

Body Image: Size Discrimination



Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- W – 9.1 Analyze and develop strategies to reduce the effects of stereotyping on body image, e.g., health risks of altering natural body size/shape, to meet media ideal.

Teacher Background

We live in a world where value about who you are is often based on appearance. Discrimination about size is common and teasing and bullying about size and shape is too often tolerated. The stereotypical ideal images for males and females are often impossible to achieve.

As in previous lessons, the individual instructor sets the pace, meaning that if there is an individual concept that requires reinforcement, there is opportunity to use this lesson as a springboard for further discussion.

This lesson is taken in part from the Grade 10-12 *Body Image Kit*. The Body Image Kit contains more activities you can use in your classroom. Contact information for the Body Image Kit is in the reference section at the end of this lesson.

Objectives

Through the use of group activities, participants will:

- Clarify personal values regarding size acceptance.
- Discuss discrimination based on weight and shape.

Materials

- Handout: *Ground Rules*
- Handout: *Exploring Discrimination*
- Discrimination Cards (6 cards, each with one term):

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1 Name-calling | 4 Weightism |
| 2 Stereotype | 5 Scapegoat |
| 3 Prejudice | 6 Persecution |

Get Ready

- Introduce today’s lesson, e.g., “The subject of today’s discussion is discrimination based on size and shape.”
- Body image can be a sensitive topic to many individuals, so it is important that others be respectful of emotions and feelings that may arise. Review ground rules.

Activity: Size Discrimination

- Write the word **FAT** on the board.
- Ask students to share their reaction to the word. Write their responses on the board (“Fat” is usually associated with negative reactions).
- Write the word **THIN** on the board.
- Ask students to share their reaction to the word thin. Write their responses on the board (“Thin” is usually associated with more positive reactions).
- Lead a discussion regarding the students’ responses to these two words. Include a discussion about inherited body types, e.g., that we are all born with an inherited body shape that we can’t change. Use the “Body Shapes” handout.
- Ask the question, “Do you think that name-calling and jokes against people who are different sizes are harmless and fun, or do they cause harm?”
- Divide the class into 6 groups. Distribute a Discrimination Card and the handout Exploring Discrimination to each group.
- Instruct each group to complete the task outlined on their handout and have a spokesperson from each group share their response.
- As each spokesperson comes forward, they begin to form a circle.
 - At this point the students see, through the visual power of the circle, the possibility that “small incidents” such as jokes and stereotypes may contribute to the development of larger, demoralizing acts of persecution.
 - Ask, “What does the circle symbolize or represent?”
- Revisit the original question, “Do you think that name-calling and jokes against people who are different sizes are harmless and fun, or do they cause harm?”
- Discuss:
 - Why do individuals or our society, in general, let intolerance progress? Remind them that intolerance is a real issue that can personally affect any student.
 - What can we do to stop this negative chain of events?

Discussion

- Why do people associate negative beliefs with the word "fat" and positive beliefs with the word "thin?"
- Do you think this information is accurate? Can we make accurate judgments about people based on size and shape?

Video Streaming

The *Pound Foolish* video (20 minutes) compliments this Size Discrimination lesson plan. It can be borrowed through the Alberta Libraries inter-library loan system.

There is an excellent video clip on this topic on the Blue Wave Website at www.ok2bblue.com/videoclips (Alyssa - 2: Acceptance).

Conclusion

In this lesson, students are encouraged to think about how people are discriminated against because of size and shape and how intolerance affects people.

Take Home Activity

- Have students do a web-based search on the topic "Health at Every Size – HAES"
- Two reliable websites are: <http://haescommunity.org>
<http://healthateverysize.org.uk>
- Have them share their findings with the class and discuss what "Health at Every Size" means.

Lesson – HAES acknowledges that good health is not dependent on size. In other words, just because someone is large does not mean that they are unhealthy; and conversely, just because someone is thin does not mean that they are healthy. More so, health is determined by healthy behaviors, like healthy eating and active living. HAES celebrates the natural diversity of people's inherited body shapes and sizes.

Assessment Strategy

Students can identify different ways that people are discriminated against regarding their shape.

References

Alberta Mental Health Board. (2001). *Body Image Kit*. Retrieved from <http://www.bodyimageworks.com>

This kit contains several other activities that you could also use with your students.

**The Body Image Kit (AMHB 2001)
is free to borrow from several sources.**

Contact:

- Your school's community health nurse
- Edmonton Public Schools: Comprehensive School Health Consultant
- Edmonton Catholic Schools: Consultant - Wellness, Physical Education and Health.
- Alberta Health Services Mental Health Promotion Specialist, Addiction and Mental Health, Edmonton

Exploring Discrimination Worksheet

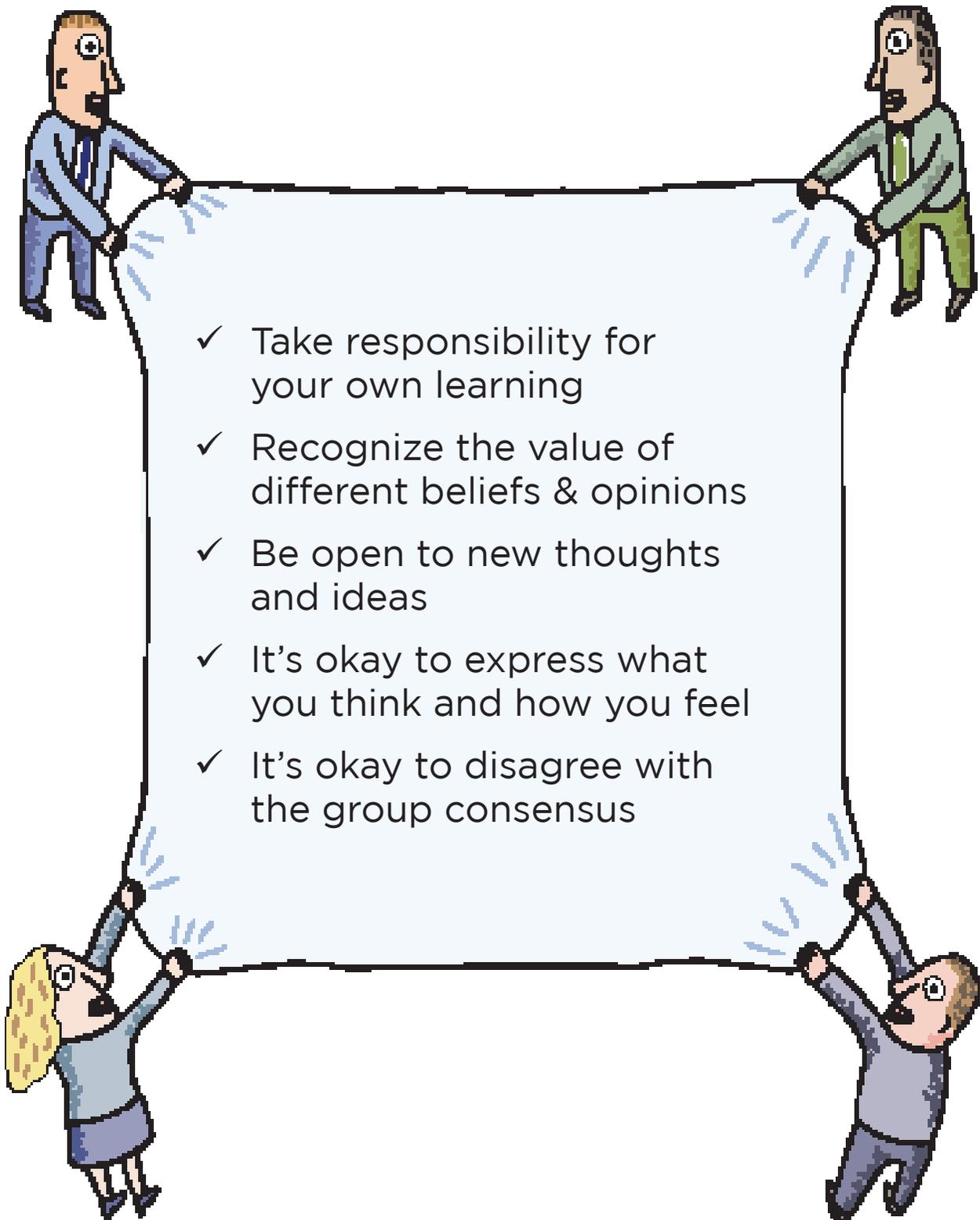
Create, by GROUP consensus, a definition of the term on your card.

Term:



Give one example in which the term (or the idea behind it) is applied to people who are overweight?

Ground Rules



- ✓ Take responsibility for your own learning
- ✓ Recognize the value of different beliefs & opinions
- ✓ Be open to new thoughts and ideas
- ✓ It's okay to express what you think and how you feel
- ✓ It's okay to disagree with the group consensus