

## Session 2

### Building a positive body image and gender empowerment

People often comment on a child's looks and tease or taunt them; or in some way hold them responsible for how their body looks/ the biological sex they are born with. This erodes their self-esteem and can make them vulnerable to sexual abuse. It is important children internalize that the structure of our body is made by nature – we do not choose our bodies. We do have control over what we say and do. We can take pride in our behavior. Our behaviour brings us pride or shame and not how the body looks. This core message helps build self-respect and self-confidence. It helps children respond positively to taunting and bullying. We respect every part of our body. We can take pride in how we take care of our body and help it grow.

Gender sensitization and empowerment is about instilling empathy for each human being, and building respect into the views that we hold about our own and other genders. This is critical for treating self and members of other sexes with respect

#### Materials required

- Charts to
- Marker pen
- Any sticking substance (Blu Tac / double sided sticking tape / cello tape / board pins)
- Lesson 1 - Worksheet 1-
- Worksheet 2 –

#### Objective of session 2

To impart and help children internalize the following messages:

**Core Message 1: Body Image: Body structure is inborn, no choice or work by us. It makes no sense to take pride in or feel ashamed of our body structure or looks.**

**Core Message 2: My body allows me to be human and create. I respect every part of my body. Each part is there for a function.**

**Core Message 3: Our intelligences and qualities are more important than our looks.**

**Core Message 4: Boys and girls are equally capable.**

**Core Message 5: Our values determine how we use our intelligences.**

**Core Message 1: Body Image: Body structure is inborn, no choice or work by us. It makes no sense to take pride in or feel ashamed of our body structure or looks.**

Discussion: Which part of the body did you make? If you did not make your body, then who did? God/ nature? Our body is amazing. It grows and heals and the organs work on their own. We have been given a body – it's up to us what we do with it, what we create and what we destroy.

Examples:

A senior boy gives you a piece of sweet that he had made and asks you to give it to your teacher. You teacher praises you for making such a good sweet. Will you feel proud? If she had told you that the sweet is not nice, would you have felt bad? If you went out to play from your class and when you come back, you find that someone has broken the teacher's chair. If your teacher blames you, will you take the blame or will you say "No ma'am, I did not break it."?

Discussion: In the case of the sweet, we do not get affected what the teacher says about it because we did not get it or make it. We only handed over what someone else made and gave to us. In the case of the broken chair also we will not accept the blame for something which is not our fault. The same logic holds good for our body. Our body is given to us. We did not make our body. We need not feel proud of it nor feel ashamed of it. Each one of us is unique. There is no one else in the world who looks exactly like us.

Discuss the influences which make them feel bad about their body.

**Tips for Trainers**

- Children might share that even after knowing this they feel sad when people tease them. Please affirm their feelings and talk to them post the class if children are still overwhelmed.
- Even if children have not given 'right' answers to the questions asked, you need to take all responses. A nod for answers given by each child can add validity to the contribution of the students.
- When answers are wrong or inappropriate, these should be stated in order for children not to internalize incorrect responses as correct.
- Praise children who have answered correctly or are on the right track by using words like, "very good response"
- Incorporate a lot of hand gestures and voice modulation to capture the interest of the students.
- It would be advisable to keep your language simple and also to intersperse some words from the local language during your session as it will help students get comfortable and understand better.
- If children are not comfortable to write do it verbally.

**Core Message 1: Body Image: Body structure is inborn, no choice or work by us. It makes no sense to take pride in or feel ashamed of our body structure or looks continued**

Activity: Do I Really Decide for Myself?

In their handouts, students respond to the f prompts by reflecting on what influences them to make these decisions.

**(Handout/worksheet in the Annexure 2:1)**

Responses are likely to include:

- media (television, music videos, movies, celebrities, advertisements)
- parents and other family members
- other adults
- peers
- personal likes and dislikes, personal decision.

Discussion-

Making decisions about what we like, feel comfortable with and wish to do is often very tough because there are a lot of factors that affect all our decisions. These influences can be positive as well as harmful. E.g. everything that we see on TV is not true. The media uses many tactics to make us believe some things are good for us, even when they are not. They show us how doing certain things make us look cool or feel good. It is important to keep this in mind so that we are able to make choices which are actually good for us. Can you think of ads where what is shown does not happen in real life or might actually be harmful for you? (E.g. Axe ads for attracting women, fairness cream ads for becoming more beautiful, Complan/Horlicks for instant height growth, etc.

Among the influences regarding being good looking from families, society and media, in today's world, the major influence is that of media. What we need to know is that actually Beauty = Symmetry = Health. We are drawn towards beauty but we need to know that there is a range of symmetry. Most of us are not extremely beautiful, but most of us are healthy. So we look beyond looks at the behaviour of the person when we want to make friends or find a person we would like to live our life with.

**Tips for Trainers**

- It is possible that some children will say they don't like to do anything with their body. Give the child diverse options to make him/her aware that she/he might be liking something which he/she is not aware of as she has/he has not thought about it before. However once you have explored diverse options leave it at that rather than coax the child to say something. Children with abusive history might be in a numb state and not feel like doing anything/ participating.
- Validate their feeling and encourage them to talk to you after the session. Consider appropriate referral and support systems.

**Core Message 2: My body allows me to be human and create. I can accept and respect every part of my body. Each part is there for a function.**

Methodology: Can creams and powders change our basic structure ( genetic material)? Why would someone want to change the shape of their eyes or the colour of their skin?

Discussion: We need to accept and respect our body. Every part of your body is there for a purpose – it has a function. We can take care of our body. Instead of trying to change the way we look, we can spend time, money and effort in keeping our body healthy, improving our skills and improving our behaviour.

How do you keep your body healthy? We can eat healthy and nutritious food, exercise and give ourselves enough sleep.

**Core Message 3: Our intelligences and qualities are more important than our looks.**

Methodology: Recollect regarding the MI questionnaire done in the previous session. You have found that each of you have multiple intelligences.

Let us examine how important looks are when compared with qualities and skills that we can develop.

Give an example: Let us suppose you go to your grandparents' village and you fall sick. There is only one hospital there with two doctors. One doctor is very good looking but very rude and impatient at looking at patients. The other doctor is not good looking but is known to be very courteous and good at diagnosing and treating patients. Which one would you prefer to go to?

Discussion: We prefer the second doctor because of his qualities and skills as they are more important to us for us to become well.

Methodology: Ask a few students to describe their friend in 3 lines.

Discussion: Notice how mostly students describe the qualities or skills of their friends and not their looks. How do you choose friends? Based on looks or their behaviour? Qualities are long lasting, get better with time. The impression of look is very short term and does not really matter in the long term.

Methodology: Ask a few students to describe their friend in 3 lines.

Discussion: Notice how mostly students describe the qualities or skills of their friends and not their looks. How do you choose friends? Based on looks or their behaviour?

Qualities are long lasting and get better with time. The impression of look is very short term and does not really matter in the long term.

**Refer to Annexure 2:2 for an Activity on Qualities**

**Core Message 4: Boys and girls are equally capable.**

Ask children: Can you tell me what boys like to do? What girls like to do?

Make two lists. After that, ask if anyone wants to do / or does what is in the other gender's list. Make another column in between the boys & girls column and transfer the points on to this column. For e.g. if being a pilot is mentioned in the girls column earlier and a boy stands up and says that he wants to be a pilot, transfer 'pilot' to the center column.

Discussions: Are there any activities/ jobs/ work that boys are not capable of doing? Girls are not capable of doing? What builds capacity and capability?

Closure: The activity focuses on encouraging students to think critically about gender roles, gender bias, and that each person experiences the world and expresses themselves in a unique way.

**Refer to annexure 2:3 for the activity on gender.**

**Tips for Trainers**

- Children might share that they feel left out as they are girl/boy.
- Validate their feelings. Say that "Sometimes people can't see or appreciate the qualities and abilities of another person, whatever be the person's gender. They may discriminate against people of a particular gender. This shows the nature and shortsightedness of those people – and not of the person they are discriminating against. Each one of us is equally human. Each one of us has equal rights – to be born and to live on this Earth with safety and dignity.
- You may also meet the children after the session
- Refer to Annexure 2:3 for additional or alternate activities for this section

**Key Messages to Communicate**

Being a boy or girl is not our choice.  
Girls and boys are equally capable.

**Core Message 5: Our values determine how we use our intelligences.**

Give children examples of two equally intelligent scientists: one using his/her intelligence to create war weapons and the other using it to make a discovery to help mankind.

Which one is using her intelligence in a better way?

What is the difference between the two?

They have different value systems.

What are values?

Your values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work.

Discussion: Intelligences and values determine our personality.

Closure: I did not make my body. Hence it does not make sense for me to either feel proud or ashamed about how my body looks. I can instead develop my intelligences and abilities. My abilities and values together determine my personality. When the things that you do and the way you behave match your values, you're satisfied and content. But when these don't align with your values, that's when things feel... wrong.

**Concluding the session:**

Game: Make a circle. Keep your right hand over your left. Emphasize that everyone's right hand should be over the left hand. Keeping the hands crossed in this manner, hold the hands of the person on your right and left. Now everyone is facing inwards with their hands crossed. Challenge is to form a circle where everyone is facing inwards AND the hands are uncrossed, by your side WITHOUT letting go of each others hand at any time.

**Summarize and review key messages:**

Ask children to share what they learnt today in the session

Reiterate:

**Core Message 1: Body Image: Body structure is inborn, no choice or work by us. It makes no sense to take pride in or feel ashamed of our body structure or looks.**

**Core Message 2: My body allows me to be human and create. I respect every part of my body. Each part is there for a function.**

**Core Message 3: Our intelligences and qualities are more important than our looks.**

**Core Message 4: Boys and girls are equally capable.**

**Core Message 5: Our values determine how we use our intelligences.**

I came here to help you learn more about yourself, how you interact with others and how to be safe. I will come again and we will learn some more things.

Annexure 2:1

Handout for Activity: 'Do I Really Decide for Myself?'

How do you decide:

Please write what influences your decision:

- Which clothes look the best on you \_\_\_\_\_
- Which movie you should watch \_\_\_\_\_
- Which radio station plays the coolest songs \_\_\_\_\_
- Which haircut will suit you the most \_\_\_\_\_
- Which film star is the best \_\_\_\_\_
- How to have a good time with friends \_\_\_\_\_
- How to behave with girls/ boys \_\_\_\_\_
- Which game/ sport to play \_\_\_\_\_



## Annexure 2.2

### My Qualities

We have many qualities. Tick the ones you think you have. Remember, being a happy person does not mean that you have to be happy all the time. If you feel that on the whole you are a happy person, tick 'happy'. Same goes for all qualities listed below.

<b>Happy</b>	<b>Peaceful</b>	<b>Patient</b>
<b>Energetic</b>	<b>Mindful</b>	<b>Creative</b>
<b>Systematic</b>	<b>Artistic</b>	<b>Daring</b>
<b>Bold</b>	<b>Graceful</b>	<b>Honest</b>
<b>Encouraging</b>	<b>Hard worker</b>	<b>Friendly</b>
<b>Generous</b>	<b>Careful</b>	<b>Punctual</b>
<b>Spiritual</b>	<b>Sensitive</b>	<b>Strong</b>
<b>Dedicated</b>	<b>Committed</b>	<b>Confident</b>
<b>Humorous</b>	<b>Considerate</b>	<b>Brave</b>
<b>Trustworthy</b>	<b>Calm</b>	<b>Compassionate</b>
<b>Competitive</b>	<b>Affectionate</b>	<b>Determined</b>
<b>Communicative</b>	<b>Outgoing</b>	<b>Cooperative</b>
<b>Assertive</b>	<b>Focussed</b>	<b>Gentle</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>Enthusiastic</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Courageous</b>	<b>Ambitious</b>	<b>Empathetic</b>

Please add more qualities to the list. How many qualities do you have? Exchange your sheet with your friend. On your friend's sheet look at the qualities your friend has left out. If you have seen one or more of these in your friend's behaviour, put a star on it and return the sheet to your friend.

## Annexure 2.3

### Activity Gender

The activity focuses on encouraging students to think critically about gender roles, gender bias, and that each person experiences the world and expresses themselves in a unique way. In their handouts, participants write their responses to the following prompts:

Boys like (activities, things)

Girls like (activities, things)

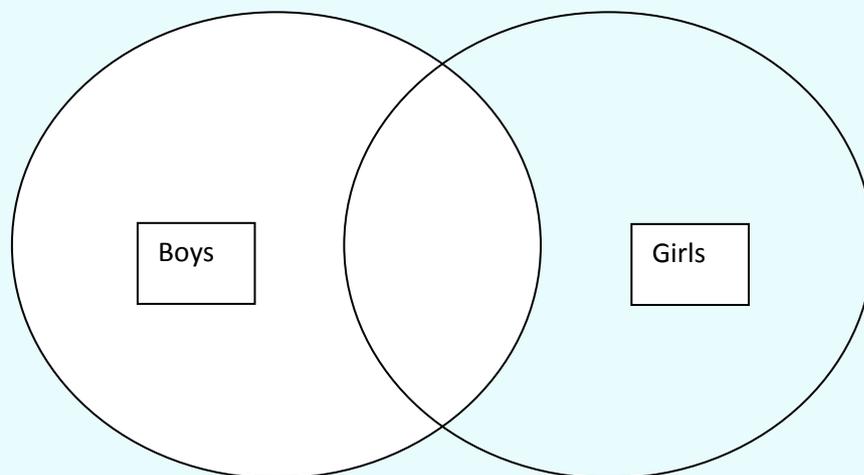
Boys are (qualities)

Girls are (qualities)

Boys want to be (roles, careers)

Girls want to be (roles, careers)

Facilitator asks the group for responses and writing them on post-it notes, places them in the relevant circles in the following Venn diagram:



With further discussion about gender stereotypes, facilitator helps the group understand these roles, activities and qualities as universal and not restricted to any gender. Facilitator may use statements like 'But a boy/girl may like that too', 'There are sometimes boys/girls who might like to do it' (e.g. cross dressing), 'Do you think these ads are true for *every* boy and *every* girl?'

Each item is discussed and moved to the overlapping part of the circles to emphasize that it applies to all people, not a specific gender. Discussion may be closed by asking for examples of gender specific messages students receive (Boys are strong, girls are delicate) and reinforcing that it's ok to express oneself differently from others and we need to respect other people's choices as well.

