


Words and Thoughts Matter

Focusing on What Our Bodies Can Do

Overview

Developing healthy relationships with others begins with a healthy relationship with oneself. In this lesson, students will reflect on the impacts that positive and negative self-talk can have on their well-being and self-concept. Students will explore the notion that ALL bodies are amazing and capable of incredible things. They will explore the concept that healthy relationships start with self-acceptance and self-love.

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

Big Ideas

- Developing healthy relationships helps us feel connected, supported, and valued. (Physical and Health Education Grades 4-5)
- 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)
- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and develop an understanding of self, community, and world. (English Language Arts Grades 4,5)
- Language and text can be a source of creativity and joy. (English Language Arts Grades 4-9)
- Exploring our strengths and abilities can help us identify our goals (Career Education Grades 4-5)

Key Concepts

- A body-neutral approach shifts the language away from appearance-based comments. It encourages us to focus on what our bodies allow us to do, the inner aspects of who we are, and the various aspects of our identity and health.
- A strengths-based approach can be used to reframe or reject negative messages about bodies. It helps us to build or increase body confidence, self-acceptance, and recognize personal strengths.
- The way we feel about our bodies changes and we experience varying and ever-evolving degrees of self-acceptance.
- Being kind and compassionate to yourself and others, in and out of the school environment, can make a big difference in your mental health and well-being.

Curricular Connections

Core Competencies

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

First Peoples Principles of Learning

- Learning involves patience and time.
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity.
- Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

Social Emotional Learning

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- 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)
 - Describe and apply strategies for developing and maintaining healthy relationships (Grades 5-7)
- Physical and Health Education Content
 - Factors that influence self-identity, including body image (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. Slides: Words and Thoughts Matter: Focusing on What Our Bodies Can Do [PowerPoint Slides \(PPSX\)](#) and [Notes \(PDF\)](#)
2. Activity Sheet for Grades 4/5: Self-Talk Statements
3. Activity Sheet for Grades 6/7: Words and Thoughts Matter
4. Paper
5. Pencil

Opening

- Sample script to start the lesson - consider including these points: Who in the class likes to listen to music? (students raise hands) Have you ever listened to the same song on repeat? If so, what happened? (e.g. the song got stuck in my head). Our minds remember things that repeat in our thoughts and words the same way our minds remember songs. That is why it is important to speak and think about ourselves and others kindly.
 - If we speak to ourselves kindly, that is positive self-talk.
 - If we speak to ourselves in an unkind way, that is negative self-talk.
- Hand out the pieces of paper students wrote on about themselves from the Mirror Inside lesson (if this lesson was not completed, this step can be skipped).
 - Sometimes, we can be hard on ourselves. We get stuck focusing on things that we think we don't like about ourselves, about our day. Ideas of how things "should be" creep into our minds. These ideas may come from our family, culture, what we see online, or even what others around us say or do. They may also come from our surroundings - for example, chairs or spaces that are not made for all kinds of bodies.
- Start the slides "Words and Thoughts Matter: Focusing on What Our Bodies Can Do".

Activity

- Provide students with the Self-Talk Statements activity. In pairs, have them categorize the statements as kind or unkind.
- Then, share this imagining activity: Gentle close your eyes or look downward if that's more comfortable. Imagine your friend is having a bad day. Perhaps they got into a fight with a friend or sibling, they ripped their favourite shirt, they forgot their lunch, or got in trouble at school. How do you think they might feel? Now gently open your eyes.
- Have students write a letter to their friend. "What would you say to your friend to make them feel better? What kind words would you use? What are some strengths and positive qualities that they have?"
- Then have students apply this to themselves. If you are having a hard day, how could you be a friend to yourself? What are your strengths and positive qualities? What kind things can you say to yourself?
- Ensure students know that they do not have to share this if they do not want to.
- This activity helps to embody the situation, locate the emotion and then come up with the positive language.

Discussion

For Grade 4-5 Activity	For Grade 6-7 Activity
<p>Think about the statements from the Self-Talk Activity Sheet above. How are some of these statements unkind? What makes them unkind?</p> <p>What do we do when negative thoughts creep in?</p> <p>How do we cope? How can we reframe to shift the thoughts from negative to neutral?</p> <p>What skills do we have that celebrate our bodies?</p>	<p>Going back to the activity sheet, why are these unkind?</p> <p>What do we do when negative thoughts creep in?</p> <p>How do we cope? How can we reframe to shift the thoughts from negative to neutral?</p> <p>What skills do we have that celebrate our bodies?</p>
<p>Key points to support with discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going back to what we talked about before - sometimes, we can be hard on ourselves. We get stuck focusing on things that we think we don't like about ourselves, about our day. • These ideas may come from our family, culture, what we see online, or even what others around us say or do. They may also come from our surroundings - for example, chairs or spaces that are not made for all kinds of bodies. • We can reframe or reject negative messages about bodies. A strengths-based approach will help us to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ build body confidence ◦ increase self-acceptance ◦ recognize personal strengths. • We can be kind to ourselves and kind to other people too. 	<p>Key points to support with discussion:</p> <p>For the first scenario, consider ways to respond:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's not appropriate to talk about other people's bodies. • I know you mean well, but body-based comments make me feel uncomfortable. <p>For the second scenario, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodies naturally come in all shapes and sizes • There are so many other factors that make up our selves other than our bodies <p>For the third scenario, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When someone says "I'm so fat" – realize that some people have a neutral relationship with the word "fat," and may use it to describe themselves, while others may find the term hurtful. • Be curious on what they mean by that. You could provide emotional support by saying that fat isn't a feeling, and ask what they mean when they say that. • "Fat is a word like small and tall; it's just a way to describe something. There is nothing wrong with being fat, just as there is nothing wrong with being small or tall."

Closure

- Share the remaining "Let's review" slide to wrap up the session
- What kinds of songs will you want to get stuck in your head about yourself now that you know the positive ones will have a better impact on your health?
- Could be fun to end with a "Happy" music video or song in class
- Invite students to complete one of the exit slips found on beingmebeingus.ca

Additional Information

Adaptations for grades 6/7

- Use the Activity Sheet for grades 6/7: Words and Thoughts Matter
- Students can create a poster or collage of kind messages that promote a body-inclusive school community to display in the classroom. Think of messaging that includes everyone - - messaging that any person of any age could read and feel good about.
- Students can identify ways to advocate for change that contributes to an accessible school environment.

Self-assessment tool for learners

- The journal entry can be used as a self-assessment on the topic.

Resources

- [Being Me, Being Us: Creating a school community where every body belongs](#)
- [Embody BC - Body Neutrality Infosheet](#)

Further discussion

- Encourage students to continue practicing positive self-talk and recognizing their body's capabilities.
- What can we say to each other when we hear negative self-talk in our classroom?



Connect to Support

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

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Self-Talk Statements (for Grades 4/5)

Preparation instructions: Statements to print out, cut, and place in envelopes to be handed out to students to sort into “kind” and “unkind” statements.



Someone says: “It’s okay to make mistakes, that’s how I learn and grow.”

Someone says: “I can try new things, even if they are hard.”

Someone says: “I am proud of who I am, inside and out.”

Someone says: “It’s okay to grow and change -
my body is doing what it is supposed to do.”

Someone says: “I am not good at anything.”

Someone says: “I’ll never be as good as my friends.”

Someone says: “I wish I could change something about myself.”

Someone says: “I wish I looked like the models
and influencers on social media”

Someone says: “I want to look like the athlete on TV”

Words and Thoughts Matter Activity Sheet

(for Grades 6/7)

Name _____

Date _____

Review the following scenarios. Think about what you’ve learned so far, and write down a kind way to respond to each scenario.

Scenario	A kind response is:
Someone in your class starts to say unkind things about your friend, saying that what they are wearing does not look good on their body. Your friend is sitting at a desk far away so cannot hear what is being said.	
Your friend says “I don’t like how my body looks. I wish I was taller.”	
You are getting ready for the school dance and your bestie says “I’m so fat”	