



Session 1 – Opening

Developmental Perspective: Society bombards female adolescents daily with a myriad of images of what is the “perfect” woman. Developmentally, female adolescence is marked by increased peer pressure, changes in family relationships, emerging physical and emotional maturity and the process of feminization. These two factors combined, lead to a decline in self-concept and self-worth for female adolescents. It is imperative that adolescent females discover ways of reversing this decline in self-concept and self-worth and find positive interventions to will lead to self-acceptance.

Objectives:

- ✧ Evaluate factors, which interfere with adolescent females’ image of self.
- ✧ Discover positive interventions that will begin the journey to self-acceptance

Materials:

- ✧ Flip chart
- ✧ Nametags
- ✧ Markers or pens (colored preferred)
- ✧ 2 lists of adjectives (**Appendixes H & I**)
- ✧ Body Image Notes for Leader (**Appendix J**)

Session Topic:

1. Welcome and Introduction

- The group will begin the sessions seated around the table for easy movement into the warm up activity.
- Each member of the group, including facilitators, will introduce themselves by stating their name and the reason for participation in the group.
- Ask members to also tell what they hope to ascertain from being a member of the group.

2. Warm Up Activity

- Each member should be given a nametag.
- *Direction:* “Write your name in the center of the nametag.”
- *Direction:* “From list ‘A’, select choose two (2) adjectives that describe who you are or how you wish to be perceived and write the words on your nametag.”
- *Direction:* “From list ‘B’, choose one (1) adjective that describes who you are or how you wish to be perceived and write the word on your nametag.”
- Let the members know they will have three (3) minutes to complete this task.
- *Questions:*
 - “What adjectives did you choose and why?” *Each member should be asked this question.*
 - “What do you notice about the word choices you were given?”
 - (All choices were positive; I would never choose these to describe myself; etc.)
 - “Was the process of picking the positive adjectives difficult or easy for you to do?” (Encourage answers for all members).

3. Set Ground Rules (As these rules are given, write them on the flip chart paper so they can be displayed during each session).

- Confidentiality

- Ask for participants agreement to this, but emphasize the counselors cannot guarantee confidentiality from group members, only from themselves.
 - Be sure and state when you, the counselor, would have to disclose information to others.
- Respect others
 - No side conversations
 - Not talking when someone else is speaking
 - Etc.
 - Generate other ground rules from group members. This is critical to insure individual buy in of the rules.
4. What is body image?
- Have students generate a list of what they think this means. (Use list entitle “BODY IMAGE” for guidance).
 - As the list is generated, write the responses on the flip chart.
 - How you see yourself when you look in the mirror or when you picture yourself in your mind.
 - What you believe about your own appearance (including your memories, assumptions, and generalizations).
 - How you feel about your body, including your height, shape, and weight.
 - How you sense and control your body as you move.
 - How you feel in your body, not just about your body.
5. What is negative body image?
- Have students generate a list of what they think this means.
 - Write responses on the flip chart.
 - A distorted perception of your shape – you perceive parts of your body unlike they really are.
 - You are convinced that only other people are attractive and that your body size or shape is a sign of personal failure.
 - You feel ashamed, self-conscious, and anxious about your body.
 - You feel uncomfortable and awkward in your body.
6. What is positive body image?
- Have students generate a list of what they think this means.
 - Write responses on flip chart.
 - A clear, true perception of your shape – you will see the various parts of your body as they really are.
 - You celebrate and appreciate your natural body shape and you understand that a person’s physical appearance says very little about their character and value as a person.
 - You feel proud and accepting of your unique body and refuse to spend an unreasonable amount of time worrying about food, weight, and calories.
 - You feel comfortable and confident in your body.

Journal Assignment: (This assignment will be discussed first ten (10) minutes of next session.)

Ask each member of the group to journal where they see themselves in regard to body image, negative body image, and positive body image. Which group do they see themselves in? What is their perception of their body image?

- During the week, find examples in magazines, television shows and/or books of women who either has positive or negative body images. Do they share any similarities with you?

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.



Session 2 – Likes & Dislikes

Developmental Perspective: During early adolescent years, young people are struggling to discover their unique identity. They are rapidly developing in many aspects and learning to deal with abstract ideas such as values. They begin to develop a more definite self-concept and to become aware that who they are is strongly related to their sense of self-esteem. Being cognizant of one's likes and dislikes about self is helpful in this growth process.

Objectives:

- ✎ To help students identify what they like and dislike about themselves
- ✎ To encourage students to feel comfortable expressing their feelings with a partner
- ✎ To illustrate that how students see themselves may not necessarily be how others see them

Materials:

- ✎ Copies of Likes/Dislikes Worksheet for each student (**Appendix K**)

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 1 - Opening). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Topic:

1. Briefly describe the goals of the session.
2. Distribute copies of the Likes and Dislikes Worksheet and ask students to spend a few minutes filling it out.
 - When students have finished, have them pair up. Each member of the pair takes a turn introducing items from the worksheet with the phrase “I am a person who...” For example: “I am a person who likes the way I can cook lasagna.” Encourage students to make additional statements about things they have not written on their worksheets.
3. Reassemble in the larger group to discuss the following questions.
 - Do you have more things written in the likes or dislikes column?
 - What do you do well by yourself? With friends?
 - What is one of your successes? When are you at your best?
 - Whom do you pretend to be? Wish you were? Hope you can become?
 - What do you dislike about yourself? Is that something you would like to change? Why?
 - During this discussion, encourage students to challenge the negative statements they hear group members making about themselves and to suggest ways the “dislike” could be changed into a “like.” For example: “Sara, you could get a permanent if you dislike your straight hair” or “Logan, you said you think you will never make it to college because you don’t like school. How do you know if you’ve never given it a try?”
4. Allow group members to process this information for as long as they need. It is very important for students to hear themselves described and affirmed by the leader and others.

Wrap Up

Invite students to explain what they learned about themselves from this session and to give a positive description of themselves in three words. For example: “I am capable, a good worker, and treat people kindly” or “I am a good sport, dress sharp, and have a great smile.”

Journal Assignment: Take the Likes/Dislikes Worksheet home and continue to think of things they like about themselves. Can process the suggestions the group made to them and any other ideas they have for changing their dislikes into likes.

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.

Morganett, R. S. (1990). Skills for Living: Group Counseling Activities for Young Adolescents. Illinois: Research Press.



Session 3 – Self Respect

Developmental Perspective: A female adolescent who is struggling with her perception of her body image, more times than not has very little self-respect. Female adolescents, who developmentally are facing many new issues, begin to put themselves down when they feel they cannot meet the criteria of beauty in our society. The thoughts the girls have of themselves negatively impact their sense of self-respect and lead them into a downward spiral. It is of utmost importance that female adolescents be taught methods for defeating these negative images and to discover how negative thoughts affect their self-respect.

Objectives:

- ✧ Students will discover how negative feelings about themselves affect their self-respect.
- ✧ Students will appraise the positive aspects of themselves and will hear positive feedback from others.
- ✧ Students will learn ways to access personal strengths and positive self-talk in coping with difficult situations.

Materials:

- ✧ Chalkboard
- ✧ Chalk
- ✧ Notebook paper
- ✧ Pen or pencil

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 2 – Likes & Dislikes about Self). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Topic:

1. Ask, “What is self-respect?” (To accept as is.)
 - As students elicit the comments, one of the facilitators will write students’ responses on the board.
2. Think of a person that you respect. What is about the person that you respect?
3. What are some things about yourself that you respect? What are things about yourself you do not respect or like? Which list was easiest for each of you to create?
4. Lead a discussion concerning the difficulty of describing ourselves in a positive manner. The script for this discussion follows. Facilitators do not have to follow the script verbatim. It should be modified to adopt the syntactic idiosyncrasies of the facilitator.

Script: We often describe ourselves to others negatively, putting ourselves down. We have learned to be modest and may even resist describing ourselves in a positive manner, for fear that others might think that we are being conceited or self-centered, or because we cannot think of anything positive to say about ourselves. We tend to think it is okay to compliment someone else, but can feel rather foolish when we compliment ourselves. Both skills are valuable in our personal growth and development. During this activity we are going to talk about our strengths, **strengths only – NO NEGATIVES**, to other members of the group with the understanding that no one will put us down. It will be an opportunity for you to think aloud about what you like about yourself.

- i. Ask each member in each group to write down at least two positive statements about themselves.
- ii. When that is finished, have the members take turns telling their positive strengths to the group.
- iii. After an individual finishes talking, the group members give that person feedback as to where they agree and where they think the individual missed some strengths. No negative comments are permitted during this activity.
- iv. After each member has given their positive statements and received feedback from the group, discuss why is it difficult for us to be positive about ourselves and why it is important to do so.
- v. Ask for volunteers to share something they learned about themselves and how it felt to receive positive feedback.

Journal Assignment: During the activity, did you learn anything positive about yourself? What did it feel like to receive positive feedback? How will you put these newfound positive attributes to work for yourself to boost your self-respect?

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.

Script adapted from:

Wittmer, J. & Thompson, D. (2000). Large group guidance activities: A K-12 sourcebook (p. 185). Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation.



Session 4 – Gender Stereotypes & Body Image

Developmental Perspective: Self-esteem among girls is inextricably linked to body image. Girls develop images of their bodies based on culturally constructed norms and stereotypes that are ingrained through popular culture and the socialization process. Girls are taught from early in their development to overemphasize appearance in order to gain acceptance. As the body changes rapidly during adolescence, girls are likely to experience increased sensitivity and susceptibility to social expectations that define beauty. Socially constructed gender stereotypes that emphasize beauty over competency leave girls particularly vulnerable to developing negative body images.

Objectives:

- ✧ Define the concept of gender stereotypes and identify examples of stereotypes linked with being female.
- ✧ Examine the social foundations of gender stereotypes and recognize the implications they have on body satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
- ✧ Identify ways women/girls modify their bodies to conform to female gender roles/stereotypes.
- ✧ Teach students to think critically about gender stereotypes and examine the reasons women alter their bodies and appearances.

Materials:

- ✧ Several sheets of chart paper, markers, tape
- ✧ Copy of *Gender Stereotypes and Body Ideals* information sheet for each student (Appendix L)

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 3 – Self Respect). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Overview:

1. Begin by asking the group what they think of when they hear the word “stereotype.” Allow group members a couple of minutes to respond. The facilitator will write group members’ ideas on a sheet of chart paper taped to the wall. Then repeat this step by asking them about the word “gender.” Present the following definitions of stereotype and gender (if further clarification is needed) and add them to the chart paper:
 - Stereotype: a general viewpoint about a collective group of people; may be positive or negative
 - Gender: role and characteristics of a person typically associated with the person’s biological sex (male or female)

Ask group members to generate a few preliminary ideas about stereotypes that relate to being a girl and write them on a separate piece of chart paper taped to the wall. Give them 5 minutes or so to discuss their reactions to these stereotypes.

Examples of stereotypes might include:

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| ✧ Girls are noncompetitive | ✧ Girls are ditzy or dumb | ✧ Girls are into arts & crafts |
| ✧ Girls are sensitive and cry | ✧ Girls are not good leaders | ✧ Girls are not good at technology |
| ✧ Girls are passive/nonassertive | ✧ Girls are not good at making decisions | ✧ Girls are interested in clothes, fashion, and appearance |
| ✧ Girls are soft | ✧ Girls are homemakers | ✧ Girls are not good at fixing things |
| ✧ Girls like kids | ✧ Girls like to talk on the phone | |

2. **Discussion of Facts:** Pass out copies of the *Gender Stereotypes and Body Ideals* (note to male facilitators: this is written from a girl's perspective) information sheet. Review the information as a group and invite members to comment on anything that stands out to them.

3. Next, present the concept of body rituals in the following way (suggested):

- “We’ve already talked a little about stereotypes and how they affect girls/women. One of the things that was mentioned in the handout was that women participate in more appearance related activities than men—I am going to refer to these activities as body rituals. For our purposes, we will define body rituals as anything that women do in our society to modify their appearance in order to try to meet society’s standard of beauty.”
- After this introduction to body rituals, provide group members with one or two examples (e.g. shaving, wearing make-up, dieting, etc.) to demonstrate what you want them to think about. As a group, have them brainstorm other body rituals that women/girls participate in to try to meet certain standards of beauty. Record their ideas on chart paper and tape to the wall. Allow 5-10 minutes for them to brainstorm as a group.

Examples of body rituals might include:

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| ☒ Wearing make-up | ☒ Liposuction |
| ☒ Hair removal (shaving, plucking, electrolysis, waxing) | ☒ Starvation/calorie restriction/purging/using laxatives/etc. |
| ☒ Dieting | ☒ Exercise |
| ☒ Straightening hair, getting a perm, curling hair | ☒ Wearing high heeled shoes to accentuate legs |
| ☒ Coloring hair | ☒ Acne medication/skin treatments |
| ☒ Painting fingernails or toenails | ☒ Tanning beds |
| ☒ Wearing jewelry | ☒ Wearing padded bras |
| ☒ Wearing perfume | ☒ Wearing contact lenses |
| ☒ Body piercings | ☒ Wearing corsets (Victorian era) |
| ☒ Plastic surgery (breast augmentation, nose job, etc.) | ☒ Foot-binding (historically in China) |

4. Once everyone has had a chance to share their body ritual ideas with the group, encourage group members to critically analyze why they think women partake in these rituals regularly. Begin by asking them to think about the rituals they participate in, in their personal lives. Let them know that they don’t have to share any specific practice, but that you want them to think about and share the reasons why they participate in them.

Questions to help them process might include:

- How old were you when you started [wearing makeup, shaving, doing whatever ritual they want to talk about]?
- How were you introduced to this practice?
- What did it mean to you at the time?
- What does it mean to you now?
- Is it something you do because it makes you feel more attractive or better about yourself? Because you feel pressure to conform? Because you’re trying to live up to society’s expectation of beauty and femininity? Because you want people to be attracted to you?
- How do gender body stereotypes affect you personally and the rituals you partake in? Do you feel bound by these stereotypes and social expectations or do you feel unaffected by them?
- What role did the gender roles of your family play in you adopting certain body rituals? What role did television/movie role models play? What role did advertising play?
- Are there any body rituals that you participate in that you enjoy? Are there any that you resent? What about these rituals do you enjoy or resent?
- What does being female mean to you? What expectations do you feel you have to live up to? What standards of appearance or beauty do you feel pressured by?
- How do these rituals affect the way you define your sense of self? Do you think they are helpful or harmful to your level of body satisfaction?

Wrap Up: Finally, encourage group members to share their reactions to this session. Ask them if there was anything that they felt uncomfortable with or anything that was particularly insightful to them. Explain that it is sometimes difficult to recognize the amount of control that socialization and stereotypes have on our lives, but that it is critical to understand these things in order to take more effective control of our decisions, embrace our differences, and develop a healthy body image and healthy self-esteem. As a final thought, remind them that body rituals may be either helpful or harmful depending on why and how they are used. If they are participating in them because they help them feel better about themselves, then that's okay and that's beneficial for them. They become harmful when they are used to try to meet unattainable images of perfection (which ultimately leads to guilt and increased body dissatisfaction), or when they are used to try to meet other people's expectations rather than staying true to themselves.

Journal Assignment: Remind group members that gender stereotypes are frequently reinforced through subtle and often unrecognized interactions with parents, siblings, other family members, teachers, professionals, etc. and through media images in our society. Explain to them that it is imperative that we begin to recognize when our thoughts, our language, and our actions reinforce negative stereotypes, so we can begin to dissect them and free ourselves from them. Provide group members with the following two options to choose from for this week's journal assignment:

Option A: Think about how often someone has commented on how pretty you look, how you've lost or gained weight, how your hair looks, how your skin looks, or on some other physical aspect of your body. Now think about how frequently you have received comments on the quality of your work, the complexity of your thoughts, your integrity, your leadership abilities, your creativity, your ability to analyze and think critically, etc. Try to remember how you felt in response to these various types of messages and write about how they affected your sense of self-worth, accomplishment, body image, etc. Be honest and include whatever positive or negative reactions you had at the time. What sort of long-term or culminating effects do you think these messages have on how you view yourself?

**Option B: Reflect on your childhood and your development to date. Try to identify a few types of toys, gifts, clothing, messages from friends or family members, interactions with boyfriends or girlfriends, etc. that reinforced stereotypes discussed in this lesson and directly affected your beliefs about girls' abilities, career opportunities, beauty, femininity, and so on. How did the toys, gifts, clothing, and messages that you received differ from those given to your brother(s) or other boys you may have known? What expectations did these communicate to you? Did they reinforce or challenge traditional expectations for you as a girl? How would you have liked for the things you were given or the comments you received to be different? If things were different, how do you think you would be different today? How did adult and/or peer sex-role expectations influence who you are today?

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.

Option B activity adapted from:

Schniedewind, N. & Davidson, E. (1998). Open minds to equality: A sourcebook of learning activities to affirm diversity and promote equity, 2nd edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.



Session 5 – The Media & Body Image

Developmental Perspective: Various forms of contemporary media function as premier sources of information for adolescents. Adolescence marks a time when individuals begin to individuate and separate from the norms of the family and the immediate social system. Different forms of media serve as guides to adolescent social development, construction of norms, and formation of identity through the images presented in print and television advertisements, billboards, popular television shows, music videos, etc. Popular media are readily available to provide individuating adolescents with images of idealized body forms, socially constructed norms and expectations, and stereotypes that are unrealistic and against the norm. These powerful messages from the media have potentially profound negative effects on the female adolescent's development of self-respect, self-esteem, and body image.

Objectives:

- ✧ Identify images of women in the media and evaluate the effects of those images on women's self esteem, body image, and lifestyle.
- ✧ Encourage students to reflect on how various forms of media affect their lifestyle choices and their acceptance of themselves and their bodies.
- ✧ Help students begin to understand the negative effects of media on women's self-esteem and body image.
- ✧ Teach students to view advertising through a more critical lens.

Materials:

- ✧ 1-2 sheets of chart paper, marker, tape
- ✧ Copies for each group member:
 - *The Media & Body Image* fact sheet (Appendix M)
 - *Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media* information sheet (Appendix N)
 - *"What are they really trying to sell?"* (Appendix O)
- ✧ Several current teen and/or fashion magazines (at least one per group member)
- ✧ Scissors, glue
- ✧ Construction paper (at least two sheets per group member)
- ✧ Pastels or markers

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 4 – Gender Stereotypes). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Overview:

1. **Introduction:** Introduce the session by asking group members to brainstorm about the sources of information that inform their decisions (and ultimately their friends' decisions) about clothes, fashion, style, beauty, and image. The facilitator might begin by saying something like, "Today we're going to talk about beauty and body image. I want to start by asking all of you to think about what you wear and what you look like. Let's begin to look at what influences the way we define beauty and what we think of our bodies and ourselves." Follow up questions might include:
 - How do you decide what fashions to buy, what to do with your hair, or what size you should be?

- How do you decide if you're satisfied or dissatisfied with the way you look? Who do you compare yourself to?
- Who do you want to look or dress like?
- Where do these images on clothes, fashion, style, beauty, and body come from?

As the group brainstorms, the facilitator will record group members' ideas on the chart paper. After about five minutes, the facilitator will wrap up the brainstorming session and tape the chart paper to the wall for everyone to see. The facilitator will then ask the group to identify how many of their ideas fall under the umbrella of media.

2. **Discussion of Facts:** Present the concept of media and its effects on women and adolescent girls by passing out and discussing *The Media & Body Image* fact sheet and the *Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media* information sheet.
 - Ask group members for their responses (positive or negative) to this information regarding functions and tactics of media, statistics, etc. Encourage them to use their own experiences as consumers of popular media to validate or challenge the information presented.
3. Present the handout "*What are they really trying to sell?*" and, as a large group, ask members for their reactions to the advertisements—allow them to create their own responses. Ask a progression of questions like:
 - What products do these advertisements represent?
 - Is there a logical connection between the products and the advertisements?
 - What type of consumers are the advertisements trying to appeal to (male/female/etc.)?
 - What messages do these advertisements send to consumers? (e.g. If you buy this product, you will look like/be like this)
 - What types of stereotypes are perpetuated in these advertisements?
 - How do advertisements like these affect your view of yourself?
 - How do images like these affect your ideas of beauty, women's roles, and cultural norms related to appearance and body size?

Allow the group to process the subtle and not-so-subtle messages from the advertisements for 5-10 minutes.

4. Next, pass around copies of popular teen and/or fashion magazines and ask group members to flip through the pages and cut (or tear) out advertisements that emphasize women's bodies, beauty, or image. Ask group members to look critically at the images represented in the magazines and decide what messages they are sending about women, women's bodies, and/or beauty. Ask each member to select two images to glue onto construction paper (one image per sheet) and have them come up with a title that accurately represents what each image is really selling or saying to female consumers. Ask them to write their title on the construction paper using markers or pastels. Conclude the activity by asking each group member to share what they found with the group, including a brief explanation of their titles.
5. **Discussion & Wrap-up:** Encourage group members to reflect on the information presented in the beginning of, and throughout, the session relating to functions and tactics of the media and advertising (from the *Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media* information sheet). Ask group members to share something that they learned during the session and explain how they will try to incorporate it into their lives outside the session.

Journal Assignment: Use your new knowledge as a critical viewer of advertising and the media to identify other images of women in television, commercials, print advertisements, electronic advertisements, audio commercials, music/music television, etc. that elicit reactions from you? Pay particular attention to the messages/images/ads that focus your attention on a woman's appearance, body parts, or body image. Do you find yourself comparing your body or your appearance to the images you see? What does that feel like? How does that affect how you see yourself and how you accept your body and your appearance? Do the images represent realistic and attainable body goals? Why or why not?

****For further exploration in your journal:** Imagine this...What if women didn't feel any pressure from our culture or the media to look a certain way? What if weight, body size, and physical appearance didn't matter to anyone? If bodies were left to be bodies, how would you spend your extra time? Think about how your life would be different and write about that experience.

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.

For further exploration in your journal exercise adapted from: www.edap.org/edinfo/aboutface-time.html



Session 6 – Conformity

Developmental Perspective: Adolescence is a time when young adults are likely to put an incredible amount of pressure on themselves to fit in. They may frequently compare themselves to the peers around them and unfairly judge themselves in that regard. This comparison in terms of whether they are conforming or not conforming to the ideals of their peers, may have several negative effects: low self-esteem, difficulty relating to peers, difficulty interacting with peers, depression.

Objectives:

- ✎ Students understand what conformity is and how it impacts interpersonal relationships among adolescents
- ✎ Students recognize that conformity is part of the adolescent social world, as well as the academic world
- ✎ Students explore their own patterns and pressures in conforming and not conforming, as well as consider possible sources of peer pressure to conform
- ✎ Students consider the price of both conformity and nonconformity and the value of responsibly challenging the pressure to conform

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 5 – Messages from Media/Family). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Topic:

1. Begin the conformity session by asking the group how much they generally conform to the majority in the situations listed below. After a brief discussion, ask them how much they conform to the minority. Either discussion may center around clothing style, behavior, social activity, attitude, music tastes, food or drink choices, or lifestyle.
 - Socially at school
 - At work
 - Academically at school
 - At home
 - Socially outside of school
2. Ask them how they feel they show their uniqueness in the above situations. Afterwards, continue discussion by pursuing these strands:
 - What encourages you to conform? / What encourages you not to conform?
 - How does conforming or not conforming to certain behaviors, attitudes, norms etc... effect the way you feel about yourself?
 - Is it easier or harder to resist conformity when you are with your friends?
 - Who sets the standards in each of the settings mentioned in the first question – school, work, outside of school, home?
 - Is there a right way to behave in each of these worlds?
 - When might conformity be bad?
 - When might it be good? (When it is in someone's best interests? When it is necessary for survival? When it is "smart"?)
 - What price might we pay for conformity? (Loss of individuality? Anger at ourselves for giving in to pressure? Loss of creativity? Loss of valuable ideas? Personal harm?)

- What price might we pay for nonconformity? (Losing out on what can be gained from “the system”? Loss of opportunity? Disruption and hassle? Loneliness? Ostracism? Abuse? Ridicule?)
 - Are you a better person if you conform? If you don’t conform?
 - How do you feel about conformists generally? About nonconformists?
 - Are you mostly a conformist or a nonconformist?
 - How do you feel about your level of conformity or nonconformity?
 - What does your family value most, conformity or nonconformity?
3. Brainstorm how nonconforming behaviors and ideas have made big and small changes in society by moving society away from the way things had “always” been done.
First explore their own ideas then offer these:

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| ☒ Nose rings and other body piercings | ☒ The theory of relativity |
| ☒ Fast food | ☒ Drive-through banking |
| ☒ Civil rights activism | ☒ Organ transplants |
| ☒ Feminism | ☒ Mixing musical genres (Christian/rock, country/pop) |
| ☒ Drive-in movies | ☒ Airplane flight |
| ☒ Laptop | ☒ Shopping malls |
| ☒ Commercials | ☒ Email |

4. For closure, invite the students to express some of the ideas, feelings and thoughts they had during the session.
Possible questions:
- Did you think of conformity and nonconformity in new ways? In what new ways?
 - Did the way you see yourself change during the course of the discussion? If so, how?
 - How did you feel during the discussion – uneasy, proud, comfortable?

Journal Assignment: Choose one of the following prompts to respond to:

- I am comfortable with the way in which I conform/do not conform to others.
- I am uncomfortable with the way in which I conform/do not conform to others

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.

Conformity Session Adapted from:

Vernon, A. (1989). Thinking, feeling, behaving: An emotional Educational Curriculum for Adolescents. Illinois: Research Press.



Session 7 – Eating Disorders

Developmental Perspective: Stereotypes of the perfect body image exert a great deal of pressure on adolescents. In their quest to conform to the ideal standard of beauty, increasing numbers of adolescent females are at risk for developing eating disorders. Eating disorders -- such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder -- include extreme thoughts, feelings and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues. Eating Disorders are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences.

Objectives:

- ☒ Learn facts about anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder
- ☒ Identify thoughts, feelings and behaviors of persons at risk of eating disorders
- ☒ Recognize common misconceptions of eating disorders
- ☒ Identify some of the causal factors and conflicts which are precursors to eating disorders

Materials:

- ☒ Chalkboard
- ☒ Copy for each student:
 - Eating Disorder Fact Sheets (Appendix P)
 - Warning Signs (Appendix Q)
 - Test Your Knowledge (Appendix R)
 - Common Misconceptions (Appendix S)
- ☒ Copy for group leaders:
 - Case Study Vignettes (Appendix T)
 - Causes of Eating Disorders (Appendix U)
- ☒ Pencil & sticky notes for each student

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 6 - Conformity). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Topic:

1. Begin by asking the group what they know about eating disorders and their causes and how have they heard of these diseases. Divide the board into 2 columns (Facts, Causes,) and have the group members use their sticky notes to add their insights to the board.
2. **Discussion of Facts:** Take this opportunity to define anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder and review symptoms, health consequences and statistics (*Eating Disorder Fact Sheets*).
 - After review ask group members to share anything that might have surprised them about this information.
3. Next, hand out the *Test Your Knowledge* sheet. Tell the group based on what they know about eating disorders and what they have just learned, they are going to test their knowledge on the subject. Give them 5 minutes to complete this exercise and 5 more minutes to discuss their answers with a partner.

4. Come back together as a group and discuss the items on the sheet as **common misconceptions** about eating disorders. Hand out the *Common Misconceptions* explanation sheet and allow the group time to read the information.
 - Ask the group if there are any specific misconceptions they wish to discuss or need further explanation.
5. **Discussion of Causes:** Refer back to the causal factors the group has listed on the board. Discuss that each of the causes listed usually fits within 4 areas (Biological, Familial, Social & Psychological), give a brief explanation of each and where some of the causes the group came up with fit into these areas.
 - Use the *Case Study Vignettes* and have the group respond to the causes they perceive, the gains each girl felt she would receive as a result of their dieting and the effect on healthy development. Encourage students to comment on their own experiences similar to those presented.

Journal Assignment: How do you feel similar to the girls in the case studies? Who or what causes you to feel this way? The girls in the case studies handled their situations by developing eating disorders, how do you cope? Are your coping strategies good or bad for you?

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.



Session 8 – Healthy Eating

Developmental Perspective: Regular exercise and healthy eating habits can enhance students' health and lifestyle. Changes students make now will improve their health for a lifetime. In this lesson, students study some suggestions for making healthy changes in eating and exercise behaviors. The lesson concludes with a look at some of our society's conflicting messages about eating and body image.

Objectives:

- ☒ Help students understand the importance of eating healthy foods and developing good eating behavior
- ☒ Students will be able to identify sensible eating and exercise behaviors
- ☒ Students will be able to identify society's influences on eating behaviors

Materials:

Have:

- ☒ Overhead projector
- ☒ Blank transparencies *or* butcher paper, two pieces
- ☒ Transparency marker *or* colored markers

Copy:

- ☒ “Here's to Your Health” student information sheet, one for each student (**Appendix V**)
- ☒ “Your Eating Habits” worksheet, one for each student (**Appendix W**)
- ☒ “Exercise – It's Your Choice” worksheet, one for each student (**Appendix X**)

Make:

- ☒ Transparency of “Guidelines for Healthy Eating” (**Appendix Y**)

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 7 – Eating Disorders). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Topic:

1. Inform the students that good nutrition is important for health. Point out that no single meal or type of food supplies all of the nutrients the body needs. Suggest that eating a variety of healthy foods and enjoying a variety of activities are the best ways to develop and maintain a healthy body.
2. Distribute the “Here's to Your Health” student information sheet. Show students the “Guidelines for Healthy Eating” transparency. Let the students know that these seven dietary guidelines were developed to help people make wise food choices. Have students read the additional information from the worksheet as you review the guidelines.
3. Distribute the “Your Eating Habits” worksheet and have students complete it. Ask the students to compare their eating habits to the suggestions on the “Guidelines for Healthy Eating” transparency. Prompt the students to see if there are any areas that they'd like to change.

4. Discuss the concept of *nutrient density* – some foods contain an abundance of nutrients in proportion to calories. The opposite of nutrient-dense foods are *empty-calorie* foods – foods that are high in calories but lack nutrients like protein, complex carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.
 - Nutrient-dense foods include milk, cheese, yogurt, lean meats, fish, poultry, nuts, seeds, eggs, dark green and yellow vegetables, fruits, beans, rice and whole grain or enriched breads and cereals. Ask students for examples of empty-calorie foods. These will include sodas, candy bars, chips and other similar foods.
5. Tell students that physical activity, combined with good nutrition, improves overall fitness. It has other benefits, too. For example, exercise can help relieve tensions that often lead to overeating. Point out that students do not have to be athletes to make physical activity count.
 - Distribute the “Exercise – It’s Your Choice” worksheet. Inform the students that it’s best to make slow, steady changes in activity level. Point out that there are a lot of little ways to improve fitness. Walk or bicycle instead of driving, use the stairs instead of an elevator, or stand rather than sit.
 - Ask the students to look at the suggestions on the worksheet for ways to increase levels of physical activity. Prompt students to check the activities that are best for them. Suggest that the group members think of other activities that interest them.
6. Acknowledge that it can be difficult to change eating behaviors. Convey to the students that our society sends some conflicting messages about body image and eating behaviors. Divide the class into two groups. Ask students in one group to discuss our society’s pressures and influences to eat. Ask the other group to discuss the pressures *not* to eat. Point out that there are social, cultural, emotional, and economic pressures.
 - Prompt the groups to list the pressures and influences on a piece of butcher paper or a transparency. Ask them to give examples of each of the pressures and influences they list. Then have each group report their responses to the rest of the group.
 - Lead a class discussion of the conflicts that arise from different messages that society, family and friends give. For example: Television shows that star people with lean well-proportioned bodies may have commercials for empty-calorie foods. Magazines may feature new recipes for high-calorie desserts and new diet regimes in the same issues. Ask students how they cope with these conflicting messages.

Journal Assignment: Describe some things you are doing to stay fit and healthy. Based on what we have discussed today, what are some other things that you feel you could include in your daily routine? Are there any goals that you would like to set? If so, how would you go about accomplishing those goals?

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.

Adapted From:

Giarratano, S. (1991). Entering Adulthood: Looking at Body Image and Eating Disorders. Santa Cruz, Ca: Network Publications.



Session 9 – Rational Thinking

Developmental Perspective: Adolescence characterizes a time when individuals may view life situations from a dichotomous viewpoint, seeing life and events as either “all” or “nothing.” This concrete way of thinking creates cognitive distortions that may negatively impact or limit an adolescent’s choices and/or viewpoints. Such irrational thinking may contribute to any or all of the following: feelings of being overwhelmed, setting unrealistic expectations, and/or blowing things out of proportion. For female adolescents, this is a particular threat with regard to body image and self-worth.

Objectives:

- ✂ Identify irrational thought patterns in the context of self-image.
- ✂ Learn rational thinking skills.
- ✂ Begin to replace cognitive distortions with rational thoughts.

Materials:

- ✂ A copy of the *Rational Thinking Worksheet* for each student (Appendix Z)
- ✂ Pencil and paper for each student

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 8 – Healthy Eating). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Overview:

1. Begin the lesson by explaining the concepts of rational and irrational thinking:
 - Rational thinking is based on realistic expectations and helps you attain goals. Irrational thinking does not help you attain goals because you are overwhelmed by disturbing emotions such as anger, guilt, or depression, which result from thinking irrational thoughts. There are three basic types of irrational beliefs:
 - i. “Shoulds,” or demands for others or for yourself: believing that others should always treat you exactly as you think you should be treated
 - ii. Self-downing: equating who you are with what you do (if you don’t perform well, you think you are a worthless person)
 - iii. Low frustration tolerance: thinking that everything should be easy for you, that you shouldn’t have to tolerate any frustration or discomfort in your life

In addition, people who think irrationally “awfulize” and over-generalize. They blow things out of proportion and assume the absolute worst. They also may use what is called tunnel vision, taking a small detail and using it as the basis for making all other judgments. Or they may take arbitrary inferences, assuming even when there is no basis for it. All-or-nothing thinking is also very common: things are either one way or the other; there is no in-between.

The following are examples of irrational thinking:

- My boyfriend should always call me exactly when he says he will. If he doesn't, it must mean that he's going to break up with me, that I'm not good enough for him, and that he's a real jerk. If he breaks up with me, I won't be able to stand it.
- This algebra teacher is so boring, and the work is way too hard. I'm just going to drop the course because I can never put up with this.
- If my parents don't let me have the car tonight, I will run away. They are so strict with me, and they never let me do anything. They should be like everyone else's parents.

2. **Identifying Rational & Irrational Thoughts:** Distribute the *Rational Thinking Worksheet* to each student. Ask students to read through the statements on the handout and identify the irrational beliefs. On the lines below each statement ask them to indicate what is irrational about them and identify how these thoughts may affect a person's behavior.

- Behavioral/psychological effects may include:
 - i. depression
 - ii. stress
 - iii. anxiety
 - iv. anger
 - v. reduction in ability to do well
 - vi. guilt
 - vii. withdrawal
 - viii. feelings of inadequacy
 - ix. feelings of imperfection

Allow about 10 minutes for group members to complete that *Rational Thinking Worksheet* and process their responses as a group.

3. Introduce the concept of disputing as a way to dispel irrational beliefs. Disputing involves asking oneself challenging questions that poke holes in the illogical reasoning that characterizes irrational beliefs. Present the following example:

- A (Activating Event): You didn't score well on the ACT or SAT exam
- B (Irrational Beliefs): You think, "How stupid I am. I'll never get into college with this score. Why can't I ever do anything right? I probably won't do any better if I take it again, so I might as well just give up and forget about college."
- C (Emotional Consequence): You feel depressed and disgusted with yourself.
- D (Dispute): Challenge your thoughts. Ask yourself: "Just because I didn't do well on this exam, where is the evidence that I'm stupid? Just because I did poorly, it doesn't necessarily mean I can't get into any college. Also, colleges look at other things beside SAT and ACT scores. I didn't do well this time, but where is the evidence that I won't do better if I take the test again?"
- E (New Effect): As a result of the disputing, you have a better perspective on the problem, and you can employ more effective problem-solving skills. You are not as down on yourself. You recognize that one bad score might not have the disastrous consequences you originally assumed when you were reacting irrationally.

4. Ask students to identify examples of their own irrational thinking and work through A-B-C-D-E model to dispute their beliefs.

Journal Assignment: Ask students to pay close attention to their own irrational thoughts over the next week (and notice the frequency of irrational thoughts among their friends). Have them keep track of their irrational thoughts and dispute them in their journal. Have them write about what it's like to catch themselves thinking this way and how it feels to dispute their irrational thoughts. Does disputing these thoughts allow them to feel more or less in control of their lives? Do they find it challenging or easy to dispute their thoughts? How helpful is this process in changing the way they think about aspects of their lives?

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each member to make sure they are ok.
- Does anyone have anything to say?
- Remind students of when the group will meet next week.
- Remind students of our confidentiality agreement.

Rational Thinking Session Adapted from:

Vernon, A. (1989). Thinking, feeling, behaving: An emotional Educational Curriculum for Adolescents. Illinois: Research Press.



Session 10 – Closing/Saying Goodbye

Developmental Perspective: All human relationships are constantly in a state of change. This is especially true with adolescents who form ties with schoolmates one day just to end them the next. This state of change is also apparent in team activities, family dynamics and other relationships. Achievement of successful and positive closure is a wonderful skill to possess.

Objectives:

- ☒ To provide a review of what has happened in the past nine sessions
- ☒ To help students understand and cope with the fact that the group is ending
- ☒ To illustrate the importance of saying goodbye and give students a chance to achieve closure on the group and their relationship in it
- ☒ To provide students with resources for further counseling, if necessary

Materials:

- ☒ List of mental health services for follow-up care (**Appendix AA**)
- ☒ Small “autograph” type book or booklet for each student
- ☒ Polaroid camera and film
- ☒ Evaluation form (**Appendix BB**)
- ☒ Likert Scale (**Appendix B**)

Journal Processing: Begin the group by processing the journal assignment from the last session (Session 9 – Rational Thinking). Take 10 minutes to share as a group and remind members that we will have this time each session to share what they have written. Encourage the group to journal throughout the week and feel free to turn in their journals to share with you and obtain feedback.

Session Topic:

1. As students arrive, take a Polaroid of each and paste them on the cover of their booklet. Set aside.
2. Next, go through the session topics and discuss what students feel are the most important lessons they learned in the group. The following question may be helpful.
 - What did you learn about your likes and dislikes about yourself?
 - What did you learn about healthy eating? Any surprises?
 - What kinds of roles can a person have? What gender stereotypes did you learn about?
 - How does conformity/nonconformity impact you?
 - How does the media affect your perception of yourself and others?
 - What new things did you learn about eating disorders
 - What does self-respect have to do with the way you live your life?
 - What goals have you set for yourself
 - How can changing what you think about yourself change how you feel?

Process:

- Point out that all relationships come to an end, whether by moving away or mutual decision, or for other reasons. Discuss the importance of goodbyes, stressing that saying goodbye can help people deal with sadness when a relationship ends and go on to new relationship.
- Model saying something encouraging about each student as a way of saying goodbye. For example: “Jill, you’ve really accomplished some of your personal goals. I’m pleased to see you working on yourself”.
- Give each student her booklet. State that the group was formed for support and sharing. Have the students pass their books to one another and each writes in everyone else’s book an affirmation (about the growth they’ve seen in that person, etc.). These will be a tangible reminder of group, that change is possible, support is available, etc.

Closure/Dismissal:

- Assemble and administer Likert Scale.
- Complete evaluations.
- Remind students of the confidentiality rule. Thank them for participating and tell them that, even though the group is ending, you will continue to be available to them and that you wish them success in reaching their goals to improve their image of self. Give them a copy of Mental Health Services sheet.
- Remind students that the group will meet again in four weeks. They are encouraged to journal until then to note progress and record questions that arise.
- Encourage students to have a “group hug” if the atmosphere seems right.



Session 11 – Follow Up

Developmental Perspective: Positive feedback and reinforcement are developmentally critical components for changing an adolescent female's perceptions of herself. These girls are constantly inundated with negative messages regarding every aspect of their lives. It is extremely important that they received positive feedback and approval for the course they are taking toward self-acceptance. Studies have shown that when people are given positive reinforcement they are quicker to adopt the behavior that preceded the reinforcement. The follow-up session provides the ideal situation to provide members of Girls Empowered with such positive feedback and praise for their accomplishments. Research surrounding follow-up sessions supports the notion of providing an opportunity for members to come together and discuss what has happened since the group's termination and acknowledge the accomplishments that members have made.

Objectives:

- ☒ To review and discuss achievements group members have accomplished.
- ☒ To give positive affirmation to the group members for continued change.
- ☒ Provide group members with a refocusing of goals and helps them remain on track
- ☒ To help the co-facilitators determine the continued success of the group

Materials:

- ☒ Likert scale (Appendix B)
- ☒ Pen or pencil
- ☒ Chalk board
- ☒ Chalk
- ☒ Certificates (Appendix CC)

Session Topic:

1. Ask if any members continued making journal entries. If so, would anyone like to share some of her thoughts?
2. What successes have the members had since the last session?
3. Have any issues, related to body image arisen over the past month that you would like to discuss with the group?
4. How have you been able to redirect negative images and thoughts into positive ones?
5. How often, if any, have you found yourself talking negatively to yourself regarding how you look? What things could you do to counter this in the future?
6. When you look at yourself in the mirror, what is your first thought?
7. **Likert scale.** Give this scale with approximately 15-20 minutes left in session. This will allow for the closure activity.

Closure/Dismissal:

- Check in with each girl to see how she is feeling at the moment.
- Reassure the group that they can and will be successful in reaching a positive body image.
- Remind the girls that you are available should any of the girls need someone to talk to.
- Dismiss the group with congratulation and a certificate of completion.