


The Mirror Inside

Understanding Self-Concept and Body Image

Overview

Students will define what body image and self-concept mean, and learn about some of the factors that influence how we view ourselves and others.

 **Suggested grade level** Grade 4/5 with adaptation suggestion for grade 6/7

Big Ideas

- Understanding ourselves and the various aspects of health helps us develop a balanced lifestyle. (Physical and Health Education Grades 4-5)
- We experience many changes in our lives that influence how we see ourselves and others. (Physical and Health Education Grades 6-7)
- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world. (English Language Arts Grades 4-9)

Key Concepts

- Body Image refers to the perceptions, thoughts, behaviours, and feelings we have about our body and appearance. It is part of self-concept, which is how we see, think, and feel about ourselves (our physical appearance, abilities, attributes, and aspects that make up who we are).
- Positive self-concept is a key aspect to students' overall physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being.
- Some factors can contribute to developing a positive self-concept and body image. Examples include: having a caring adult in the student's life, feeling a sense of belonging in school; learning effective coping strategies for handling emotional distress.
- Some factors put a student at higher risk for developing a negative self-concept and body image. Examples include: exposure to adverse childhood experiences; parental and peer modelling of dieting behaviours; experiences of bullying; exposure to unrealistic body ideals in the media.
- Body image and self-concept can change from day to day. There are different strategies to develop positive self-concept and body image.

Curricular Connections

Core Competencies

- **Communication** - Communicating, Collaborating
- **Thinking** - Critical and Reflective Thinking
- **Personal and Social** - Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Social Awareness and Responsibility

First Peoples Principles of Learning

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Social Emotional Learning

- Self-awareness
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills

Curriculum Learning Standards

- Physical and Health Education Curricular Competencies
 - Describe factors that positively influence mental well-being and self-identity (Grade 4)
 - Explore and describe how personal identities adapt and change in different settings and situations (Grade 5)
- Physical and Health Education Content
 - Factors that influence self-identity, including body image and social media. (Grade 4)



Lesson Outline

Guidelines for creating an environment that is inclusive and trauma-informed to talk about this topic.

Guidelines PDF

🕒 Time

30 Minutes

📋 Materials

1. Book: “**Smile So Big**” by Sunshine Quem Tenasco or “A Boy and His Mirror” by Marchánt Davis
2. Or show the “**A Boy and His Mirror**” **read-along video** by Marchánt Davis
3. Activity Sheet: Understanding Self-Concept and Body Image
4. Paper
5. Pencil
6. One envelope

Opening

- Invite students to get started on this reflection activity. Optional script to say to students: On a piece of paper, write words that you connect with yourself. Nobody will see this paper but you. You might start with: “I am _____” or “I am a _____”
- After they finish, teachers can seal it in an envelope for safekeeping until the next lesson.
- Ask students to individually think about how they would respond to these questions: What do you think body image means? What do you think self-concept means?

Activity

- Read the story: “Smile So Big” by Sunshine Quem Tenasco or “A Boy and His Mirror” by Marchánt Davis.
- Think Pair Share
 - **Think:** ask students to think about what they learned from the story. What did you learn from the story? Has your idea of body image and self-concept changed in any way?
 - **Pair:** in pairs, invite students to brainstorm ideas, words, or images about any new ideas that came up from the story
 - **Share:** invite students to share with the class. Teachers can write down responses on a white board and eventually lead to the definition of body image and self-concept. This may include different things that impact body image and self-concept.
- Invite students to complete the Activity Sheet: Understanding Self-Concept and Body Image

Closure

- Review the definition of Body Image and Self-Concept, which can be found under “Key Concepts”.
- Invite students to complete one of the exit slips found on beingmebeingus.ca

Additional Information

Learning extension

- Have student pairs brainstorm and add more ideas to their original list of different things that impact body image and self-concept.

Adaptations for grades 6/7

- Opening reflection can include: What does body image mean to me? What does self-concept mean to me?
- Think pair share can include: Who influences the way we think about ourselves and others – parents? family? teachers? friends? media? In what ways do they affect us? What experiences and situations help us form a positive self-concept? What experiences and situations harm the way we see ourselves? What are some positive ways you can care for your mind and body?

Resources & information

- Children and youth are an integral part of community well-being. Just as our inner selves and identities change and grow as we age, so does our relationship with our bodies and our environments. The First People's Principles of Learning (FPPL) highlight the importance of exploring identity and supporting students' well-being. Caring for the self and connecting to family, community and ancestors are key. These can be contributing factors for healthy self-concept.
- Some factors can contribute to protecting and developing a positive self-concept and body image. Others can put individuals at a higher risk for developing a negative self-concept and body image.

Examples of protective factors	Examples of risk factors
<p>Students have better self-concept and body image when they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have parents/caregivers and other caring adults that model a holistic acceptance of bodies;• engage in regular physical activity;• learn effective coping strategies for handling emotional distress;• practice self-compassion;• feel a sense of belonging in school;• view balance as key to health and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACES);• intergenerational trauma• parental and peer modelling of dieting behaviours;• experiences of body-based bullying, discrimination, weight stigma, sexual objectification/assault;• exposure to unrealistic body ideals in the media

For more information, visit Being Me, Being Us: Creating a school community where every body belongs

Visit website at beingmebeingus.ca

Further discussion

- Discuss how different cultures and generations have different concepts of "ideal" body image



Connect to Support

If you or a student is looking for emotional support or more resources on this topic, visit [NEDIC.ca](https://www.nedic.ca). It connects you to a confidential telephone helpline or live chat.

Adapted with permission from the National Eating Disorder Information Centre ([NEDIC](https://www.nedic.ca))
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Understanding Self-Concept and Body Image

Name

Date

Draw or write responses to these questions:

Scenario	A kind response is:
What are three words you would use to describe yourself? (Try not to focus on the way your body looks.)	
What are three things that make you feel great? (events, activities, etc)	
What are three things you are proud of about yourself? (Think about things your body can do, things you are good at, etc.)	