoga, kung-fu, forest walks, etc.

Body care methods: massage, meditation, exfoliation, sauna, mindful touch, aromatherapy baths, breathing exercises, shaking, stroking your own arm with a bit of body lotion, selecting clothes that make you feel good, giving your body a moment for itself and nurturing it through positive observation, being still and observing your surroundings, laughing, napping, smiling at yourself in a mirror, etc.

Others: hormone awareness - noticing the positive effects of physical activity, hydrotherapy, healthy eating, gardening, fresh air, immunization, benefits of oxytocin produced through social contact, relaxation and stress relief, quality of sleep, healthy habits, hair care, etc.

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Which ways of self-care resonate with your body?

What activities or self-care methods make you feel good?

What kind of movement feels most natural to you?

How can movement help us deal with difficult life situations?



Useful Resources

SELF-CARE PRACTICES

Jeremy Sutton (2020) - **The Self-Care Wheel: Wellness Worksheets, Activities**

This article contains information on what is the Self-Care Wheel, different templates and worksheets, self-care activities by the domains of the Self-Care Wheel and a look at popular self-care apps. The Self-Care Wheel is a helpful tool to assess one's current situation and set goals for future in a structured way.

Anna Katharina Schaffner (2020) - **How to Practice Self-Care: 10+ Worksheets and 12 Ideas**

Good ideas, activities and worksheets to explore topic of self-care with adults and young people as well.

Elizabeth Scott (2024) - **Types of Self-Care for Every Area of Your Life**

The author explores physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual self-care, and describes in more detail the self-care plan that inspired the template included in this module.

TED TALKS ON SELF-CARE

Guy Winch (2014) - **Why We All Need to Practice Emotional First Aid**

We'll go to the doctor when we feel flu-ish or a nagging pain. So why don't we see a professional when we feel emotional pain: guilt, loss, loneliness? Too many of us deal with psychological-health issues on our own, says Guy Winch. But we don't have to. He makes a compelling case to practice emotional hygiene - taking care of our emotions, our minds, with the same diligence we take care of our bodies.

Dima Abou Chaaban (2019) - **Re-train Your Brain With Self-Care**

Dima Abou Chaaban combines neuroscience and self-care. She looks at how the science we have can impact our well being and improve the way we see ourselves. In this speech she shares her ideas on burnout, and the role neuroscience plays in self-care.



Susannah Winters (2019) - **Self-Care: What It Really Is**

Susannah Winters breaks the myth that self-care is a wine party, Netflix binge, or pedicure social. Self-care should always leave you with more energy and feelings of revitalization. Often, the activities that are described as self-care leave you more depleted and with less energy. This talk discusses the four components of self-care that will support one's overall wellness: nourishing foods, stillness and movement, time in nature, and self expression.

Jen Oliver (2018) - **How to Love Yourself to the Core**

Through safe core fitness, self-care and mindfulness Jen Oliver supports moms to embrace, nurture and enjoy their motherhood journey. What she is most passionate about is spreading the message that if you love the body and life you have, you will have the body and life you love.

Jessica Brubaker (2020) - **Why Self-Care isn't Selfish**

The talk addresses the importance of learning to believe you are enough and treating yourself that way.

Portia Jackson-Preston (2019) - **The Missing Ingredient in Self-Care**

What happens if you push yourself too hard? What happens when your body tells you to stop yet, you keep going? Portia shares how self-care brought her back to health and it can help you too.

TED TALKS ON DANCE

Amrita Hepi (2016) - **To be a Good Dancer, Don't Give a F**k**

Amrita Hepi encourages people to be confident and comfortable in their body. The shame associated with our bodies is a result of the gaze that is imposed on it. It's important to be vulnerable and committed to your actions.

Natalia Duong (2013) - **Dance As Therapy**

Natalia Duong's interdisciplinary research explores kinesthetic empathy as a resource for conflict resolution, community theater and the embodied transmission of trauma.

Cara Scrementi (2015) - **Believe in the Power of Dance**

Cara Scrementi talks about the power that dance education can have on an individual. Dance is essential to educating the whole.



BENEFITS OF DANCE

Aeon Video (2018) - **Why Humans Love to Bust a Move**

Every culture dances. Why is this frivolous act so fundamental to being human? The answer, it seems, is in our need for social cohesion - that vital glue that keeps societies from breaking apart despite interpersonal differences. This video explores that unifying feeling of group that lifts us up when we're enthralled by our favourite sports teams, participating in religious rituals, or dancing the night away.

Charlotte Svendler Nielsen (2015) - **Dance Education Around the World: Perspectives on dance, young people and change**

This research article reflects on the power of dance to change the lives of young people. Dance shapes identity, affirms culture, and explores heritage. Creative and empowering pedagogies drive curriculum development worldwide, where the movement of peoples and cultures generates new challenges and possibilities for dance education in multiple contexts.

Rebecca Watson (2018) - **Young People Doing Dance Doing Gender: Relational Analysis and Thinking Intersectionally**

If you are interested in the connection between gender and dance, the text offers several perspectives on the topic. It demonstrates how some of those gender dynamics are played out, reproduced, and resisted by both boys and girls who participate in community-based dance organisations.

EMBODIMENT

Barbara Field (2022) - **What Is Embodiment?**

The article explores the connection between the mind and body. When people experience the world through their bodies and senses, they may feel grounded in their physical bodies or embodied.

Melissa Madeson (2021) - **Embodiment Practices: How to Heal Through Movement**

This article explains what are embodiment practices in psychology and psychotherapy, embodiment philosophy and theory, as well as explores embodiment in learning and includes few practical exercises for the workshops.



MOVEMENT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Imre Thormann (2017) - **Practices: Natural Movement in Everyday Life**

Interview with Imre Thormann, one of the most renowned Butoh dancers from Europe, and reflection on the natural movement in everyday life.s.

BOOKS

Mirka Knaster (1996) - **Discovering the Body's Wisdom**

Mirka Knaster provides an overview of the principles and theories underlying the major Eastern and Western body therapies. The book shows readers how to befriend their own bodies, getting back in touch with their internal sources of health and wisdom. It also describes more than 75 body practices, their benefits and associated risks.

Susan Bauer (2018) - **The Embodied Teen**

Susan Bauer presents a curriculum for teaching teens how to integrate body and mind, enhance kinesthetic intelligence, and develop the inner resilience they need to thrive, now and into adulthood.

MOVIES

Liz Friedlander (2006) - **Take the Lead**

A dance teacher offers to conduct detention for a group of misfit students by teaching them ballroom dancing. He overcomes their insecurities and prejudices, to enter them in a dance competition.

Tarzana Treatment Centers (2018) - **A List of Helpful Movies about Self-Care**

When a person feels down or disconnected from their community, watching a self-care can remind them of valuable ways to help themselves. Here is a list of helpful movies about self-care.



Module VII

Bodies and Identities

Embrace yourself for who you are, do what makes you feel good, and own it.

Look beyond societal standards, explore and experiment.

Adolescence is a period of transformation when bodies are changing, and so are beliefs, personality traits, and ways of self-expression. Young people question who they are, where they belong, and how they see themselves in the world. Identity development is influenced by factors like peers, family, media, and celebrities, which are interconnected.

Research shows a strong link between body image and identity. This relationship can be both positive and negative. While body dissatisfaction is tied to identity confusion, positive experiences, like sports, can enhance positive group identity. How others treat us based on how we look, how we evaluate ourselves based on our body's capabilities, and how we alter our appearance to express individuality or fit in are just a few examples of how our bodily experiences interact with who we are.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Creating a space for young people to reflect on their identity and increase their self-awareness.

Identifying the role of the body in how young people see themselves and express themselves to the outside world.

Increasing participants' understanding of the influences and consequences of their decisions related to body practices.

Fostering an appreciation of diversity.

ACTIVITIES

My Inner-Outer Self

Body as Identity Project

Gender Identity and Gender Expression

Navigating Social Media

My Inner-Outer Self

Materials and time

You will need coloured paper, markers, paper glue, and printed portraits of people expressing different emotions, representing diverse ages and genders. You can collect images from magazines or print the **images** selected by the BODYkind team. These images are also available in the BODYkind Cards set.

This exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

Participants work individually. Each receives a sheet of coloured paper and markers. The facilitator places the photos in the middle of the room and asks participants to select a picture representing a 'potential me'. They then glue it onto their paper sheet.

Next, participants are asked to individually reflect and write down characteristics that make them who they are. These characteristics can be related to:

Skills – what can I do?

Knowledge – what do I know?

Values – what matters to me?

Qualities – what can I bring?

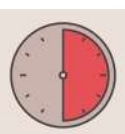
Interests – what captures my attention and focus?

Emotions – what do I experience and what vibes do I bring into the room?

Relationships – what relationships are important to me, and with whom?

Any other relevant aspect that shapes who you are

The guiding aspects (characteristics) can be listed on a flipchart or presented as a slide. If participants provide examples of other



characteristics not on the above list, these should also be included. Once they finish writing, the facilitator asks participants to reflect on the role the body plays in the aspects they have noted down. This involves considering the body's role in shaping our overall identity. Does the body allow us to express our inner features, skills, values, and interests? Has our body helped us to develop certain qualities? In which way does the body allow us to express ourselves? Participants can write in the area surrounding the word and statement to indicate how – if at all – the body is related to the skills, knowledge, values, etc.

At the end, participants can attach their papers to a wall.

Discussion in plenary follows, based on the questions below. After the reflection, participants can make a quick round and try to guess to whom each paper sheet belongs.

Questions for reflection

Was it easy or difficult to find a picture that represents you? What were you considering while selecting the picture – for example, how the person in the picture looked, what emotions they expressed, or something else (such as)?

What does one's identity consist of?

How easy or difficult was it to reflect on different aspects of your identity?

Does the poster you created serve at least as an approximate representation of your identity?

If someone were to look at your poster, do you think they could recognise you in it, despite the different photo?

What role does your body play in shaping and expressing your identity? Does it allow you to express your inner features, or does it limit you in any way?



Body as Identity Project

Materials and time

You will need 4 large sheets of paper (one per table), markers and pens in multiple colours, post-it notes, and printed guiding questions: **Worksheet 7.1**.

The exercise takes around 60 minutes.

Instructions

This activity follows the World Café methodology, where participants discuss four different topics, each representing one 'identity project' that affects the body:

Identity project 1: Modified bodies: includes deliberate altering of the human anatomy and physical appearance with practices such as piercings, tattoos, extensive plastic surgeries, scarification; extreme body modification practices common in some cultures, such as elongating the necks; modifications in terms of physical disability: prosthetic extremities.

Identity project 2: Healthy bodies: includes practices believed to improve health such as workouts, weightlifting, the wellness industry, detox, supplements, dietary regimes.

Identity project 3: Beauty bodies: refers to skincare and hair care products and routines, fragrances, makeup, anti-ageing, cosmetic treatments and other practices believed to 'improve' the physical appearance.

Identity project 4: Fashioned bodies: refers to clothing, jewellery, accessories, fashion trends and styles popular among the mainstream culture or different subcultures, expression through fashion.



This folder contains examples of 'identity projects'. The facilitator can choose to introduce them before the World Café session begins. In this case, the guiding questions on some of the tables should be modified; for example, instead of asking, 'What are some practices related to body modification?' the host can ask, 'What other examples of body modification can you think of?'

Introduction: Four tables are set up in separate areas, with chairs distributed equally at each table. The concept of World Café is introduced. The facilitator assigns the participants to each table, ensuring an even distribution. Each group has a designated host. One of the participants should volunteer to host the table, guide the conversation, and encourage active participation.

Small group discussion: Participants have around 10 minutes to discuss the assigned topic at their table. Guiding questions for each topic, see Worksheet 7.1, are placed on the tables. Groups can choose questions randomly and discuss them, or the host can lead the discussion. Participants can write on the paper sheet or use post-it notes to capture key points, ideas, etc.

Rotations: After the first round of discussions, the facilitator asks participants to rotate to different tables with new topics for a second round of conversations. Before the discussion continues at each table, the host summarizes the main points from the previous discussion for the new participants.

Repeat: The rotation process continues for two more rounds until all participants have discussed all the topics.

Summary: After the final round, each table host shares the key insights, ideas, and discussions from their table. The host can use the paper sheet to briefly present the discussions, no more than 2 minutes per host. After the presentation, the facilitator can briefly summarise the key takeaways.

Variation

The facilitator divides participants into pairs or trios – depending on the group size. There is no need to assign a host. The pairs or trios visit the tables, select and discuss two or three questions, and then



they move on to another table. They are free to choose the topic that interests them the most and spend more time discussing it.

After a few rounds, they return to a plenary and share thoughts about each topic. If not tackled during the sharing round, the facilitator can encourage them to reflect on the questions below.

Questions for reflection

Have you tried any of the discussed practices? What was your experience?

Are you considering trying anything in the future? If so, why?

Is there anything you would change in how you make decisions that affect your body or how you feel in your body?





Worksheet 7.1

BODY AS IDENTITY PROJECT

Modified Bodies

What are some practices related to body modification?

Why do people choose to modify their bodies, and what motivates them?

How can body modification contribute towards self-expression?

How does society perceive individuals with body modifications, and how does this impact them?

Would you modify something in your body? If so, what modification would you choose, and what would it help you achieve? How would it change your life?

Healthy Bodies

What is a healthy body?

What could help you become healthier?

Are there any social influences that shape what we perceive as a 'healthy body'?

How can societal concepts of a 'healthy body' impact a person's body image and self-esteem?

What would constitute an extreme approach versus a balanced approach to well-being and self-care?

Beautiful Bodies

When you think about 'beauty', what comes to mind?

What beauty practices are most and least common in your surroundings, and are there any trends?

What do you think is the impact of the beauty industry on how individuals perceive their bodies?

In what ways can the pursuit of beauty be empowering? In what ways can it be limiting?

In what ways can beauty practices be a form of self-care, and when does it become harmful?

Fashioned Bodies

How do dress and fashion contribute to expressing ourselves and our individual identities?

Are there any particular trends popular in your surroundings, whether mainstream or subcultural, and is it important for people around you to follow these trends?

What is the impact of fashion on body image and self-perception?

Is fashion important? What are some of its positive and negative influences on young people?

How can fashion challenge societal norms and promote body acceptance and diversity?

Gender Identity and Gender Expression

Materials and time

You will need post-it notes, sheets of flipchart paper, sheets of coloured paper, coloured pens, magazines. The exercise takes 45 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator starts by reminding participants about what body image is and engages in a group discussion of gender identity and gender expression by asking them:

Do you know what gender identity is?

Can you define gender identity?

Can you name different gender identities?

What is gender expression?

What expectations do you have about how people should act or look based on gender? Are societal expectations the same as yours?

Are these expectations met in your surroundings? Can you think of any examples that don't fit into these expectations?

What happens when one's gender expression is outside of these norms? How are these individuals affected? How does this affect their body image?

If the topic is new to the participants, the facilitator summarises the discussion or pause between the blocks of questions to provide additional input. The slides for this module can provide insights for this purpose.

Group work follows, and then the facilitator divides participants into small groups of up to six people. Firstly, the facilitator encourages participants to reflect on gender expectations in their surroundings. Participants share their ideas and discuss them in their groups.



In the next step, the facilitator asks the groups to challenge the gender expectations they debated, for example, participants could challenge the saying that 'boys don't cry' or 'girls should behave well'. Participants can also decide to rewrite the classical stories in which the prince rescues the princess. They should present their ideas for challenging these expectations by making a creative product, such as a poster, poem, story, video, or even a short verbal or non-verbal performance. The facilitator should offer various arts and crafts materials for this purpose, including magazines, coloured paper, large sheets of paper, coloured pens, even different clothes or costumes – if available.

During their creative process, participants should consider the following questions:

1. What topic would you like to address? What is the aim of your creation?

What gender-based expectations have you witnessed?

Where do they come from?

What would you like to challenge and why?

What kind of change would you like to provoke?

2. Who is your audience?

With whom do you need to communicate to provoke the desired change? What message would you like to send across?

How do you want to communicate your message? What kind of channel is best to reach your audience?

Once ready, the groups present their work. If some groups select a product that can be published online or publicly displayed (such as a poster), they are encouraged to do so if they want.

Questions for reflection

How was the group work experience?

Reflecting on your creative products, what conclusions can we draw regarding gender expectations?

Do you think gender expectations strongly impact our identities?

How can we challenge gender expectations, and should we do so?



Navigating Through Social Media

Materials and time

You will need projector, screen, speakers, and **video** for Module VII. . This exercise takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Instructions

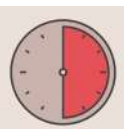
The facilitator introduces the video by explaining that it tackles the topic of identity. Participants watch the video, followed by a discussion.

Questions for reflection

Do you feel that you can freely express your identity on social media and in the environments where you spend most of your time, such as school, during free-time activities, or with your family?

What could help you express your identity more freely?

Do you have a positive example of a person, movement, or influencer who empowers you to express your identity? If so, could you share?



Notes for Facilitators

Instead of printing out the portraits provided in this module, the facilitator can prepare images by cutting them out from books and magazines.





CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

How does your body shape your sense of identity?

Can changing your appearance, such as through fashion or body modification, alter your identity?

In what ways do you feel pressure to conform to certain body standards? How does this affect your identity?

Can body acceptance lead to a stronger, more authentic identity? Why or why not?

How free do you feel to be yourself and express your identity?

What are the advantages of cultures or environments where people feel free to express themselves?

What could help you express your identity more freely?



Useful Resources

BODY IMAGE AND IDENTITY

The School of Life (2020) - **I Am NOT My Body!**

This video reflects on the thought that 'we're always being told that we should make peace with how we look. But why? We never chose our bodies, nor should we necessarily be forced to identify with them.'

Johanna Kling (2019) - **Being at Home in One's Body**

This doctoral dissertation explores the connection between the body and identity development.

The School of Life (2017) - **The Mind Body Problem**

This video introduces the so-called 'Mind-Body problem', or the difference between how others see us based on our looks and how we see ourselves inside. While people judge us by our appearance, we often feel that our true selves are not reflected by how we look, leading to feelings of being misunderstood.

FASHION AND BODY MODIFICATION

Joanne Entwistle (2023) - **The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory**

Joanne Entwistle highlights the centrality of dress to our identities, gender, and sexuality.

Vogue (2019) - **Models on the Pressure to Lose Weight and Body Image**

In this video, models speak about eating disorders, size discrimination, and the fashion's relationship with weight. They describe what it's like to challenge the status quo and why attaining a healthy body image is more important than booking a runway show.

The School of Life (2017) - **Why Clothes Matter**

This video reflects on the statement that 'the clothes we choose to wear constitute some of our most crucial lines of autobiography'.



Ambrogia Cereda (2013) - **Modified Bodies. Between Fashion and Identity Projects**

This research paper explores various ways of decorating, adorning, and camouflaging the body, especially tattooing, scarification, aesthetic surgery, and piercing, and how these practices help individuals to narrate and reflect upon their own personal story.

BODY AND GENDER

Council of Europe (2019) - **Gender Matters. A Manual on Addressing Gender-Based Violence Affecting Young People**

This manual contains non-formal education methods for preventing and addressing gender-based violence with young people. It will be useful to youth workers, teachers and other educators active in human rights and combating gender inequality.

SheKnows (2019) - **What Gender Identity Means to Today's Teens**

The video brings the perspectives of twenty-five kids who shared their reflections on growing up.

Madison Rae Sauerteig (2017) - **Conformity to Gender Stereotypes Impacting Body-Esteem, Eating, and Exercise Behaviors in Female College Students**

This study examines the link between gender stereotype adherence and body-esteem, eating, and exercise behaviors. Findings reveal that several female gender stereotypes have effects on body-esteem, eating and exercise behaviors. Of particular significance is the stereotype that females should strive to be thin.



Module VIII

Body as a Protest

Instead of focusing on your appearance, use your body to do good to the world.

People use their bodies to give meaning to who they are as social beings – to express their identities and their group belonging. Sometimes, bodies are used to set or erase boundaries between us and others. Sometimes, the very presence of particular bodies can be a form of resistance or protest against political power or societal expectations. Bodies are our universal tool, providing creative and humorous forms of civic engagement.

This module offers an insight into the relationships between bodies and various forms of sustaining or resisting ideologies and invites young people to take a more active role in shaping their societies.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Exploring how body expression can convey societal, educational and political messages.

Understanding how changing body practices can help to reach a broader institutional or societal transformation.

Inviting participants to explore their personal needs, opportunities, and motivation to become activists.

Generating ideas on how body-based work could bring about change in participants' schools and communities.

ACTIVITIES

Kitchen Politics

Inspirations

Case Studies

Reinventing the School

Provoking Emotions

Flash Mob

Young People Can Change the World

Kitchen Politics

Materials and time

You will need a paper sheet and a pen for each participant. This exercise takes up to 15 minutes.

Instructions

This activity serves as an introduction to the topic. Each participant lists the foods they consumed in the last 24 hours. The facilitator then asks how the participants decided what to eat. Was there a political or social consciousness to their food consumption, for example, what is the environmental impact? Was their food produced locally, or did it travel around the globe? What about animal rights? Or did they just eat what was put on the table by their parents or school canteen?

The sharing concludes with the idea that in each society, bodies are regulated and disciplined in numerous ways – from eating and clothing to sexual relationships. The most basic bodily practices have social, economic, and cultural consequences; therefore, the body is political. It is influenced by politics and can be used to change politics. The main theses for the facilitator's input can be found in the slides of this module.

Questions for reflection

How do food choices reflect social and environmental values?

How can changing food habits contribute to personal and social transformation?

What are examples of social movements centered around food, and what have they achieved?



Inspirations

Materials and time

You will need printed quotes from **Worksheet 8.1**. These and additional quotes are included also in the BODYkind Cards set.

This exercise takes up to 15 minutes.

Instructions

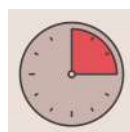
Participants are divided into trios, with each trio receiving one quote related to bodies and politics or bodies and social change. The trios discuss their understanding of the quote and whether they agree with it. They also brainstorm practical examples of how the idea conveyed in the quote might manifest in real life – in their schools or communities. Sample quotes are provided in **Worksheet 8.1**.

The exercise continues with case studies and examples – see the activity below. This will help participants get a better understanding of the relationships between bodies, different ideologies, and sustaining these ideologies or resisting them.

Variation

The facilitator can place the quotes on some surface and ask each participant to choose one that resonates with them.

Another option is to provide a collection of books on topics related to body, politics, and social change. Each person can select a random book and find a quote that they can relate to. Depending on the size of the group, a few people or everyone can then read their chosen quote and explain their interpretation or reason for selecting it.



Questions for reflection

What changes occur when people are neutral or positive toward their own bodies and the bodies of others?

Why do topics related to gender, sexuality, and reproductive health tend to be so popular among politicians and in political discussions?

To what extent should the state be able to control the choices people make regarding their bodies?





Worksheet 8.1 INSPIRATIONS

Are we really what we eat? What is the relationship between the things we consume and the politics we practise? For example, while vegetarianism may be connected to obvious ethical considerations, such as animal cruelty, what is its relationship to seemingly unrelated systems of power, such as gender conformity and consumerism? Addressing this question raises new ideas about how individuals embody ideologies and how the body can be a site of everyday resistance.

Samantha Kwan and Louise Marie Roth

I want people to understand that the concept of 'normal' that we aim for is imaginary. People don't fail to meet the definition of 'normal' gender – but the definitions fail to meet the people.

Esther Morris Leidolf

We negotiate the world in the bodies we have or can make for ourselves. The body is our universal tool. The body is our essential presence in the world. If we are political, we must be political through our bodies. If we are angry, happy, engaged, disengaged, organising or isolating ourselves, we do it through our bodies.

Barbara Katz Rothman

We as women are trained to see ourselves as cheap imitations of fashion photographs, rather than seeing fashion photographs as cheap imitations of women.

Naomi Wolf



Worksheet 8.1 INSPIRATIONS

The regulation of human bodies is central to organised religion. Religious traditions have rich histories of controlling, for example, what we eat, what we wear, how we move our bodies, how we sing, and with whom we have sex. Religious leaders seem to understand the importance the body has in marking one as a member of a religious culture. Because religious identities, like all identities, are humanly created fictions, religious cultures regulate bodies in order to socially mark who is an insider and who is an outsider.

Samantha Kwan and Louise Marie Roth

If protest is illegal, make daily life a protest.

Andrew Boyd

Our body is how we express who we are. Our ideas, likes, dislikes can all be showcased in how we navigate our bodies in our environment. Subversion through our body and movement can create mass change in society, either by standing alone in what we believe in, or moving together in a group. By using the body, we can literally embody the cause, resisting and responding to what is happening in our surroundings.

Selin Ozay

No matter what a woman's appearance may be, it will be used to undermine what she is saying.

Naomi Wolf



Worksheet 8.1 INSPIRATIONS

A culture fixated on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty, but an obsession about female obedience. Dieting is the most potent political sedative in women's history; a quietly mad population is a tractable one.

Naomi Wolf

When you are told that you are insignificant, inferior, not 'cool' enough, unimportant, undeserving of representation; that you should hide, shrink, cover up, walk with your head down, and not take up space... to do the opposite of that is a radical and paradigm-changing action. Just do you.

Jes Baker

We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller, we say to girls, you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful, otherwise you would threaten the man.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements.

Michel Foucault



Worksheet 8.1 INSPIRATIONS

Everyday resistance is about the many ways people undermine power and domination through their routine and everyday actions. Unlike open rebellions or demonstrations, it is typically hidden, not politically articulated, and often ingenious. But because of its disguised nature, it is often poorly understood as a form of politics and its potential underestimated.

Anna Johansson and Stellan Vinthagen

We form ourselves within the vocabularies that we did not choose, and sometimes we have to reject those vocabularies, or actively develop new ones.

Judith Butler

Women who love themselves are threatening; but men who love real women, more so.

Naomi Wolf

Body love has the capacity to change the world.

Jes Baker

Schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions – to define, classify, control, and regulate people.

Michel Foucault

Case Studies

Materials and time

You will need a projector and slides with examples. This presentation takes 15 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator, using slides and audiovisual materials, introduces several examples of protests, individual and collective social actions, and performances that use bodies as a medium to raise specific issues, promote causes, or demand a change. The presentation includes quotes to better understand the topic and questions for discussing the presented cases in the group.

Questions for reflection

What do you think about the presented causes and tactics?

Could you relate to these causes?

In your opinion, were the chosen tactics efficient?

What are the issues you would like to bring more attention to?

Do young people's voices and opinions receive enough attention? If so, can you share some positive examples? If not, can we brainstorm how to change this?



Reinventing the School

Materials and time

You will need pens and sheets of paper for note-taking, list of **keywords** printed out and cut in small cards for each group. These keywords can be found in the BODYkind Cards set as well. This exercise takes 45 minutes.

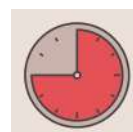
Instructions

The facilitator initiates a discussion among participants about the formal or informal ways in which their bodies, including gender and sexuality, are regulated in the school environment. What body types, sexualities, and gender behaviours are considered normal or popular in their peer culture? How do participants feel about them? Is it necessary to conform to these norms and practices in order to feel included and receive positive feedback from teachers, administrators, and peers? Have participants ever resisted these norms? If so, how did resisting these norms make them feel? How do teachers and peers typically respond to individuals who do not fit these norms?

After a brief sharing session in plenary, participants are divided into groups of four. Each group is tasked with writing a brief policy recommendation for the school. The recommendation should outline the changes needed to create a school environment that is more inclusive and supportive of diversity, as well as the mental and physical health of young people.

It might be challenging to figure out what should be discussed and included in the recommendation; therefore, participants can pick a topic from the list below.

The facilitator should distribute sets of cards for each group containing the topics - print out **Worksheet 8.2** and cut the words as separate cards. Participants can review all the topics and choose



the one they find most important. They can consider topics such as: Should any changes be introduced regarding students' clothing? How freely can students express their gender? Is the need for relaxation considered in the learning process? Are there any changes needed as to how sports classes are conducted?

Please note that all the topics in Worksheet 8.2 are related to the body. The facilitator should ask participants to focus on suggesting changes that concern young people's bodies, attitudes, and practices related to their bodies.

After the brainstorming and recommendation writing in groups, each group presents their recommendations. Depending on the results of the group work, the facilitator may encourage participants to finalise the recommendations and submit them to their school's administration.

The same activity can also be adapted to reinvent youth spaces, such as youth centres or youth organisations.

Questions for reflection

Which body-related practices at the school should be changed to better support your learning?

Are there any body-related practices at school environment that you find damaging to your physical or mental health?

What kind of school environment would help you feel confident and comfortable in your body?

What changes are needed to support diverse bodies and people with different abilities?

How do you think the school administration would react if you submitted your recommendations to them?

What would be the parents' reaction to such a recommendation?

Which specific point from your recommendation would you be prepared to fight for?





Worksheet 8.2
BODIES AT SCHOOL

CLOTHING

STILLNESS

HAIR

VIOLENCE

SEXUALITY

PLAY

GENDER

SCREEN TIME

HYDRATION

SILENCE

MENSTRUATION

RITUALS

HYGIENE

ADDICTIONS

TOUCH

WEIGHT

NOISE

AGE

PAIN

DISABILITIES

FOOD

RELAXATION

SPORTS

PLACE

NATURE

VOICE

SENSATIONS

SENSES

DISEASES

MOVEMENT

Provoking Emotions

Materials and time

You will need a large space for participants to move around. This exercise takes 5 to 15 minutes.

Instructions

This activity serves as a warm-up before generating flash mob ideas. Participants work in pairs. Participant A sculpts participant B into a shape. Participant B asks themselves whether the shape provokes any emotion or sensation. If not, then another shape is found. If it does, then participant B can adjust the shape to facilitate a stronger feeling. Then, participant B has to find a phrase that feels appropriate to the shape.

The activity can be concluded with the thought that bodies are a great tool for expressing emotions and provoking other people's emotions. As we are all bodies, sharing body-related experiences or communicating through our bodies makes it easier to provoke empathy and understanding.

Questions for reflection

What emotions or sensations did you experience when you were in the different shapes?

Did you notice any patterns or connections between certain shapes and specific emotions?

What potential do you see for using body-related experiences to connect with others on an emotional level?



Flash Mob

Materials and time

You will need pens and sheets of paper for note-taking. This exercise takes 30 minutes.

Instructions

A flash mob is an unrehearsed, spontaneous, contagious, and dispersed mass action. Flash mobs first emerged in 2003 as a form of participatory performance art, with people using online communication channels to organise gatherings and perform playful activities in public spaces. It is also one of the most embodied forms of public action, as no words or explanations tend to be used.

Sharing invitations to participate in a flash mob is easy, and when multiplied by tens or hundreds of people, it can have a significant impact. In this activity, participants generate ideas for flash mobs as a tool for activism in their communities or schools.

Participants form groups of four and are invited to develop an idea for a flash mob. At first, participants must agree on their cause, which can be the most challenging aspect of the activity. The facilitator may suggest that they stand up for a change identified as necessary in their school during the previous exercise.

Then, each group should discuss:

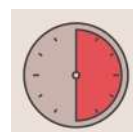
What is your message?

Who needs to hear it to make a change?

What is the most powerful way to deliver this message?

How could you embody your message?

Participants should be encouraged to communicate through actions rather than words, to act out what it is that they want to say – you don't want to tell people what to think, you want them



to reach their own conclusions. After the groups have defined their messages, the facilitator asks them to brainstorm as many ideas as possible for delivering those messages through a flash mob.

If participants are enthusiastic about their causes and flash mob ideas, the facilitator might offer encouragement and support to organise one or more flash mobs. If not, some of the concluding questions can be discussed in plenary after sharing the best flash mob ideas from each group.

Questions for reflection

Do you see yourself as an activist?

Can young people initiate and effect change in their communities and countries?

What stops you from taking the initiative or engaging more in social, educational, and political issues and processes?



Young People Can Change the World

Materials and time

You will need a projector, screen, speakers, and **video** for this module. This exercise takes 30 minutes.

Instructions

The facilitator introduces the video by explaining that it addresses the topic of activism. Participants then watch the video, followed by a discussion.

Variation

The facilitator asks participants to write down issues or problems that are bothering them and that they would like to change. They can focus on issues at school, in the community, or in the city. Once they are ready, they share their thoughts with the group. In the next step, they watch a video that focuses on the steps to create change. After watching the video, participants are asked to revisit their issues and problems and answer the following questions:

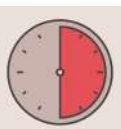
How would you research your issue or topic?

Where would you start?

With whom would you connect?

Who has the decision-making power to solve the issue or problem?

They can also discuss these questions in trios or small groups to generate more ideas and strategies for addressing their concerns.



Questions for reflection

What are the social, educational, or political issues you are most passionate about? What changes would you like to see in the world? What would you like to contribute to?

Have you ever experienced inequality or injustice that motivated you to take action?

What role do you think young people can play in creating positive change in the world?

How do you define activism, and what does it mean to you personally?

What are some examples of successful activism movements that you admire or have found inspiring?

What challenges do you think activists face, and how can they overcome them?

What skills, knowledge, and attitudes are necessary to make a change? How could you develop or improve these competencies?



A stylized illustration of a person's arm and hand, with the fist raised in a gesture of protest or solidarity. The hand is rendered in shades of pink and red, with black outlines. The background is a solid red color. The person's torso, wearing a black top, is visible on the left side of the frame.

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

How do body practices, such as exercise and beauty routines, or sexual behavior, reflect social norms and values?

How does beauty standards influence individuals' access to opportunities and resources?

What kind of bodies around you are facing the most significant injustice and discrimination?

How can educational programs about body image contribute to social change in schools and communities?

What are the connections between body image, self-esteem, and activism?

How do we use our bodies to navigate and express our political and emotional states?

Which specific laws or regulations governing people's bodies do you disagree with?

Useful Resources

EMBODIED RESISTANCE

The Embody Lab - **Navigating the Intersections of Embodiment and Social Justice**

25-hour certificate program to explore how the body is political, how politics are embodied in our everyday experience, and how to connect the body with our activism, organizational work, and collective movements.

Zhongxuan Lin (2019) - **Mediating Embodied Protest: Performative Body in Social Protests in the Internet Age in China**

This article uses Ye Haiyan, a famous Internet celebrity in China, as a case to illustrate how the body can provide a site of embodied protests. Author illustrates how Ye Haiyan turns her body into a site of struggle and a political resource, how she deploys her body as a weapon to evoke broader emotional and moral resonances.

Rae Johnson (2018) - **Embodied Activism**

Rae Johnson talks with Serge Prengel about how the body is implicated in social justice work, and how to engage our bodies in the process of activism. You can also read her book with the same title.

Lindsay Hockenberry (2017) - **How the Female Body Can Become Revolutionary**

Women's protests are often scoffed at, made fun of, or belittled by men, people in power, and even other women. As a last resort, many use their bodies in order to get a message across.

Chris Bobel, Samantha Kwan (2011) - **Embodied Resistance: Challenging the Norms, Breaking the Rules**

Collection of stories from people who decided to go against social norms and rules restricting their bodies.



Jaeck Marie (2003) - **The Body as Revolutionary Text: The Dance as Protest Literature in Latin America**

This paper argues that some class and racial struggles in Latin America have consciously utilized the communicative power of dance to further their goals: the rhumba in Cuba, the merengue in the Dominican Republic, the samba in Brazil, the tango in Argentina, and Aztec dance in contemporary Mexico and the Southern United States.

BODY AND POLITICS

Michel Foucault (1990) - **The History of Sexuality**

Michel Foucault offers an iconoclastic exploration of why we feel compelled to continually analyze and discuss sex, and of the social and mental mechanisms of power that cause us to direct the questions of what we are to what our sexuality is.

ACTIVISM TOOLS

Chris Johnston (2017) - **Disobedient Theatre**

The book full of practical exercises for all those who have an interest in what makes theatre powerful, disturbing or even life and world changing.

Andrew Boyd, Dave Oswald Mitchell (2016) - **Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution**

This book brings together dozens of artists and activists from around the world to distill their best practices into a toolbox for creative action.

BODY IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Charlotte Kerner, Leen Haerens, David Kirk (2017) - **Understanding Body Image in Physical Education: Current Knowledge and Future Directions**

The school curriculum can play a significant role in shaping how adolescents experience their bodies. In physical education, the



body is judged for physical ability but is also situated in a space that provides the potential for social comparisons and body judgements. This paper reviews current knowledge on the relationship between physical education and body image disturbance.

PSHE - **Teacher Guidance: Key Standards in Teaching About Body Image**

This guidance offers teachers advice about the safe and confident teaching of body image. Includes tips for creating a school environment that supports and promotes positive body image.

BC Dairy Association (2013) - **Positive Body Image School Assessment Tool**

This tool will help to assess positive body image practices in school.



Closing

The first step to improving the body image of young people is to improve the relationship with our own bodies. Once we understand our body's nature, we are on the best path to providing support and a safe space for others.

Psychology suggests that we tend to criticise others for what we dislike about ourselves, and this might be true. How often do we look at someone else's clothing, style, or a particular part of their body and are about to comment on it? Luckily, there are those few seconds when we can stop ourselves and turn this comment into appreciation, something we would like to hear ourselves.

Here are several testimonies from participants of the BODYkind workshops that we can use as an example of how we can improve:

'It is not always necessary to comment on how someone looks. You put on weight. You lose weight. We change all the time.'

'I am grateful for this experience of participation in the workshop. I learned that I can better deal with my imperfections and the imperfections of others. And also, that it is important not to look at one group as mass and automatically put people into one group just based on one character.'

'Judging people based on the first impression is natural, but it is good to take a step back from this judgement and give a person a chance to show up and show his character.'

'The workshop helped us learn about acceptance of one's body, responsibility for one's words and actions, and not to be ashamed of one's peculiarities. It taught us to have the strength to face bullying.'

'I will think differently about my body from today. I received a lot of peer support on a topic I never discussed with anyone.'

'It would be great to have workshops on body-related topics at school so students can easily access information on the subject.'