# Body Image - Year 9

A person’s body image may be linked to physical appearance, but it is predominantly how someone feels about their physical appearance, and can therefore be influenced by a range of factors which may or may not be directly related to a person’s looks. Body image is a continuum and so a person’s body image is not static, but varies over time and even from day to day or hour to hour. Due to the increasing number of images children and young people see every day in the media it is possible that they could develop an unrealistic and narrowly defined view of how someone ‘should’ look, which causes comparison and sometimes negative feelings if they feel their own appearance does not match up to the ‘ideal’. If children and young people see their appearance as a measure of their self-worth, they may feel that they are inadequate in some way if they do not conform to the images of other young people seen in the media. This is turn will impact negatively on their self-esteem and mental health.

The film explores pupils’ understanding of the term ‘Body Image’ and introduces them to the concept as a continuum with a positive body image being one where they have a clear, realistic perception of their bodies and that they do not worry inappropriately about food, weight or calories. The pupils will develop strategies to help them to move along this continuum and to know how to help themselves when feeling less positive about their bodies. This is partly addressed by enabling the pupils to explore the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour so that they can regain a positive frame of mind which will improve their body image, and their overall mental health. The activities in the film support pupils to reflect on themselves as people, building their self-esteem, so that they can feel good about themselves and their achievements. They will learn that a person is far more than just their appearance, and that appearance in fact gives us very little information about who someone is and says nothing about their value as a person. The pupils are taught to evaluate what they see and hear about appearance by increasing their media literacy through the use of film clips. They develop their understanding of how the images they see will often have been carefully selected and then subjected to image manipulation and that advertisers use various techniques to manipulate the feelings of the viewer. This film demonstrates Circle Time, case studies and small group, sorting walls and the use of film.

## Sensitive Issues

When teaching about body image, it is important to be sensitive to pupils who may have a low self-esteem, or who may have been, or are being, teased or bullied about their appearance. In addition, some pupils may display signs of over sexualised behaviour. The school’s safeguarding procedures may need to be taken into account in some cases. Some cultural and religious views may affect adults’ and children and young peoples’ experiences in relation to body image, e.g. understanding of ‘attractiveness’. Families will have a broad range of ideas about what is appropriate for children to watch and read in the media. Ensure that any examples (e.g. films, magazines) you use are consistent with school policies and that parents/carers are kept informed about teaching and learning as well as about any responses by the pupils which may give you cause for concern. Factors which might adversely affect body image include touch deprivation (a lack of holding and hugging) and teasing about appearance as a child. It is therefore important to be sensitive to all pupils in the class, but particularly those who you know may have experienced, or still be experiencing, this as part of their family life, or those who are experiencing teasing or bullying at school. Warning signs of a poor body image or low self-esteem might include a reluctance to take part in any activities which require changing clothes, or a withdrawal from social activities. It is important that clear ground rules are put in place before beginning work in this area so that pupils are enabled to feel safe when participating in discussion about potentially sensitive issues. If you are concerned about particular pupils, it may be appropriate to follow your school’s Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures.

## Wider Context

Teaching about body image should form part of a whole school approach and become an integral part of the way in which schools promotes and encourage healthy lifestyles and relationships. Body Image work will be most successfully delivered within the context of a comprehensive PSHE programme of work including complementary learning around ‘Emotions’, ‘Healthy Lifestyles’ and ‘Healthy Relationships including anti-bullying’.

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| Activity | Content | Methodologies |
| **Introduction**  | Welcome Aims of sessionGround Rules | Circle Time |
| **Activity 1** | Exploring a definition of body image and what might affect whether someone has a positive or negative body image.  |  Definition of body image and paired discussion |
| **Activity 2** | Exploring how thoughts and feelings can impact either positively or negatively on behaviours. Identifying and comparing the cycle of thoughts, feelings and behaviour of people with either a negative or positive body image | Case studies and small group work |
| **Activity 3** | Exploring who influences our own body image and the negative and positive impact of this influence  | Post –its and sorting activity: Appearance, Skills and Character  |
| **Activity 4** | Evaluating and identifying subtle techniques used in the media to influence the way in which people behave including how they think and feel about body | Film clipsCoca Cola advert \* |

\*Coca Cola advert – every effort has been made to contact the publishers. Anyone holding copyright is welcome to contact us.