Body Image Action Planning Activity

Recommended Age: 12+

Goal

- To brainstorm ways to feel good about our bodies and combat negative body image.

Have Ready

- Write "How can I feel better about my body?" "How can I help others feel better about their bodies?" on two flipcharts.
- Markers.
- Tape (for posting flipcharts).

Instructions

- Split youth into two groups. Give each group a list. Allow groups about 5-10 minutes to complete the lists.
- Have each group read their list, debriefing as a large group after each list.

Sample Flipcharts

How Can I Feel Better About My Body?

- Give yourself compliments: think about the things you like or enjoy about your body and try not talking to yourself negatively.
- Don't compare your body to others, as we're all unique.
- Eat food you like and that fuels you!
- Hang out with people who love you the way you are.
- Listen to your body! Pay attention to what makes you feel good (eating well, sleeping enough, movement).
- Exercise to feel good, not to lose weight or bulk up.
- Wear clothes you feel good in.
- Be critical of media.

- Refuse to apologize for your body.
- Recognize that our bodies are changing at this age and that's a good thing!
- Don't date anyone who doesn't think you're beautiful.
- Think of your body as the most important tool you will ever use!
- Behave like a person who is confident and comfortable with their body.

Debrief

- Often, youth may write things on the flipchart like: exercise more or eat healthy. Reframe their answers into body-acceptance statements like: move your body in ways that feel good or eat a variety of foods and don't feel guilty for eating a piece of cake.
- This is not a list of things we can do to change what we look like. This is a list to affirm who we are today.
- Encourage youth to try to find things they like about themselves. This is a lifelong process, but is worth the effort, as when we feel good about ourselves and have high self-esteem, it's easier to treat ourselves well and resist harmful messages about our bodies.

How Can I Help Others Feel Better About Their Bodies?

- Compliment people for what they do, as well as how they look.
- Educate yourself and others. Take part in education around body phobia, such as International No Diet Day or doing an info table on fatphobia, eating disorders, or racism in advertising/media.
- Don't judge anyone's looks or compare people's bodies.
- Be a good example. Don't put yourself down.
- Challenge media that tell us only certain body characteristics are beautiful (thin, white, blond, able-bodied, etc.).
- Support companies that are body-positive.
- Challenge body-phobic comments and myths.
- Challenge professionals to avoid assumptions about body size and health.
- When people talk about feeling 'fat', ask them why fat means bad/unattractive.
- Challenge myths about fatness and eating/exercise.
- Shop at stores that carry all sizes.

- Stop supporting the diet industry.
- Support alternative media.
- Create our own media.

Debrief

- Most mainstream media contributes to people feeling negatively about their bodies. Helping ourselves and others feel better about our bodies can start with the activities listed. Ask youth, **"Why is it important to help other people feel good about themselves?"** We are all impacted by body-shaming and fatphobia, and we all have the power to change the current culture by how we act and what we say. When we model body acceptance and challenge fatphobic attitudes, we make it easier for others to feel better about themselves. When people feel better about their bodies, they are better able to take care of themselves.

Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity should be followed by:

- Body Image Boosters