TRANSITIONAL
LIFE SKILLS
FOR TEENS

TEENS ~ BODY IMAGE AND BEYOND

Facilitator Reproducible Activities for Groups and Individuals

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Illustrated by
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Dedication

I dedicate this book to . . .

our children, Mitchell, Kathy, Lynne and Amy who originally taught me how to be a mom of teenagers

and our grandchildren, Sophia, Nick, Ari, Jenny, Mason; Moselle, Avi, Shai; Kyle, Tyler and Evan, who continue my education!

Carol Butler

I dedicate this book to . . .

my daughter, Tambria whose adolescent challenges helped her become the person and counselor she is today

and my granddaughter Amber who emerged from her teens a wonderful woman and mother; and my granddaughter Myriah whose teen years are yet to come.

Deepest Gratitude

Our gratitude to these teen counselors for their input . . .

Annette Damien, MS, PPS
Beth Jennings, CTEC Counselor

And to these teens for their insights . . .

Joseph Dritch
Hannah Lavoie
Moselle Yulish

And to these professionals who make us look good!

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Purpose of the Book, Teens – *Body Image and Beyond*

Body image affects males and females; puberty’s physical changes, combined with identity, popularity, and athletic pressures, contribute to adolescent challenges. Food and weight are not the only issues; preoccupation with facial features, skin, hair, clothes and height, and striving for brawny builds or hourglass figures undermine peace of mind and divert attention from other aspects of self and life.

*Teens – Body Image and Beyond* helps teens to accept their body types and inherited features, see differences as distinctions, and know their appearance is not their identity.

Media messages, online profiles, friends, sports, eating disorders, muscle madness, temptations to use steroids or diet pills, and other issues are addressed. Teens will be encouraged to value variety in shapes and sizes and to embrace their own and others’ uniqueness.

Young people who wish to change alterable traits will receive nutrition and fitness tips. Teens with gender identity concerns will know that they are not alone and they will learn how to access professional expertise.

Dating is laden with body image issues; teens will consider whether they pursue partner-pressured perfection or are self-directed. Teens will identify the non-physical appeal and qualities they seek in partners and relationships.

While the intensity of body image challenges is validated, teens will be encouraged to build character, ponder ethical dilemmas, see struggles as steppingstones, and find ways to be charitable.

**Adolescent Appeal is Essential**

Teens like to be active and interact; games, role plays, panel discussions and team activities promote movement and fun; thought-provoking questions encourage verbal and artistic expression; teens create posters, poetry, slogans and skits; they play expert advisors to each other.

Teens who prefer private self-examination are equally served; facilitators who believe their teens need introspection rather than interaction have that option; most sessions are adaptable for individual or group activities.

**Launching Life**

Identities developed during adolescence set the stage for life. Keeping physical appearance in perspective and prioritizing internal attributes helps teens forge ahead as whole persons whose heads, hearts and hands mean more than faces and figures.

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*Out of the mouths of babes oft times come gems;* teens, older and wiser than babes, are able to learn, grow, discern truths, develop values and influence peers with *pearls of wisdom.*
For the Facilitator Using Teens – *Body Image and Beyond*

**FORMAT**

An Introduction for Participants to motivate teens for the activities (Page 7).

A chapter cover sheet with a related quotation and a description of each session.

Ten chapters, two to nine sessions per chapter . . .

- My Profile
- My Friends
- My Genes and My Genes
- Shape, Size and Sports
- A Different Perspective
- Body Size Diversity
- Are You What You Eat?
- Work Out or Play?
- Sexual Image
- Beyond Body

Reproducible page(s) for each session – most are adaptable to individual or group activities.

Each session supplies an explanation *For the Facilitator* which includes:

I. Purpose – goals for the teens
II. General Comments – brief background information
III. Possible Activities – ways to introduce the topic; interactive and/or individual activities
IV. Enrichment Activities – additional learning opportunities

Most activities provide more than enough material for a fifty minute group or individual session; if more time is needed, facilitators may wish to assign homework or continue topics at the next meeting.

Delicate issues are addressed; **facilitator discretion is advised**. Feel free to photocopy a page, white out text and/or write in additional information, then reproduce and distribute.

Facilitators are reminded to **refer troubled teens** for a psychiatric evaluation if they appear severely depressed, admit to thoughts about harming themselves or others, have been or are being abused, or based on your intuition, indicate they need more help. Follow all legal reporting requirements. If threats are imminent, call 911 or local emergency numbers.

Teens need to know that **keeping secrets can kill**. If they are aware that a peer wants to harm self or others, they need to tell a trusted adult. Breaking a confidence to save lives is honorable.

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V
Tips for Presenting This Information to Teens

To know how to suggest is the great art of teaching.
~ Henri Frederic Amiel

Ask, don’t tell, whenever possible.

Teens learn by doing; active involvement versus passive listening has greater impact.

Working in teams or pairs makes most sessions more enjoyable.

Encourage a teen to list peers’ ideas on the board during brainstorming.

Allow teens to ponder problems and possible solutions and arrive at their own conclusions.

Encourage teens to respectfully disagree during the many opportunities for discussion and debate.

Encourage disclosure at each individual’s comfort level.

To encourage personalized modes of expression, opportunities for talking, role plays, games, drawing and writing are provided. Allow teens to deviate from the suggested activities to use any safe method to communicate.

Remind teens to share what is true for them; there are few right or wrong answers.

Ask teens to pour feelings onto paper without censorship; mechanics, spelling or artistic ability are unimportant in these instances.

Remind teens to use code names so that only the writer knows the person’s identity. Example: if their friend Greg loves baseball, use HLB for He Loves Baseball when referring to him.

Although an agenda is provided, deviate at will! You know your teens, what they need, what will work.

If a topic of high interest and relevance emerges, seize the moment; return to your plan later or tomorrow!

Encourage teens to talk privately with you after a group session if overwhelming emotions or issues surface; remind them that additional professional help and support groups are available; refer and report abuse or threats as warranted.
Teens – *Body Image and Beyond*
Introduction for Participants

**Body image is big!**

It affects your identity, popularity, dating, athletics, employment, and your life.

Some aspects of appearance can be changed; some cannot.

Your can alter your image and its importance.

Despite media madness and pressures for perfection, you have the power to change your perspective and make peace with your uniqueness.

You may decide that your head, hands, and heart matter more than your face and form.

You can develop and cherish internal aspects of your identity.

As you complete the handouts, or participate in activities, consider the following:

- Think for yourself, give honest opinions, express feelings, ask questions.
- Respond thoughtfully; write for you, yourself, not for class or publication; draw for your eyes only, unless you wish to share.
- If overwhelming emotions arise, ask for one-to-one time with your teacher or counselor; tell a parent or care provider.
- If a peer tells you about wanting to harm self or others, tell a trusted adult. Secrets kill; sharing saves lives! If there is no one to tell, call 911 or your local emergency services number.
- Any person in emotional distress may go to a hospital emergency room for help.

You will have opportunities to discuss, debate, advise peers, and make decisions. Ultimately, you decide the value you place on looks; what you love; how you live.

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*We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey no one can take for us or spare us.*

~Marcel Proust~
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InSight ........................................... page 13 ▶
Teens lose their sight momentarily; then open eyes, and minds, to society’s unrealistic standards, media madness and peer pressure regarding appearance.

Dear Advice Columnist … .......................... page 15 ▶
Teens role-play advice columnists, answering fictitious letters about looks, dating, popularity and other issues; additionally, teens may compose anonymous real-life problem letters and receive peer feedback.

BODY BIAS BINGO ................................. page 17 ▶
Teens play BINGO and consider cultural bias, advertising agendas and role models; celebrities with talent and humanitarianism are compared to those with superficial appeal.

I-Messages ........................................... page 19 ▶
Teens liken self-talk to electronic messages by deleting negative thoughts, replacing them with positive but realistic I-messages and noting resultant changes in feelings and actions.

Coin a Phrase .............................. page 21 ▶
Through a coin-toss game, teens analyze and personalize quotations about enduring aspects of profiles or personhood.

Attitude is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than what people do or say. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill.

— CHARLES R. SWINDOLL
**InSight**

FOR THE FACILITATOR

I. Purpose
To boost awareness of media madness and stereotypes dictating what’s cool and how teens should look.

II. General Comments
Teens live in a material world; this helps teens replace probable prior unawareness with insight.

III. Possible Activities
1. Individual Activity
   Distribute the InSight handout and ask teens to define and apply some of the terms to their experiences in writing and/or aloud.

2. Blindfold Game
   a. Before session write the terms on the board, scattered randomly, as on the handout.
   b. Tell teens they will be blindfolded, then able to see and gain insight about the terms.
   c. Teens take turns holding one hand over their closed eyes, and pointing the other index finger forward. (A blindfold may be used if preferred).
   d. A volunteer guide accompanies each contestant to the board, to ensure safety.
   e. The blindfolded teen touches the board with an index finger and opens his/her eyes.
   f. The teen defines the term closest to his/her finger and applies it to personal experience, and/or asks for peer ideas; no one is put on the spot! Erase terms as they are used.

Elicit the following concepts:

- **Online profile** – Teens put their best face forward in photos, attract friends, appear cool.
- **Unrealistic standards** – Society expects muscle men, hourglass females, symmetrical faces.
- **Media bias** – TV, movies, music videos and magazines promote thinness or machismo.
- **Media literacy** – Awareness of sex appeal in ads promising perfection through products.
- **Obsession** – Fixation on popularity, appearance; focusing excessively on a perceived flaw.
- **Favoritism** – Preference or prejudice in jobs, popularity, etc., based on appearance.
- **Emaciated models** – The former standard; current efforts are to promote healthier looks.
- **Comparison** – Looking at self in relation to a fashion model or weight-lifter.
- **Touch-up** – Processes done to photos to make celebrities look better.
- **Competition** – Trying to have the best body, the most friends, the coolest clothes.
- **Authentic** – Being the real you, not trying to impress others or achieve popularity.
- **Popularity** – Status and recognition usually due to looks, athletic prowess, or clothing.
- **Stereotypes** – Discrimination against differences; how cool people should look, dress, act.
- **Unique** – Valuing individually; seeing a difference as a positive distinction.
- **Social hierarchy** – False status of a clique; the haves and have-nots; in-groups and outcasts.
- **Perspective** – Viewing character as more important than appearance, cars, performance.
- **Weight neutrality** – Not chasing a perfect weight; focusing on what really matters to you.
- **Emotional Immunity** – Ignoring toxic comments, knowing the truth about your attributes.
- **Role models** – Rock stars, celebrities, athletes; Barbie and Ken; people who use their fame to promote humanitarian efforts; people in science, politics, the arts, etc. who improve the world.
- **Rubenesque** – Rubens painted sensual, full-bodied women; plumpness was pleasing!
- **Unconditional acceptance** – Love of self and others regardless of face, figure, fashion.
- **External motivation** – Looking or acting to please others, for applause or approval.
- **Internal motivation** – Desire to be kind, competent, etc., for inner rewards.

IV. Enrichment Activity
Encourage teens to discuss, *Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it.* ~ Confucius
## Dear Advice Columnist …

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My partner always stares at people with better bodies than mine.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I’m a thin male with good grades.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>People are bullying and bad-mouthing me online and in person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel inferior.</td>
<td></td>
<td>How do I find a girlfriend?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My parents constantly complain about my appearance.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>I’m a plain female who males call a friend.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>My friends laugh at different ethnic groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How do I find romance?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am jealous of good looking, popular people.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Better looking people are trying to steal my partner.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>My parents disapprove of my friends based on their looks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I can't afford the trendy clothes, most people wear.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>People are jealous of my great face and perfect body.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am starving myself to fit into size two jeans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do to be accepted?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How do I find friends?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Will it be worth it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I want a weight lifter body but I’m too lazy.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>No one likes me because I look different.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>I want plastic surgery to reshape my nose so I will have more friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How can I be accepted?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What will my new friends be like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I want to be in the popular clique but I don’t look or act cool.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I don’t measure up to movie or music stars or sports heroes.</td>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I feel unlucky. People with good looks and money get all the breaks.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Should I change my appearance to please others?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How will I get some good luck?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Dear Advice Columnist …

FOR THE FACILITATOR

I. Purpose
To consider situations related to looks, dating, popularity and obtain peer feedback.

II. General Comments
Teens often sacrifice health, sanity and individuality at any cost to seek social acceptance.

III. Possible Activities
1. Individual Activity
Distribute the Dear Advice Columnist . . . handout and ask teens to write their advice on a separate paper and/or share their ideas orally.

2. Game Using Cut-Outs
   a. Before session, photocopy handout, cut apart Advice Columnist squares; fold, and place them in a container.
   b. Ask teens about their experiences writing to or reading responses from advice columnists.
   c. Teens take turns sitting at the front of the room and reading a cut-out from the container.
   d. Peers offer brief opinions and advice without questioning the person.

3. Game Using Teen Created Letters
   a. Distribute blank slips of paper; teens write short anonymous letters asking advice about situations they face related to looks and body image, (involving dating, sports, etc.).
   b. Allow time for completion, then collect folded slips and place them into a container.
   c. Teens take turns reading and giving advice (as in the game using cut-outs above).

NUMBERS 1 & 2 ABOVE, advice corresponding to numbers on cut-outs may include these ideas:
1. You are not inferior because of body build; you may need a partner who appreciates who you are.
2. Find females who like brains not brawn, who may be similarly interested in intellectual pursuits.
3. Be assertive; talk with a trusted adult.
4. Dangerous side effects; brief weight loss; find people who like you, not a number on your scale.
5. Talk with the friend, say No to the borrowing; help with fashion suggestions; shop together.
6. Determine if complaints are valid; discuss with your family your more important traits.
7. Some romances start as friendships; stop acting like one of the guys; seek different types of males.
8. Encourage friends to have empathy and be open to diversity; if it continues, consider new friends.
9. Dangerous side-effects; often illegal; short-lived results; instead, exercise, practice, eat right.
10. Find a girlfriend in an art class, gallery, or art organization; all females don’t look for athletes.
11. Look your best, be yourself, stop comparisons; seek friends with similar interests and values.
12. If your partner leaves because of someone’s looks, let your partner go.
13. Consider the validity of their concerns, (dirty? gang attire?); discuss your friends’ good points.
14. Dangerous; illegal, weight gain when you stop using speed; get proper nutrition and exercise.
15. Focus on your unique strengths and personality and find like-minded friends.
16. Acceptance with true friends is not based on fashion; attractive dress need not be expensive.
17. People may be jealous or may sense conceit; get your mind off yourself; be interested in others.
18. Starving ruins physical and mental health and when you resume eating, the jeans no longer fit.
19. You might eat more due to decreased inhibitions; it’s dangerous and liver disease swells bellies.
20. Stop unrealistic comparisons; be the best you that you can be; work on enduring traits and goals.
21. Get up and work out, or decide on different goals; develop your mind instead of muscles, etc.
22. Celebrate your individuality; become a champion for people with distinctions.
23. Plastic surgery won’t fix your life or personality; you will gain only temporary friends.
24. You will never please everyone; develop personal goals, unique style and internal attributes.
25. They may be favored; you can make your own luck through positive thinking and hard work.

IV. Enrichment Activities
Teens share the best advice they ever received, (not necessarily related to body image).
# BODY BIAS BINGO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 1-10</th>
<th>I 11-20</th>
<th>N 21-30</th>
<th>G 31-40</th>
<th>O 41-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does body bias affect relationships and popularity?</td>
<td>How does the media touch up images?</td>
<td>How have models suffered by the current thinking that Thin is In?</td>
<td>Name a celebrity famous mostly for face, figure and fashion.</td>
<td>What can be learned from a beautiful actor who didn’t get surgery on her nose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What magazines promote thinness, muscles and good looks? How?</td>
<td>Which dolls and mannequins promote unrealistic ideals? How?</td>
<td>What happens when people compare themselves to unrealistic ideals?</td>
<td>Name a celebrity whose talent rather than looks makes him or her famous.</td>
<td>What can be learned from a man born with no right hand who became an Olympic pitcher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the way most music video stars look and dress.</td>
<td>If someone insults your appearance, what does it mean to consider the source?</td>
<td>How would you help a friend who says, I hate the way I look.</td>
<td>Name a celebrity with real charitable or humanitarian interests.</td>
<td>What can people do to reduce the power of media madness in their lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe a typical movie star’s facial features and body build.</td>
<td>What types of businesses make money on people’s pursuit of thinness, muscles and attractiveness?</td>
<td>What can you suggest to the media to promote realistic images and a range of body sizes?</td>
<td>Describe internal traits you admire in a family member.</td>
<td>How can non-celebrity teens be positive and realistic, true role models, and for whom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does this mean? You can’t judge a book by its cover.</td>
<td>How can a friend help someone who looks different or has body size issues?</td>
<td>What motivates bullies who mock people who look different?</td>
<td>Describe internal traits you admire in a teacher, coach or counselor.</td>
<td>Describe traits you admire in a person who is in the public eye.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BODY BIAS BINGO
FOR THE FACILITATOR

I. Purpose
To notice and diminish the effects of media on body image.
To compare celebrities known for superficial attributes with meaningful role models.

II. General Comments
Unchallenged, media dictates weight, good looks, hair styles, fashion, popularity, what’s cool and what’s not. Glossy photos are often air-brushed or otherwise altered. Teens need critical thinking skills about who they admire and why; they need exposure to people who are recognized for what they do versus how they look. Awareness of money making agendas in ads for products to lose weight, gain muscle or fix a feature, is essential.

III. Possible Activities
   Elicit - the ability to analyze, evaluate and create messages.
b. Encourage brainstorming about the messages bombarding teens today.
c. Distribute Body Bias BINGO.
d. Instruct teens to randomly number the boxes (according to the ranges next to each letter).
e. Ideally everyone’s numbers will be in different order. Examples:
   • Under B a teen will label the boxes 1-10, in any order.
   • Under I – 11-20, in any order
   • Under N – 21-30, in any order
   • Under G – 31-40, in any order
   • Under O – 41-50, in any order
   Alternatively, the facilitator or a volunteer numbers the pages before group, all pages numbered differently.
f. The BINGO Game:
   • Facilitator calls one number per letter; teens with the number raise hands.
   • Teens read their questions aloud and answer; no rights or wrongs.
   • If a teen cannot respond to the question, peers may assist.
   • After responding, teens color or mark an “X” in the corresponding box.
   • If the same teens keep having lucky numbers, let those who have had no turns call the next numbers, (using numbers they have on their pages).
   • Teens win by answering and marking all boxes in a row horizontally, vertically or diagonally.
   • When someone wins, winner calls the numbers as peers continue to play.
   • At session’s end, if no one won, the teen with the most marked numbers wins.

IV. Enrichment Activities
Discuss celebrities and their charities.