

Health at Every Size

So, What is Normal?

Lesson Plan

Overview

This lesson accompanies the colourful poster “So, What is Normal?” and fits the Health and Career Education Grade 6 and Grade 7 Curriculum.

Through this lesson, students learn to:

- Identify, respect and accept diverse shapes and sizes in teen bodies
- Embrace a healthy lifestyle at any body shape or size

The lesson plan on healthy eating, “[FoodTrack: Check on Balance](#)” (downloadable from www.bcdairyfoundation.ca) is a suggested follow-up to these activities.

Estimated time: 45-60 minutes

Learning Outcomes

Please refer to the Curriculum links handout for a specific list of the learning outcomes covered by this lesson.

Key Concepts

- Our culture is obsessed with physical appearance. Unrealistic media images, adults expressing dissatisfaction with their own bodies, overemphasis on rapid weight loss and body shape changes can get in the way of having a positive body image.
- The process involved with making an ad is very complex and produces unrealistic images (hair, make up, photoshop, etc).
- No one particular shape or size is healthier than another when healthier lifestyles are followed. What’s important is to respect and appreciate the variety of body shapes and sizes.
- The key is to be active, eat well and feel great at any body shape or size.

Materials

- “So, What is Normal?” Poster
- AV/ computers/ computer lab
- Advertisements from teen magazines for the Hype or Health? Activity
- Dove Fabricating Beauty clip (can be downloaded from www.dove.ca, click on Campaign for Real Beauty, click on Educators, click on the real beauty school program and then download the video)
- Pictures of body images throughout history and cultures to illustrate how society influences body image
- Class set of activity sheets (“Hype or Health” and “So, What is Normal?”)
- Teacher Backgrounder
- Food supplies if doing the optional tasting activity

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Lesson Plan

Procedure

Pre-lesson

- a. Ask students to bring advertisements from magazines they typically read two days before teaching this lesson.
- b. Flip through them and select the ads you would like to use. Make sure you include a mix of ads targeting both boys and girls.

Learning Activity 1: Hype or Health? Media Advertisement Activity

- a. Start with an introductory class discussion:

What are some examples of communications media? (*Film, radio, CDs, videos, TV, billboards, bus shelter ads, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, advertising, comic books, posters, etc...*)

We are going to take a look at how body images are portrayed through the media and whether this is realistic or not.
- b. Divide students into groups. Distribute 3-4 ads to each group along with the Hype or Health activity sheets. Ask students to select one ad and discuss the questions on the activity sheet as a group. Then they will share their findings with the rest of the class.

Some answers you would like to get from discussion include:

 - *It doesn't look very realistic.*
 - *What we see in the ads does not portray a realistic body image.*
 - *What is normal is not what you see in magazines or advertisements.*
- c. Use pictures throughout history to discuss how body shape preferences and cultural differences evolved to today's preferences.(optional)
- d. Ask students if they can think of additional factors that pressure them to look a certain way (e.g. peer influences, parent influences, credible or non-credible websites...).

Learning Activity 2: Dove Fabricating Beauty clip (about 4 minutes)

- Have students view the clip.
- Discuss with students:
 - o What do they think about the clip?
 - o What do they notice most?
 - o Do boys feel the same about the ad as girls?
 - o How do girls perceive boys and vice versa?
 - o What attributes are they looking for when they like someone?

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So, What is Normal?

Lesson Plan

Learning Activity 3: So, What is Normal?

- a. Ask students what they define as normal.
- b. Provide a definition of normal: it is a range of shapes and sizes and does not necessarily fit into a certain mold as shown by the media.
- c. Introduce the “So, What is Normal?” poster: it portrays teens with different shapes and sizes. Ask them to focus on body characteristics and not on how the teens look (i.e. skin, clothes, etc).
- d. Distribute student activity sheet “So, What is Normal?”.
- e. Have a class discussion about activity sheet questions and poster focusing on the different shapes represented. Recognize that adolescence is a time of rapid growth and body changes. Teen bodies are still changing and what is ‘normal’ for one teen may be very different for another one the same age. Keep discussions open and engaging as the topic may be sensitive for some students.
- f. Link magazines with poster.
1. Do you think the people in the ads are healthy? *(We don't really know just by looking at the ads BUT there are a lot of unhealthy behaviours like dieting, skipping meals, drugs, alcohol, smoking, lack of sleep, etc... that can make us unhealthy.)*
- g. What are the long term health implications of the unhealthy behaviours (extreme dieting and/or exercise) that people engage in to meet society's idea of a “preferred body”? *(Most youth are aware that the people portrayed in the media as “desirable” aren't necessarily healthy, and that the preferred body weight isn't necessarily a healthy one. The problem is that most youth would also rather be popular than healthy. Make them feel proud of their healthy behaviours and healthy bodies.)*
- g. Summarize this learning activity by stressing that we should respect and appreciate the genetic diversity of body shapes and sizes. We can be healthy regardless of our body shape. On the poster the teens are all different sizes and shapes but they are all healthy – they are eating well and keeping physically active, etc...

Learning Activity 4: (Optional)

- a. Have students prepare a healthy snack (i.e. blender smoothies, yogurt parfaits) in class as a way to link healthy eating and lifestyle and to keep students engaged.

Extension Activities:

- Divide class into small groups to discuss situations where they felt pressure from media or peers to fit the “perfect” body type. Have them share ways for dealing with these pressures. This could be part of a class discussion if students choose to. (The topic may be sensitive for some)

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So, What is Normal?

Lesson Plan

Ask students to list and describe a range of strategies for attaining and maintaining emotional, physical and social health during puberty and adolescence (e.g., healthful eating, active lifestyle, strong self-esteem...).

- Have students pick one of the teen magazine advertisements and write a new slogan or redesign the ad to promote a realistic, positive body image. As a class, share the slogans or ads.
- Have students write a paragraph expressing their opinion:
“What does it mean to be healthy at any shape or size?”

Ask students to share their paragraph with the class.

- Have students list relevant health issues for teenagers of their age. Ask them to identify and describe the health services and agencies available in the local community that provide support and information for addressing these issues. Students will share their findings with the class.

This lesson is adapted from the Oregon Dairy Council’s lesson “So, What is Normal?”