

## Body Image Obsession TEACHER'S GUIDE

### What teachers need to know:

"Body image" means how you see your body and how you feel about your physical appearance. Many people aren't happy with what they see in the mirror. Some people are so unhappy with their bodies that they have low self-esteem, which can lead to poor grades, social struggles, anorexia, bulimia, Body Dysmorphic Disorder, and possibly suicide. Some experts believe a person's body image is set by age six; however, during the pre-adolescent years, kids become increasingly aware of society's standards of "beauty." The Nemours Foundation offers these facts:

- By the 4th grade, 80 percent of American girls have dieted or are dieting.
- In a study of 5th graders, 10-year-old girls and boys told researchers they were dissatisfied with their own bodies after watching a music video by Britney Spears or a clip from the television show "Friends."
- One study reports that by age 13, 53 percent of American girls are "unhappy with their bodies." This grows to 78 percent by the time girls reach the age of 17.

Parents, teachers and other adults in a child's life can help promote positive body image by focusing on a child's strengths, character, personality, skills, and "inner" beauty.

### Lesson Plan

#### Objectives:

Students will:

- Create a list of at least five statements about themselves
- Say a compliment to each member of the class
- Compose two paragraphs on self image and how it is affected by others

#### Materials:

- Chalk/white board or overhead projector
- Blank, unlined paper (two sheets per student)
- NON-permanent markers (one per student)
- pencils/pens; tape

#### Project and Purpose:

Students will actively notice positive things about each other and compliment each other. In the process, students will also notice positive things about themselves. Through this activity, students will examine the concept of self-image and how others see them.

1. Give two pieces of paper to each student. Ask students to trace one of their hands onto one of the pieces of paper.
2. Say, *On the first two fingers, answer the question, "How do you feel about yourself?" On the other two fingers, answer the question, "What makes you YOU?" On the thumb and the palm, write several words that describe you.* **Teachers: Write the questions on the board or an overhead to help students stay on task.**
3. When students have completed their "hand" papers, have them take the second piece of paper, turn it vertically and write their name on the top in one inch letters.
4. Have the students help each other tape their name pages to their backs. Explain that they will go write a positive statement or compliment about each person, and each person will write on their name page. Say, *"Think about each person in this class. What do they do well? What is "nice" about this person?"*
5. Have students form one inner and one outer circle. The outer circle will move one person to the left. The outer circle will write on the inner circle's sheets; then they will switch.
6. Give each student a non-permanent marker. Make sure they do not use up all the space. Do not have them sign their names. They should not read what other people say; they should just write their own words. **STAY POSITIVE—FIND SOMETHING NICE TO SAY.**
7. When the writing is done, have students remove their papers and read what has been written. NOTE: If you are concerned that some students might have written inappropriate remarks, collect the papers and tell the students you will review them before returning them to the owners. Mark out any inappropriate remarks.
8. Have students return to their desks and compare the compliment sheet to the hand drawing they did for themselves. How does their self-image compare to their compliment sheet?

#### Class Discussion Questions:

1. Why are so many teenagers unhappy with their looks? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
2. How has the media helped and/or hurt the way people see themselves?

**Self-Reflection Questions:**

1. How do you see yourself compared to what others wrote about you?
2. Who or what has influenced the way you feel about your body?
3. How can you help your peers to resist the pressure?

**Evaluation:**

- Did each student complete a handprint with self-image words/phrases?
- Did each student take part in the circle/writing activity in a positive manner?
- Did each student complete the written assignment?