Confident Me

School Lesson for Body Confidence

1

Lesson Guide for Teachers

Single Lesson

Dove
Self-Esteem Project

Learning outcomes

In this lesson students will:

- **Understand** the concept of appearance ideals and where pressure to achieve them comes from
- **Analyse** the influences that create pressure to achieve appearance ideals
- **Build** media literacy skills by exploring how images and messages are often manipulations of the truth
- **Challenge** appearance ideals by setting a goal to build body confidence

Before teaching this lesson:

- **Ensure** you are familiar with your school's safeguarding and child protection policy and that you know who the safeguarding lead is.
- **Don't** encourage students to disclose sensitive information in the classroom.
- It is **important** to think about how this lesson fits into your PSHE education programme.
- **Consider** how this lesson links to learning on media literacy and on mental health and emotional wellbeing. Understanding of key concepts such as self-esteem and peer influence would support learning in this lesson.

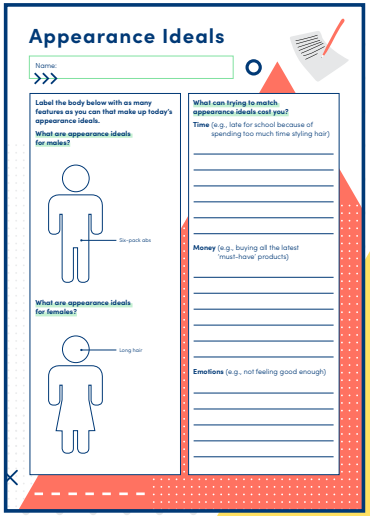
Preparation

From Your School

- A way to stream a video
- A way to show the presentation

Single Lesson Materials

- Online access to or printed copy (one per student) of handouts containing:
  - Appearance Ideals
  - How can Images be Manipulated?
  - Set a Personal Goal



Appearance Ideals

Name:

Label the body below with as many features as you can that make up today's appearance ideals.

What are appearance ideals for males?

Six-pack abs

What are appearance ideals for females?

Long hair

What can trying to match appearance ideals cost you?

Time (e.g., late for school because of spending too much time styling hair)

Money (e.g., buying all the latest 'must-have' products)

Emotions (e.g., not feeling good enough)

How Can Images be Manipulated?

Name:

01 What did you find surprising, unreal, or unlikeable about what you saw in the film?

02 List all the actions that you think took place BEFORE the photo was taken.

03 List all the actions that took place AFTER the photo was taken and before it was posted.

04 Why do you think the image was created in this way? Who benefits from this social media post?

05 How do you think the image makes the girl who likes the post at the end of the film feel?

06 Think about how the image of the influencer has been changed from reality. How does seeing these changes make you feel?

Set a Personal Goal

Name:

Work by yourself.

One action I will take as a result of what I learned today about appearance ideals and professional media is...

I will complete this action by ___/___/____

I will take these steps (at least two) to complete my goal...

When I am successful, I will feel...

Feeling stuck?

Think about what will help you challenge the pressure you and your friends feel to look a certain way. Try to choose a simple action that is easy to achieve.

Pressure to look a certain way comes from the world around us.

It's important to remember that images of people we see in all types of media aren't always real.

It's unfair to compare ourselves to these images.

Celebrate your individuality and the diversity of the people you know.

Aim to be the best you can be - you are one of a kind!

Lesson Overview

50 mins

Page 5 **Introducing Appearance Ideals** | 15 mins

- Introduction and group agreements
- What is body confidence?
- What are appearance ideas?

Page 9 **Costs of Pursuing Appearance Ideals** | 10 mins

- What are the costs and impact of pursuing appearance ideals?

Page 10 **Appearance Ideals in the Media** | 10 mins

- Where do we learn about appearance ideals?
- How can images be manipulated?

Page 13 **Goal Setting to Champion Body Confidence** | 13 mins

- Set a personal goal

Page 14 **Plenary** | 2 mins

- What have we learned today?
- Congratulations!

How To Use This Guide

Suggested Time Allocation

This is the amount of time generally recommended for students, to achieve learning outcomes and improve body confidence. This may be adapted to suit the needs of your class.

Lesson Learning Objectives

Students should achieve these objectives by the end of each section.

Presentation

These are visual cues and learning objectives to help you facilitate the lesson effectively.

Handouts

Introducing Appearance Ideals

15 mins

By the end of this activity, students will understand the concepts of body confidence and appearance ideals.

Presentation

Handout

Teacher Actions

Welcome students to the program.

Say:

We are going to discuss a variety of topics related to body confidence.

Explain the lesson agreements will help create a supportive, nonjudgmental environment.

It is worth taking time to ensure these agreements feel collaborative and, if necessary, to adjust them to suit the needs of your class.

Ask:

Does anyone have any other agreements to add?

Ask students
(verbally or using technology, like clicker devices):

Teacher Notes

Students will understand the lesson agreements and feel comfortable being active participants. If you have already established lesson or classroom agreements, you may skip this piece.

Teacher Notes

This quick informal assessment will give you a good idea of how many students are already familiar with the term and whether they have methods to improve their body confidence.

Desired Responses

Body confidence is feeling comfortable with your appearance and accepting your body for how it lo

APPEARANCE IDEALS

Teacher Actions

Bullet points highlight important questions to ask students to ensure key concepts are addressed with optimum impact on body confidence.

Text in **BOLD** indicates instructions to help structure planned activities, e.g., when you should play films or use handouts.

Notes/Desired Responses

Possible answers to look for from students, but also offers ideas for guiding their responses as they develop their understanding of key concepts and improve their body confidence.

Introducing Appearance Ideals

15 mins

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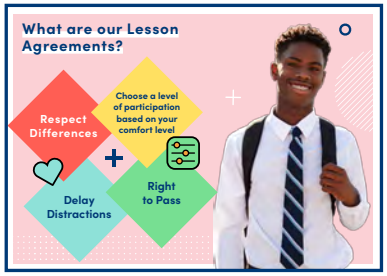
Presentation



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Teacher Notes

Students will understand the lesson agreements and feel comfortable being active participants. If you have already established lesson or classroom agreements, you may skip this piece.

Ask students
(verbally or using technology, like clicker devices):

Do you understand what we mean by body confidence?

Do you know how to improve your body confidence?

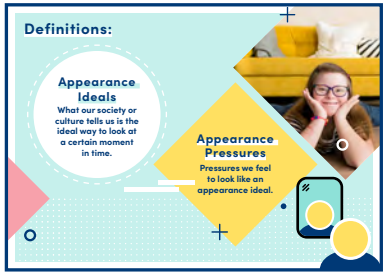
Teacher Notes

This quick informal assessment will give you a good idea of how many students are already familiar with the term and whether they have methods to improve their body confidence.

Desired Responses

Body confidence is feeling comfortable with your appearance and accepting your body for how it looks and what it can do.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Explain what students will be learning about today by referring to the presentation.

Ask a student to read each definition:

Appearance Ideals
What our society or culture tells us is the ideal way to look at a certain moment in time.

Appearance Pressures
Pressures we feel to look like an appearance ideal.

Say:

We are going to understand what society currently tells us is the ideal appearance for boys and girls.

Arrange students, or have them self-select into small groups. The students will remain in these groups for the next few activities. They can be in any mixed-gender groups.

Hand out or share access to the *Appearance Ideals Handout* (one per student). Have them complete the left side of the sheet only.

Teacher Notes

Take the time to ensure all students understand what is meant by appearance ideals, so they can use the learning in the rest of the workshop.

Students will understand that the lesson will focus on media as a source of appearance pressures.

Teacher Notes

Note: Research and feedback from young people who have taken part in this workshop show that girls are less likely to speak up about appearance ideals when in groups with boys. Further, boys often don't like hearing girls talk about what society tells them boys "should" look like (and vice versa) as it can be perceived as a form of appearance pressure that can make young people feel self-conscious. To maximise the comfort of students of all genders, it is recommended, where possible, that students self-select their own groups. Experience suggests that students feel most comfortable and forthcoming when working with friends. If that is not possible, at minimum, the group agreements should be revisited to remind students about the importance of respecting others.

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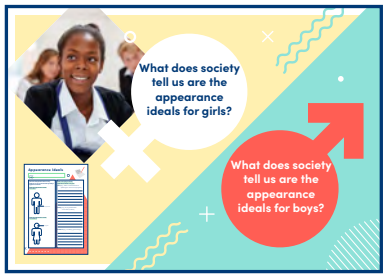
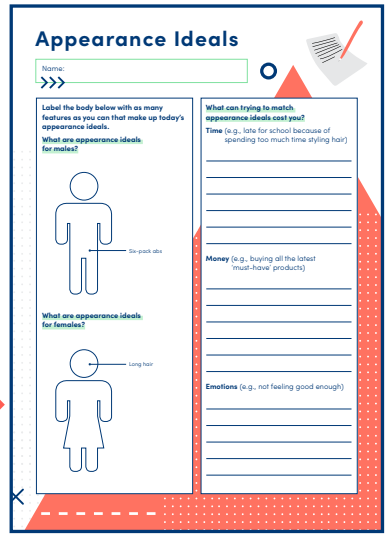
Presentation



Handout



Teacher Actions

Say:

We are going to think about what society currently tells us is the ideal appearance for boys and girls. In your groups, discuss the following two questions and have one person write down what you came up with. Create a list as long as possible of the physical features that make up today's appearance ideals.

- What does society tell us are the appearance ideals for girls?
- What does society tell us are the appearance ideals for boys?

Bring students back after 7-8 minutes and share out.

Teacher Notes

Encourage students to be specific in their responses. "For example, when a student says "hair", ask them to give specific details (e.g., length, color, texture). Or, when they say "perfect teeth" or "perfect skin" ask them to explain what these attributes look like (e.g., straight, white teeth; clear skin without blemishes or wrinkles).

Desired Responses

Example appearance ideals include:

Girls/women – long, slim, hairless legs; slim/skinny; clear, blemish-free skin; toned; big eyes; flat stomach; straight, white teeth; hairless body; long, manicured nails; thick, defined eyebrows; long eyelashes; large lips; long, shiny hair.

Boys/men – muscular; tall; slim waist; lean, v-shaped torso; low body fat; broad chest; flat stomach; six pack; straight, white teeth; blemish-free skin; some facial hair; thick, styled hair.

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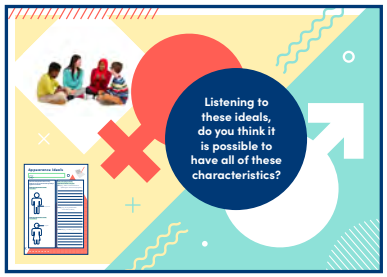
Presentation



Teacher Actions

Say:

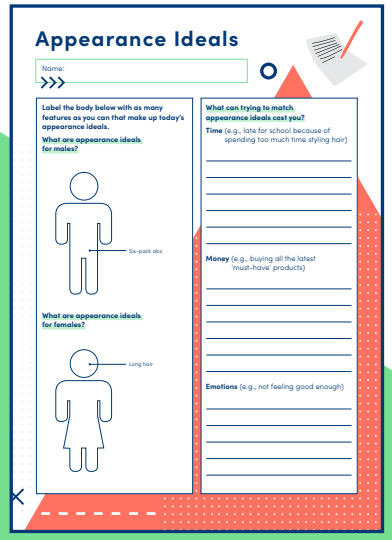
Listening to these ideals do you think it is possible to have all of these characteristics?

Discuss.

Say:

Can you think of any other issues with these appearance ideals?

Handout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What can trying to match appearance ideals cost you?

Time (e.g., late for school because of spending too much time styling hair)

Money (e.g., buying all the latest 'must-have' products)

Emotions (e.g., not feeling good enough)

Desired Responses

No, it is not possible because:

- There are inconsistencies between the different features e.g., long legs and small feet, or curvy hips (which require body fat), and a flat stomach with a six-pack (which requires very low body fat). It's therefore not realistic to have all at once.
- Our looks are defined by our genes, inherited from our birth parents and their birth parents. Therefore, this makes it impossible for most of us to match appearance ideals.

Desired Responses

These appearance ideals take a narrow view of what different genders should look like. They draw on gender stereotypes in our society. Additionally, adopting a binary approach is not inclusive of other genders.

Appearance ideals are constantly changing across time, countries, and cultures. They never stay the same!

Teacher Notes

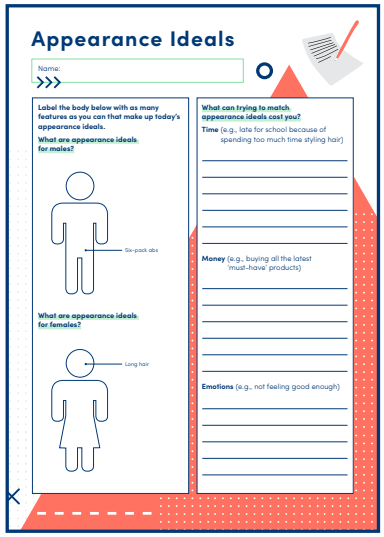
You may need to acknowledge that though different groups of students might uphold different appearance ideals, they all are narrow ideas and encourage us to work towards an unrealistic goal.

Cost of Pursuing Appearance Ideals

10 mins

By the end of this activity, students discuss where the pressure to achieve appearance ideals comes from.

Handout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Money (e.g., buying all the latest 'must-have' products)

Emotions (e.g., not feeling good enough)

Teacher Actions

Say:

Now that you understand what appearance ideals are, we are going to explore some of the pressures they can create in our daily lives.

Refer to the right side of the *Appearance Ideals handout*. Have students spend a few minutes in their groups working on the right side of the handout. Once complete, have a discussion on these three questions.

Teacher Notes

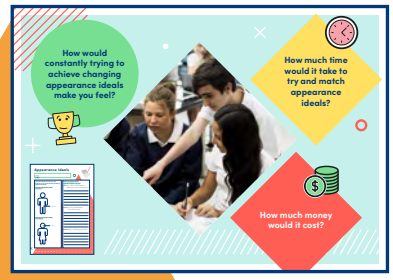
Take a few responses, but don't spend too much time in this section. The primary objective is for students to realise it costs a lot (rather than specific quantities).

Ensure that the students do not take this as an opportunity to share tips on how to match appearance ideals.

If students are struggling, refer them to the list of appearance ideals they previously generated. It can also help to ask students to imagine someone of a similar age, background, and interests to themselves.

Continued >

Handout



Teacher Actions

01 How much time would it take to try and match appearance ideals?

02 How much money would it cost?

03 How would constantly trying to achieve changing appearance ideals make you feel?

Say:

It is okay to take care of your appearance through hygiene and health and well-being behaviors.

Desired responses

01 Examples of negative consequences on how much time it might take include: Spending too much time on hair, make-up or skin care, extreme exercise, dieting, checking or comparing your appearance with others, dwelling on negative emotions.

02 Lots of money spent on hair products/treatments, skincare, make-up, clothes, magazines, beauty treatments, gym membership, dieting products, surgery.

03 Feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, jealousy, anxiety, shame, embarrassment, dread, dissatisfaction, unhappiness.

Teacher Notes

What students are exploring here is when they might get too caught up in trying to achieve a look that is impossible for most, and use up too much time, money, and mental energy in the process.

Students might use this task to argue that some people can match appearance ideals with little time, money or emotional energy. Remind students that these people might still not feel satisfied with their appearance, and will not always feel that they look their best – and just because some people might come close to appearance ideals, it doesn't guarantee that their lifestyle is any more ideal.

Appearance Ideals in the Media

10 mins

By the end of this activity, students will explore how media manipulates content to promote appearance ideals.

Presentation

Teacher Actions

Ask:

Where do you think these appearance ideals come from? Where do we find out about them?

Say:

By knowing where these ideals come from, we can begin to change how we respond to these ideals. Let's take a closer look at media. We will start by exploring how images and messages in the media can be a source of appearance pressures.

Ask:

01 What do you think the word 'manipulation' means?

02 How are images of people in the media manipulated or changed?

Desired Responses

Answers could include: advertisements, magazines, fashion industry, websites, celebrity culture, diet industry, parents or family, friends, other young people, bullies, social media, our own thoughts.

Teacher Notes

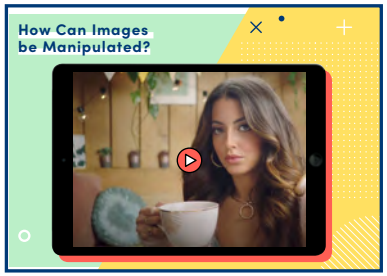
Be careful not to create a blaming atmosphere (for example, blaming parents or friends). Messages about appearance ideals are part of our daily environment and are so common that those around us may not even be aware of them. Raising awareness of the source is the point here, not judging or assigning value to each one.

Desired Responses

01 To edit or change something, such as a person's appearance in media.

02 General responses such as airbrushing, using filters and photo editing apps, lighting, make-up, choosing one photo out of hundreds taken.

Presentation



Handout

How Can Images be Manipulated?

Name:

01 What did you find surprising, unreal, or unlikeable about what you saw in the film?

02 List all the actions that you think took place BEFORE the photo was taken.

03 List all the actions that took place AFTER the photo was taken and before it was posted.

04 Why do you think the image was created in this way? Who benefits from this social media post?

05 How do you think the image makes the girl who likes the post at the end of the film feel?

06 Think about how the image of the influencer has been changed from reality. How does seeing these changes make you feel?

Teacher Actions

Handout or share access to
How can Images be Manipulated?

Assign each group at least one of the questions to answer while watching the video.

Say:

We are going to watch a brief video called "A Selfie". As the video plays, go ahead and answer the question on the handout assigned to your group. We will watch it through twice.

Play 'A Selfie'.

Play the film a second time.

Give groups a few minutes to discuss the answers to their assigned question and then have each group share their answers. Encourage other groups to jot notes and thoughts on the handout related to the other questions.

01 What did you find surprising, unreal, or unlikeable about what you saw in the film?

02 List all the actions that you think took place BEFORE the photo was taken.

03 List all the actions that took place AFTER the photo was taken and before it was posted.

04 Why do you think the image was created in this way? Who benefits from this social media post?

Desired Responses

01 Surprised that there are so many people involved; surprised how much she was edited prior to the edits being made; unlikeable because the comment under the image is dishonest.

02 Special location chosen; make-up done and retouched; hair styled; professional lighting installed; careful selection of props; clothes chosen by a stylist; creative direction of the shot.

03 Neck elongated; filters applied; hair made fuller; jawline sharpened; cheekbones enhanced.

04 It could be to sell products, advertise the café, increase her following on social media, and/or gain likes and comments. The girl being photographed benefits from the image, as do the companies or brands she may be promoting through her social media account.

Teacher Notes

Help students realise how much work there was before and after to achieve this look and image.

Continued >

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Teacher Actions

05 How do you think the image makes the girl who likes the post at the end of the film feel?

06 Think about how the image of the influencer has been changed from reality. How does seeing these changes make you feel?

Next, ask students as a class:

07 Why do you think it is unrealistic or unfair to compare the way you or your friends look to manipulated images of people you see on social media and in mass media like television, films, and magazines?

To close this activity, ask:

Why do you think it is unrealistic or unfair to compare the way you or your friends look to manipulated images of people you see on social media and in mass media like television, movies, and magazines?

Students may go back to their original seats since they will be working independently in the next activity.

Desired Responses

05 It makes them feel sad, unworthy, or not good enough. They might feel bad or start thinking about how they look different from what they see on social media because they are comparing themselves to these images.

06 Feelings of surprise and outrage at the thought of being tricked and misled. Now we know that images are manipulated, this also makes us feel bad – we feel deceived and realise that what we are striving for is unachievable.

07 Most people are not models or paid influencers and do not have make-up artists, hair stylists, or professional photo editing to change the way they look.

Goal Setting to Champion Body Confidence

13 mins

By the end of this activity, students will practice goal setting by setting a goal to challenge appearance pressures.

Handout

Set a Personal Goal

Name:

Work by yourself.

One action I will take as a result of what I learned today about appearance ideals and professional media is...

I will complete this action by ___/___/____

I will take these steps (at least two) to complete my goal...

When I am successful, I will feel...

Feeling stuck?

Think about what will help you challenge the pressure you and your friends feel to look a certain way. Try to choose a simple action that is easy to achieve.

Pressure to look a certain way comes from the world around us.

It's important to remember that images of people we see in all types of media aren't always real.

It's unfair to compare ourselves to these images.

Celebrate your individuality and the diversity of the people you know.

Aim to be the best you can be - you are one of a kind!

Teacher Actions

Handout or share access to
Set a Personal Goal handout.

Say: Now we are going to think about how we can challenge appearance pressures we see in the media through goal setting.

Ask: Thinking about media (e.g., advertising on social media and television shows), what might you do to show that you don't agree with the way professional media emphasises an unrealistic 'ideal' way to look?

Say: Now thinking about the media we ourselves create, what could we do differently when creating or sharing pictures, films, and messages? What goal can you make to address the pressure you and your friends feel to look a certain way? Using the Set a Personal Goal handout, consider what action you might take.

Instruct students to complete the handout independently, writing a goal they will work toward as a result of what they learned today.

Encourage students to make their goal a small and specific action. This way, it's easier for them to keep to their commitment.

Ask one or two students to share their personal goal.

Desired Responses

Unfollow the account, don't buy the magazine advertising the product; don't buy the product; tell all your friends you think the advertising is fake or misleading; boycott the company; complain to the company, advertiser or the media outlet (via Twitter or commenting on an Instagram post); unfollow companies that use photo manipulation; buy products that use responsible advertising techniques.

Goal ideas may include: try to post a mix of photos that represent different aspects of your life, such as showing you having fun, being out with friends, or arty shots; spontaneous photos, rather than always posed in the best position; post comments complimenting friends on features other than how they look; respond to any negative comments or teasing with supportive comments.

Teacher Notes

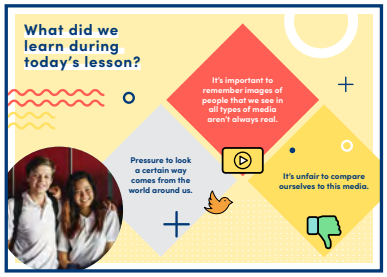
Students' goals could include changing how they consume professional media, how they create or consume personal and social media, or how they can learn to better identify and challenge existing appearance ideals.

Plenary

2 mins

By the end of this lesson, students will have reflected on what they learned throughout the lesson and made a goal demonstrating their ongoing commitment to championing body confidence.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Say:

What did we learn during today's lesson?

Invite volunteers to read aloud key learning points from the slide, as well as summarie any points students may have missed.

Desired Response

Social media is unrealistic, we shouldn't compare ourselves; recognising the appearance ideal is unachievable; follow people that make you feel good on social media.

Thank students for their participation in today's lesson.

Encourage them to think about and apply their knowledge and understanding every day from now on.

If possible, offer to stay behind or speak to students at another time about anything covered in the lesson.

Acknowledgements

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It was adapted from 'Happy Being Me' with permission and under licence from Susan T. Paxton, Sian A. McLean, Shanel M. Few and Sarah J. Durkin, 2013.

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Dove
Self-Esteem Project