

# Healthy Bodies; Teaching Kids What They Need to Know

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*Healthy Bodies* is aligned with the National Health Education Standards. Analysis of this alignment is included in the Appendix.

**PREFACE** Page xv

**ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND FOR EDUCATORS** Page xxii

**UNIT INTRODUCTION: Growth and Change in Appearance** (Health) Page 1

*Building Block: The way we look will change as we grow up.*

Students will recognize that change is a natural part of life, understand that developmental change is expected for preteens and teens, and learn there are tools to help manage changes smoothly. They will recognize the importance of this unit, and will be reassured that discussions will be safe, respectful, and occasionally gender-specific. They will learn that differences in appearance are highly individual and should never be judged as good or bad.

**LESSON 1: Gaining Perspective: The Development of Unrealistic and Negative Body Images in Western Culture** (Literature, History) Page 16

*Building Block: People become unhappy trying to control something that is not in their power to control. As for looks, it's best to make the most of who we were born to be.*

Students will develop historical and cultural perspective on today's prevalent body image, eating, nutrition, fitness, and weight norms. In this light, students will be motivated to develop critical thinking skills about current weight-related attitudes, eating for weight control, and the influence of mass media.

**LESSON 2: Identity and Competency: More Than the Way We Look** (Health, Art) Page 28

*Building Block: The way we look is only one part of us. We need to pay attention to all of who we are.*

Students will consider many different aspects of their identities. They will learn that the whole is stronger than the sum of its parts. Attention to all of who they are makes them stronger than undue focus on any one aspect. A strong sense of self based on an appreciation of diverse attributes will empower students to resist objectification and comparisons to unrealistic, idealized images.

**LESSON 3: How Your Appearance Will Change in Puberty** (Science)

Page 39

*Building Block: There are many different normal ways for looks to change in puberty. Sooner or later, most girls and boys gain weight and fill out.*

While recognizing that looks are only one aspect of their identity, students will acknowledge that physical changes in puberty naturally draw attention to their bodies' appearance. Students will learn the normal outward changes to expect as they enter puberty, and that words describing body sizes are not judgments. They will learn that talking about these changes can be reassuring and supportive.

**LESSON 4: Genetics: How Body Size and Shape Are Determined** (Science)

Page 64

*Building Block: Most of the way we look is determined before we are even born: taller, shorter, fatter, thin—all are normal, all built in!*

Students will recognize that genetics are the greatest determinant of body size and shape. This lesson provides a foundation for their own body images as they learn the biological limits to what they can and cannot expect to control about their outward appearance. Students will identify characteristics of their own personal genetic heritage.

**LESSON 5: Internal Weight Regulation: The Metabolism Factor** (Science)

Page 75

*Building Block: Each person's body works to grow and maintain a weight that is natural for him or her.*

Students will recognize that the body's internal weight regulatory system defends the body's natural weight. Metabolism provides an example. Through an experiential activity, they will learn that if everyone ate exactly the same food and was active in exactly the same way, people would still have diverse bodies, from fat to thin. Students will understand why it is not safe to make assumptions about how much a person eats or how active they are from appearance alone, and will learn that care must be taken with labels, such as "overweight" and "underweight."

**LESSON 6: "Sold" on Looks: The Influence of Mass Media** (Family Life & Consumer Science, Social Studies)

Page 89

*Building Block: Hardly anyone looks as perfect as the models in advertisements. I will be careful not to compare myself or others to them.*

Students will consider the role of looks. They will document the pervasiveness of media images in our culture and understand the potent role mass visual media has had in determining current cultural values about looks. They will recognize the ways in which unrealistic media images create misunderstanding and destructive expectations. They will learn to interpret media messages and reduce their vulnerability to being "sold" unhealthy messages.

**LESSON 7: Hunger and Eating: What Is and Is Not in Our Control?** (Science) Page 104

*Building Block: Weight-loss diets are not a good idea. We can hold back hunger for a while but will eat more to make up for it later.*

Students will discover that predictable outcomes occur when basic needs are not fully met. Food fulfills a basic need, and if internal hunger cues are discounted, counterproductive results can be expected. Restrictive eating (dieting for weight loss) is not an effective strategy for long-term weight loss or control. Students will understand the importance of trusting hunger to regulate their eating.

**LESSON 8: How to Eat—Caring for our Bodies with Mindful Eating** (Health) Page 118

*Building Block: Satisfy hunger completely with enough wholesome food at regular meals and snacks.*

Students will learn that eating well is one of the most important things they can do to care for their bodies. This includes tuning in, listening, and responding to physical hunger, along with mindful awareness of other cues for eating. They will understand that foods are not good or bad, but have different qualities that serve different purposes. This eating wisdom will empower them to choose foods for the outcome they truly want in a given context.

**LESSON 9: How to Care for our Bodies with Movement** (Health) Page 149

*Building Block: It's important not to sit too much in our free time. Being active is one of the best things we can do for our health and self confidence.*

Students will learn that in addition to eating well, movement is one of the most important things they can do to care for their bodies. With new awareness of today's default sedentary lifestyles and its costs, students will see the value of tuning in to their body's need to move. They will be motivated to intentionally seek ways to be active that are enjoyable. They will also learn that, while aerobic activities produce benefits, "no pain, no gain" is a myth.

**LESSON 10: Compared to Whom? Selecting a Standard for Choosing Role Models** (Health) Page 169

*Building Block: Choose role models you admire for things deep inside and who make you feel good about who you are.*

Students will identify how fads and fashions may influence their choice of role models and will learn to select positive, realistic role models. They will consider "daring" to stay true to their authentic selves even in the face of peer and cultural pressures, and will reflect on their current and future role models.

**APPENDIX** Page 180