Curriculum links

WA Curriculum

Personal identity and change

- Changes associated with puberty.
- Strategies to manage changes associated with puberty.

Healthy and active communities

- Ways in which health information can influence health decisions and behaviours

International technical guidance on sexuality education

Key concept 6.3 Puberty (9-12 years)

- Puberty signals changes in a person's reproductive capability.

Materials

- Student Activity Sheet: *Media and body image* [one per group]

Before you get started

- Read the background notes on Body image.
- Consider the students in your class; particularly those who may have disordered eating habits, diagnosed eating disorders, or challenges associated with body image, self-esteem or eating. Ensure that appropriate support strategies are put in place, and tailor activities to best suit individual needs.
- Be mindful of the impact that discussions about body image may have on all students.
- Try to ensure that posters in your classroom display models with a range of body shapes and sizes.
- Collect a range of suitable food advertisements/music videos showing stereotypical male and female body types for the small group activity. These may include ideals such as tall, broad and strong men, and women who are lean but curvy in the 'right places'.

Learning activities

Sharing circle: body image messages

25 minutes

Students explore the definition of body image and factors that affect it and recognise that we are all different physically. The aspects of development that they have little control over are discussed.

1. Explain that body image refers to how you see yourself, how you feel about the way you look and what you think other people might think about how you look. Explore this idea until you are sure students understand it.
2. Conduct a sharing circle using a small, soft ball and the following questions:
   - *Name one way your family can affect your body image in a positive/negative way. E.g. genetics, meals eaten at home, income, traditions, customs and habits around food and exercise.*
   - *Name a way your friends can affect your body image in a positive/negative way. E.g. peer influence - liking or disliking the way another person dresses, how they speak to you about how you look.*
   - *Name one thing about yourself that you feel good about and why. This can be to do with your body or another quality.*
   - *Name one celebrity (musician, actor, athlete...) who has made you compare your body to his/hers.*
   - *Name how you might feel if you came to school on free dress day in your school uniform?*
   - *Name how you might feel if everyone in your group was wearing a certain type of wristband and you didn't have one.*
   - *Name a diet that you have heard of. Examples may include raw food, low carb, keto, fasting, paleo etc.*
   - *What is your favourite nutritious food? (Keep in mind, some students will have different ideas about what is healthy or nutritious - try and encourage them to think about fruit/veg, dairy, grains, healthy fats and any meals that include a mix of these foods).*
   - *What is your favourite way to exercise or be physically active? (Like above, exercise will look different for students depending on what they have access to outside of school - encourage those without active sports or hobbies to think about things like walking, riding a bike, dancing, going to the park, playing on the playground, stretching...)*
3. Have students record their own definition of body image and draw a mind map of where they might get their messages about their own body image.

   Ask:

- *In what ways are we different to each other? (e.g. height weight, complexion, eye colour, likes/dislikes, abilities)*
- *What are some things we can change through effort, by studying or practising? (e.g. sporting skills, musical skills)*
- *What are some things we can't change about ourselves? (e.g. height, eye colour)*
- *What are some things about ourselves that will change over time whether we like it or not? (e.g. height and weight will change as we grow, interests change as we mature)*

4. Have each student write down three things they are good at and share them with a partner. Stress that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. What makes the world interesting is that we all have these unique qualities. Explain that, as with other traits, each of us grows, develops and matures at a different rate. During adolescence and puberty, we experience significant changes in height, weight and weight distribution.

   In girls:

- Typically begins earlier than in boys.
- Usually begins between 10.5 and 11.5 years (but may be as early as 8 or 9 and as late as 12 or older).
- Full physical development is usually reached by 15.5 years.

In boys:

- Usually begins between 11 and 13.5 years.
- Full physical development is usually reached by age 16 or 17.
- Often accompanied by an increase in muscles and strength.
- Often accompanied by an increase in appetite.

5. Ask:
   - *Do you feel like you have ever been picked on or teased about qualities (either physical or otherwise) that are unique to you? How did you feel?*
   - *How could others change their approach to you to make the situation better?*
   - *What did you do to cope with your feelings about the situation?*
   - *Have you ever picked on others over some trait that is unique to them?*
   - *If so, how did the person you picked on respond?*
   - *If you had the situation to do over again, what would you do differently?*
6. Stress that we are all different in many ways, including physically. Some of these differences are within our power to influence while others are out of our control. Stress that physical fitness and healthy eating are factors that are within our control that can help change our body shape. Sometimes, even with healthy eating and physical fitness our bodies may not change - and this is very normal. Everyone is born with different genes that impact how our body changes throughout the lifetime. Each of us should focus on being the best we can be and show respect toward others.

Busting body myths

25 minutes

Students examine the ideal body type presented in the mass media and use their health literacy skills to deflate these myths.

1. Divide students into small groups and give each group two ads (from a popular magazine or online) or

   access to two YouTube music videos that portray unrealistic body images of males and females.
   - Give each group one copy of the Student Activity Sheet: *Media and body image*. Ask each group to discuss and answer the questions about their advertisement or music video. Model the activity first using an ad to demonstrate the health literacy skills required.
   - Ask one representative from each group to briefly present their conclusions about one or both of the ads/music videos critiqued by their group. Make tallies of the responses to each question.

   Likely responses are:

   Questions 1 and 2: Most models appear either average weight or thin (rarely overweight or other than tall and lean for women or tall and muscular for men).

   Question 3: Often the product and the body type of models are in conflict (i.e., slim people are eating unhealthy food)

Question 4: Advertisers/music video producers want people to think models look good naturally, however, most models rely on makeup, cosmetic enhancements, and/or computer-enhanced photography to look the way they do.

Question 5: Most often models appear to be having fun while using the product/promoting the song.

2. Ask:
   - *What messages do magazines, TV, social media, internet advertisements, music videos, etc. send to young people about women's and men's bodies?* (Possible responses may include; it's not good to be overweight (or even to have a large body frame); it is not good to be shorter or have a stocky build; slim people are the norm; there is an ideal body type (tall and thin for women and lean, muscular, athletic for men); if you want to have fun, achieving the ideal body type should be a goal*)*
   - *If we believed these messages, how might we think about our bodies that would not be healthy?*
   - *It's important to like our bodies. What can we do or say to ourselves when we get negative messages from the media and others about our bodies?* (e.g. turn off TV shows/ don't read mags that portray 'perfect' unattainable images; limit spending time with people who tell us how we should look; wear clothes that we like and not just what we think others will like; talk to parents and siblings about what they looked like at your age)
   - *What could the media do to make sure young people had a more realistic and healthy idea of women's and men's bodies?*
3. On a blank sheet of paper, have students draw a mirror. They then imagine that they are their own best friend. Ask: *What would your best friend say are the positive qualities of your body? What are some other positive qualities? List* these inside the mirror.

3-2-1 Reflection

1. Have students complete the following questions individually. Give examples for each first.
   - *What messages might you get from your friends that would make you feel okay/not feel okay about your body?*
   - *What messages might you get from your family that would make you feel okay/not feel okay about your body?*
   - *What messages might you get from your coaches that would make you feel okay/not feel okay about your body?*
   - *What can you remind yourself so that you only let the positive messages from other people influence how you think about your body?*
2. On the other side of the mirror, have students write a message that will remind them to only let the positive messages from other people influence how they think about their body.

Health promoting schools

Background teacher note: Health promoting schools framework.

Partnerships

Family

- Talk Soon. Talk Often: a guide for parents talking to their kids about sex is a free hardcopy resource that can be bulk ordered by schools and website. Send a copy home to parents prior to starting your RSE program. The booklet offers ages and stage related information on puberty (and other topics) so that parents can reinforce the topics covered in class. (How to order hard copies.) Provide the link to parents on school websites and social media.
- Run a parent workshop and run this activity with parents to model the content that will be covered in your RSE program.
- Run a parent and child evening session, where the children can teach the parents what they have been learning about.



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