

Session 2

Building a positive body image and gender empowerment

Rationale

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. 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 brings us pride or shame and not how the body looks. This core message helps build self-respect and self-confidence. We respect every part of our body. We can take pride in how we take care of our body and help it grow.

Materials required

- Marker pen
 - Any sticking substance (Blu Tac / double sided sticking tape / cello tape / board pins)
- Session worksheets/charts

Objective

At the end of the session 2 the children will internalize:

Core Message 1: My body structure is inborn, I did not make it or choose it.

Core Message 2: Looks I have no control over. I can develop my qualities, intelligences and abilities instead.

Core Message 3: Make friends based on their qualities and behaviour.

Core Message 4: Our values determine how we use our intelligences. Values determine our personality.

Core Message 5: Women and men have more similarities than dissimilarities.

Core Message 6: Gender roles and stereotypes confine people and reduce their potential as human beings.

Core Message 7: Body changes at its own pace. Each person has her/ his own rate of growth, determined by genes and other factors.

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

Methodology: What is it that you like about your body? What don't you like about your body? Why did these concepts come about? List their responses.

Discussion: Which part of the body did you make? If we did not make your body, then does it make sense to feel proud or ashamed of it? Our body 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.

Methodology: From where did we get the idea that our body is ok / not ok / needs to be this way / should not look this way?

Discussion: Among the influences regarding being good looking from families, society and media, in today's world, the major influence is that of media. Why did it come about? Mainly to promote their products. Beauty = Symmetry = health. There is a range of symmetry - most of us are not extremely beautiful, but most of us are healthy.

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.

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: 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 as when compared with qualities and skills that we can develop.

Examples:

You are on a ship and the ship hits an iceberg. At this time, what kind of ship captain would you want to have? What is more important at that time? Her skills and qualities or her looks?

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 and treating patients. Which one would you prefer to go to?

Discussion: The qualities and capabilities of the ship captain are more important because that is what will save the ship and its people, not looks. We would prefer the second doctor because of his qualities as they are more important to us for us to become well.

Additional and Alternative activities provided in Annexure 2:1

Tips for Trainers

- **Refer to Additional/Alternative activities in the Annexure**
- It is possible that some children will say they don't have any qualities. 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 coaxing the child to say something.

Tips for Trainers

Refer to Annexure for activities and students handouts

Core Message 3: Make friends based on their qualities and behaviour.

Methodology: Think of two of your very good friends, persons who you really like. Can you mention what you like about them?

Discussion: Most of these will be qualities and mostly no one would have mentioned any physical attributes. 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. Ask them how come none of you mentioned looks of your friends. Does it matter if he / she is not good looking? Would you not be their friend? What actually matters? Looks or qualities? What actually matters in a person is the kind of person he is inside.

Refer to Annexure 2:2 for activities and students handouts

Core Message 4: Our values determine how we use our intelligences. Values determine our personality.

Methodology: Example of two equally intelligent scientists: one using his intelligence to create war weapons and the other using it to make a discovery to help mankind. Which one is using his intelligence in a better way? What is the difference between the two?

Hitler and Gandhi. Two leaders who had leadership qualities but their impact on the world was very different. What was the actual difference between the two?

Discussion: We may have intelligences but how we use our intelligences maybe different. Our values determine how we use our intelligences. Our values determine our personality.

Tips for Trainers

- Refer to Annexure 2:2 for additional or alternate activities for this section
- Children might share that they feel left out as they are girl/boy.
- Validate their feeling and encourage them to talk to you post the session.

Core Message 5: Women and men have more similarities than dissimilarities.

Methodology: Can you tell me what boys like to do? What girls like to do? List down their responses. 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 and 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.

Discussion: By nature, boys and girls are capable of doing similar jobs and activities. Sometimes people's comments and remarks can make the person feel and behave differently.

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

Making Connections

If children are able to identify that being of either sex is not their choice and they are equally capable; they will be able to have better self-confidence as well respect the other sex.

Core Message 6: Gender roles and stereotypes confine people and reduce their potential as human beings.

Methodology: What does it mean to be a boy / girl? Are there any particular ways a boy / girl needs to behave? Any way a boy / girl should not behave?

Discussion: List responses. Ask how did they get these ideas? For e.g. boys should not cry / girls should not whistle. Ask if any of them feel the opposite. Write that point on the board at the center. Many of these ideas are influences from the society and media.

Do the Activity ‘Do I really decide for the Activity’ (Refer to the Annexure for the script of the activity)

Core Message 7: Body changes at its own pace. Each person has her/ his own rate of growth, determined by genes and other factors.

An example of one child getting worked up and anxious because all his classmates have started shooting up and getting taller and suddenly he finds he is the shortest in the class. All the exercises / eating / basketball is still not helping.

Discussion: Changes happen as per each person's requirement as per his or her blueprint. Focus on developing your qualities and abilities instead. We can develop our skills and can take pride in them. Our body we have no choice but we have a choice in how we look after our body. Talk about importance of sleeping well, eating well and doing enough exercise in being healthy.

An example of a child who was talented, intelligent, smart but could only look at his / her one flaw which was that he / she had, a slight squint eye. The focus was only that flaw and could not see the good aspects of himself / herself.

Discussion: What I think of myself is my self- image. I can choose to think of the positive aspects of myself or I can only notice the negative aspects of myself. I can learn to appreciate my talents, skills, qualities and values.

Activity: My Symbol

Ask participants to choose a symbol for themselves and draw it. A symbol is something that represents them. E.g., symbols of a political party. Ask students to get into pairs and share why they chose that particular symbol for themselves.

Summarize and review the key messages:

Ask children to share what they learnt today in the session

Reiterate:

Core Message 1: My body structure is inborn, I did not make it or choose it.

Core Message 2: Looks I have no control over. I can develop my qualities, intelligences and abilities instead.

Core Message 3: Make friends based on their qualities and behaviour.

Core Message 4: Our values determine how we use our intelligences. Values determine our personality.

Core Message 5: Women and men have more similarities than dissimilarities.

Core Message 6: Gender roles and stereotypes confine people and reduce their potential as human beings.

Core Message 7: Body changes at its own pace. Each person has her/ his own rate of growth, determined by genes and other factors.

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

Our strengths- Areas of improvement'' exercise

- Objective:

- Helping student to self - evaluate their own strengths and areas of improvement
- Increasing their self - awareness and self-esteem.
- Helping student to respect and empathize with other people.
- Understanding feeling through this activity

- Procedure:

1. Handing a piece of paper to each student, and then asking them to think and write down their 5 main advantages and some disadvantages (if yes).
2. Giving time for student to think
3. Sharing with nearby student
4. Sharing in a small group
5. Class discussion:
 - + What do you think when speaking out your strengths and areas of improvement?
 - + Why can you share these strengths and areas of improvement with other people?
 - + What do you think about your friend's strengths and areas of improvement?
 - + How did you feel hearing about your friend's strength's and areas of improvements?
 - + +How did you feel about doing this exercise?

** The trainer if comfortable can share his/her advantages/disadvantages so to facilitate the discussion. (However these need to be generic in nature rather than personal/private.)

Conclusion:

- Everyone has advantages and disadvantages. It is important for everyone to recognize exactly his/her advantages and disadvantage, try to promote the advantages and overcome the disadvantages.
- We might have felt happy, confused, anxious, shame while doing this exercise. We might feel happy, proud, and shy to talk about our advantages. We might feel sad, angry, shame, guilt to talk about our disadvantages. We might feel sad, happy, confused while listening to others' disadvantages.

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.

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

--	--	--

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

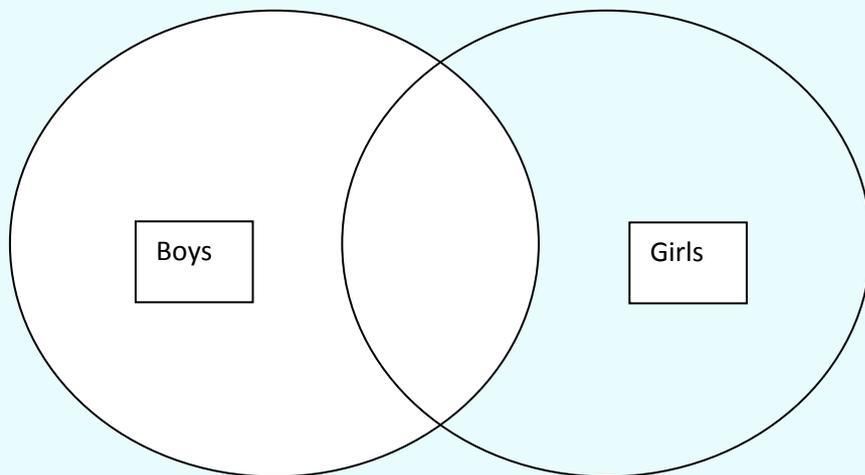
The activity focuses on encouraging students to think critically about gender roles, gender bias, and that each person experiences the world and expresses themselves in a unique way. In their handouts, participants write their responses to the following prompts:

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.

Annexure 2:4

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 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 _____



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.