Confident Me: School Workshops for Body Confidence

Media Messages

Workshop Guide for Teachers
Workshop 2 of 5

Media Messages

Learning outcomes and resources

IN THIS WORKSHOP, STUDENTS WILL:

• **Built media literacy**, exploring how images and messages—from advertising and movies to social media—are often manipulations of the truth.

• **Understand that it is pointless to compare themselves to images in media** because the images often promote appearance ideals (ideals of attractiveness) in order to sell us products and services.

• **Generate ways they can challenge and reject media** images and messages that promote appearance ideals.

RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED:

**Workshop materials**

- **Workshop guide**
- **Workshop presentation**
- **Two activity sheets** (one set per student)
- **Extension sheet** (one per student)
- **"Going further" sheet** (one per student)

**Stimulus film:**

- **“Dove: Evolution”**

The film demonstrates to students the transformation of one model’s appearance from their natural state to a finished image for use in advertising. It reveals how clever lighting, makeup, and digital manipulation can distort our perceptions of beauty, contributing to the pressure we face to live up to unrealistic ideals of appearance.

**From your school**

- **Projector and whiteboard**
- **Each student will need a pen**

You will need to source examples of advertisements. It is important to select ads that will resonate with your class, both boys and girls. You should aim to find two examples, one depicting a celebrity promoting a product aimed at the students’ age range, and other examples that advertise different products. It can be useful to search online for popular celebrities with the following search term: [insert celebrity name] ADVERTISEMENT, e.g. “One Direction” advertisement.

**OPTIONAL:**

- Scrap paper
- Flip chart and markers
**Overview**

**INTRODUCING MEDIA MESSAGES**
- What have we learned?
- What are we learning today?
- What do we mean by media?
- How can images be manipulated/edited?

**IMPACT OF MEDIA MESSAGES**
- Why is professional media often created in this way?
- How would it feel to have an image of you manipulated or altered?
- What is the impact of media messages?
- What is the influence of social media messages and images?
- How can we "remix" our responses to media messages?

**BE A CHAMPION FOR CHANGE**
- What have we learned today?
- How will you be a champion for change?
- Congratulations!
- Going further
How to use this guide

Impact of media messages

By the end of this section, students will have understood that it is pointless to compare themselves to images in media because the images often promote ideals of attractiveness in order to sell us products and services.

Desired responses from students. To help you guide students’ answers in a way that develops their understanding throughout the workshop and has the most impact on their body confidence.

Suggested time allocation. Reflects the relative importance of each section for achieving learning outcomes and improving students’ body confidence, but may be adapted to suit the length of your lesson.

Learning outcome. Students should achieve this by the end of the section.

Visual cues and learning objectives. To help you steer the workshop and deliver it effectively.

Teacher actions. Non-italicized bullet points highlight important questions to ask students so that key workshop concepts are addressed with the best impact on body confidence. Text in italics indicates instructions to help structure workshop activities, e.g. when you should present videos or use activity sheets. You may want to adapt these to the specific needs of your class.

Key activities. The key activities are those that are most effective for improving body confidence. These are shown in blue and should be prioritized if you are low on time.

Notes. Ideas and guidance for making the workshop as effective as possible for students.

Teacher actions

1. Presentation

2. Instructor Actions

3. Desired Responses

4. Presentation

5. Instructor Actions

6. Desired Responses

7. Presentation

8. Instructor Actions

9. Desired Responses

10. Presentation

11. Instructor Actions

12. Desired Responses
Introducing media messages

By the end of this section, students will have built media literacy by exploring how images and messages in professional media are often manipulations of the truth.

Welcome students to the “Media Messages” workshop. Briefly remind students that the workshop series aims to help them explore more helpful ways to manage appearance-related pressures and build body confidence.

Students are welcomed to the workshop.
Workshop 2 of 5
Media Messages

What have we learned?

Students briefly recall what they learned in the previous workshop.

What are we learning today?

Students understand that the workshop will focus on media images that promote appearance ideals, and how we can generate ways to challenge and reject these media messages.

TEACHER ACTIONS

> Invite one or two students to recall what they learned in the previous workshop.

> Summarize any key learning outcomes from the previous session that students might have missed.

> Briefly explain the areas of focus for today’s workshop. Briefly remind students of the ground rules to help create a supportive, non-judgmental environment throughout the five-session program.

DESired RESPONSES


Workshop 2 of 5
Media Messages

Students explore what we mean by media. They can list different types of media and sort media into two categories: professional media or personal/social media.

What do we mean by media?

Create a “reply chain”**: have students take turns naming an example of media, working your way around the classroom with no repetitions. How far around the class can you get?

- What different examples of media can we think of?
- Record students’ ideas on a board.
- Which of these examples of media are made by professionals?
- Which media do you and your friends make?

How can images be manipulated/differed?

Explain that we will start by exploring how images and messages in professional media can be a source of appearance-related pressures.

- How are images of people in the media manipulated or changed?
- Invite one or two responses from members of the class.
- Play “Dove: Evolution”.
- What did you find surprising, unrealistic, or unlikable about the finished product?
- Ask for one or two responses.

Any examples of media such as movies, TV shows, ads, particular social media sites, magazines, etc.

TV shows, movies, music videos, ads, computer games.

Photos, videos, comments, selfies, writing (often on social media sites).

General responses such as airbrushing, lighting, makeup, or choosing the best few images out of hundreds taken.

Surprise that so much is changed and how different the model looks from the start of the video before the hair and makeup starts, to the photo on the billboard.

Messages, images, and videos that are communicated in different ways.

Images, messages, and films produced by companies or businesses that are communicated through channels such as TV shows, magazines, advertising, movies, and music videos.

Images, messages, and films produced by you and your friends, including on social media sites.

Showing the “Dove: Evolution” film can result in immediate boosts to students’ body confidence.²

How can images be manipulated?

Students will recognize or list the different ways the image in the film has been manipulated.

How can images be manipulated?

Students record their reactions to the film on Activity Sheet 1.

> Play "Dove: Evolution" again, this time in two parts, pausing at the point the photos are taken.

> Instruct students to work individually to complete Activity sheet 1, Task 1.1.

• What decisions were made about the image before the photos were taken?

> Play "Dove: Evolution" after the photos were taken.

> Instruct students to complete Activity sheet 1, Task 1.2.

• What decisions were made about the image after the photos were taken?

Example: the photographer was chosen; the model was carefully selected; her hair was styled; eye makeup and foundation were applied; and professional lighting was used.

Example: just one photo was selected; blemishes and spots were removed; the skin tone was altered; her neck was elongated; they made her hair fuller; they lifted her eyebrows, made her eyes bigger, and whitened her teeth.
Students will share their reactions to the manipulation they witnessed in the film. They will be able to explain why it is unfair and unrealistic to compare themselves or others to manipulated images they see in the media.

Help students recognize that even celebrities don’t look like they do in magazines when they’re going about their daily lives.

Be sure to get the students to verbalize that they do not think it’s a good idea/fair/realistic to compare themselves or others and why they think this is so.

- How might you view images differently?
- What are some examples of other media you see that alter images of people in similar ways?

Use the slide to share the different decisions made for "Dove: Evolution".

Facilitate a short class discussion.

Images in the media are neither real nor achievable.

- Why do you think it’s unrealistic or unfair to compare the way you or your friends look to manipulated/altered images of people you see in professional media?

“Average” people are not models and do not have makeup artists or hairstylists or professional photo editors to make them look “perfect”, so it’s like comparing things on totally different levels, which is not fair.

- What have you learned from watching the video?
- How might you view images differently?
- What are some examples of other media you see that alter images of people in similar ways?
Impact of media messages

By the end of this section, students will have understood that it is pointless to compare themselves to images in media because the images often promote ideals of attractiveness in order to sell us products and services.

Students will recognize that images in professional media (specifically advertisements) reflect current ideals of attractiveness in order to promote their products and services.

**TEACHER ACTIONS**

- Now that the class has explored how images in professional media are often altered, explain that next they’ll consider the messages that often accompany these images.

- **Show your advertisements.** Quickly guide students through the key questions for each example advertisement, encouraging the entire class to respond.

- **What is being sold in this advertisement?**
- **Who are they using to sell it?**
- **Why are they using a person who looks like this?**

- **What would they alter a picture of this person to make them look more “ideal” in this ad?**

- Student responses will depend on which ads you choose.

**DESIZED RESPONSES**

- If the ad is for a product, to make it look like the product works as well as the ad promises. They are attractive, look appealing, and are popular with the people who would like to have that product.

- Advertisers want people to compare their own looks or lives to the ones they see in the advertisement. They imply that by buying that product, people can get closer to meeting ideals of appearance, even though this is unrealistic and unfair because most images are altered.

- Try to answer all of these questions for at least two advertisements to allow students time to reflect on the way advertisements are designed.

- Show your selection of ads along with this slide. You can find more details on the type of ads to collect in the equipment list on p. 2.
**Workshop 2 of 5**

**Media Messages**

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**PRESENTATION**

Why is professional media often created in this way?

- Promise
- Feelings
- Actions
- Results
- Fix

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**TEACHER ACTIONS**

> Explain that we are going to explore the messages behind ads in further detail.

> Facilitate a class discussion using one of the ads you’ve selected.

- What does the ad promise?

- What feelings does the ad evoke?

- What actions do people take after seeing the ad?

- What are the results of these actions?

- How do people respond to fix these results?

> Repeat these questions for the second ad you selected.

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**DESIRE RESPONSES**

The advertisement promotes appearance ideals or an ideal lifestyle and connects this with using the product. It suggests that buying the product will make you a better person or better-looking, and advertising promotes the idea that people will not like you as much if you don’t buy the product.

Viewers feel dissatisfied and want to make changes so they look more like what they see in the ad. They are inspired and hopeful that the product will help them get closer to ideals of attractiveness and achieve the ideal lifestyle, just like what they see in the ad.

They purchase the product, hoping it will make them change to be more like what they see.

Even if the product works, it doesn’t produce the desired change in look or lifestyle. This leads to disappointment and feelings of failure.

The person looks for another product that promises a better solution.

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You may want to use the "Extension sheet" with more able students, or set it as an independent follow-up task. Try to guide students to provide these answers for themselves, but they may need some support in articulating these points.

The feelings stage is really important—this is the response advertisers want to generate, and it’s these feelings that provoke the action of buying the product.
Workshop 2 of 5
Media Messages

PRESENTATION

> Facilitate a short class discussion.

> How do you think celebrities and models might feel after their images have been so drastically altered?

> Do these images make them feel that they have an ideal lifestyle?

Students consider the emotional impact that having your image manipulated can have.

TEACHER ACTIONS

> They make them feel sad, unworthy, insecure, not good enough.

DESIRED RESPONSES

You might want to refer to recent examples of celebrities who have openly commented on the manipulation of their photos.
Workshop 2 of 5
Media Messages

**PRESENTATION**

Explain that we aren’t just exposed to messages about appearance ideals in professional media, but in all different types of media.

Play the short animation on the slide and facilitate a short class discussion.

Where do you see ideals of appearance in the media throughout the day?

How many times a day do you see or read something that promotes the need to conform to appearance ideals? In the double digits? Hundreds? Thousands?

Answers could include social media, TV, advertising, magazines, newspapers, phone apps, taking photos. Any type of image can manipulate the truth, including movies, music videos, computer games, and their own and their friends’ pictures on social media.

Reinforce that it is not just the images we see but also the messages we are given that add to the pressure to achieve appearance ideals.

TEACHER ACTIONS

Students recognize how frequently they are exposed to messages that promote ideals of attractiveness, and the impact this can have. They pledge to challenge such images in the media.

> Have the class vote.

- Raise your hand first if you think this manipulation and these messages are right. Or second, if you think we should challenge such images because they are unhelpful.

- What might the impact of all these messages be?

Media messages that promote appearance ideals include:

- that looking good is easy; that everyone should focus on how they look instead of other things in life; and that if you don’t match ideals of attractiveness, you are not good enough.

- Each form of media or communication might be unhelpful, or even harmful.

DESERVED RESPONSES

It is not fair or helpful to alter images and promote these messages in this way, because they do not reflect the truth. This means it is also unfair to compare ourselves with these images.

Voting in this way allows students to demonstrate their personal commitment to change the way they consume media.

Inviting a few students to give their opinion will help them to conclude by themselves that it is neither fair nor useful to compare oneself to altered images in the media.
Explain to students that they are going to explore messages behind different media in more detail, as well as the reasons it is unfair to compare themselves to such images.

Arrange students in small groups.

Instruct students to complete one or more examples on Activity sheet 2.

• What message is each type of media trying to get across?

Because these images are not realistic, it is not fair to compare ourselves to the ideals of appearance that are promoted in media images and messages.

Why is it unfair for us to compare ourselves to this media?

Invite one or two groups to share their responses.

Have the class vote.

Raise your hand first if you think it is fair and useful to compare yourselves to images or messages promoting appearance ideals—or second if you think it’s unhelpful or even harmful.
Workshop 2 of 5
Media Messages

> Have the class vote.

• **Raise your hand** if you think we should all challenge altered images in the media or messages that promote ideals of attractiveness.

> Explain that the easiest way to take personal action is to change the way we each respond to, and challenge, media images. This means taking apart the messages we receive and taking action to change what messages and images we consume.

> Ask students to discuss in pairs how they might pass on or reinforce appearance ideals on social media.

• What strategies do people use to create pictures of themselves that show them looking close to appearance ideals?

• How does viewing images like this on social media sites make you feel?

Students explore how ideals of appearance are promoted through messages and images on social media, and the impact this can have.

Encourage students to share specific strategies. You could remind students of the different techniques they saw in “Dove: Evolution”. Are similar techniques used in personal and social media?

Draw out the negative impact of viewing images that promote appearance ideals/the ideal lifestyle.

Help students understand it is okay to want to look good in selfies, but trying to look good all the time (or as the only focus of social media activities) can get in the way of other important things they might want to promote, like showing themselves having fun, focusing on achievements, etc.
> Facilitate a short class discussion.
> Instruct groups of students to each consider a different type of media.

- What might you do to show that you don’t agree with, or don’t like, the way advertising and media, including social media, emphasize or reinforce ideals of attractiveness?

> Invite students to share responses for each type of media.

You could avoid editing or retouching your own photos, tweet positive messages, write to magazines, campaign against the use of retouched photos, tell people what happens in images, or start an online petition.

Encourage students to be creative with their ideas.

It might be helpful to share an example. One example is 14-year-old Julia Bluhm, who created an online petition that led the magazine *Seventeen* to agree not to retouch models’ bodies or face shapes.
Be a champion for change

By the end of this section, students will have reflected on their learning throughout the workshop, committing to one action to champion body confidence.

Throughout the workshop, students will have:

- **Built media literacy, exploring how images and messages**—from advertising and movies to social media—are often manipulations of the truth.
- **Understood that it is pointless to compare themselves to images in media** because they often promote appearance ideals in order to sell us products and services.
- **Generated ways they can challenge and reject media** images and messages that promote ideals of appearance.

Students will share the key messages from today’s workshop.

> Ask for volunteers to briefly recall what they learned in the workshop.
> What have we learned in today’s workshop?
> * Invite volunteers to read out the key learning points from the slide, and summarize any points students might have missed.
>

Students articulate the key messages in their own words.
Media Messages

Workshop 2 of 5

How will you be a champion for change?

Students will use what they have learned in today’s workshop to make a pledge to challenge or resist images or messages in the media that promote appearance ideals.

PRESENTATION

TEACHER ACTIONS

DESIRE RESPONSES

Help students choose a small and specific action, making it easier for them to stick to their pledge.

> Ask one or two students to share:
  - What have we learned about images in the media?
  - How will you personally challenge or resist images promoting ideals of appearance in the media?

> Invite one or two students to share their ideas with the class.

For example, students could share what they know about the manipulation that takes place in the media with others, challenge a brand or media outlet that uses altered media images, or change what they choose to publish on social media sites.

> Thank students for their participation in today’s workshop, and draw the workshop to an end.

Congratulations!

You’ve now completed Workshop 2 of Confident Me: School Workshops for Body Confidence. The next workshop is: Confront Comparisons.

Students will use what they have learned in today’s workshop to make a pledge to challenge or resist images or messages in the media that promote appearance ideals.
Encourage your students to explore the ideas raised in today’s workshop by completing the “Going further” sheet before the next workshop.

Suggest that they identify three ways in which they compare their appearance with those around them.
Next steps

You have now completed Workshop 2: Media Messages from the Confident Me: School Workshops for Body Confidence. The next workshop in the series is: Confront Comparisons.

ABOUT THIS WORKSHOP:

In this workshop, students identify how valuing and focusing too much on the way people look often leads them to compare their own appearance with their friends' as well as people they see in the media.

Students see that the features they tend to focus on when comparing themselves to others are the features they don't like, and that they compare themselves to people who they perceive to have much better versions of these features. They explore how these comparisons are unhelpful and can be harmful due to the negative feelings they create in themselves and in others. Finally, they practice using alternative, more positive responses during moments of comparison that help make them confident to be the best version of themselves and to celebrate their individuality.

Access the materials for this workshop and others in the Confident Me: Five-Session Program at selfesteem.dove.us

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