

# Body Image Expectations & the Media

**Recommended Age: 12+**

## Goals

- To explore body image issues.
- To explore how youth are affected by body image issues.
- To discuss the media's role in creating and perpetuating negative body image.

## Have Ready

- Hand out scrap pieces of paper to each participant.
- Recycling bin.
- Write "What Beautiful Means to Me" on two flipcharts.

## Instructions

- Ask youth, **"What is body image?"** How you see yourself, not what you actually look like.
- Give youth a few minutes to reflect on all the things that go into images of celebrities that we see in the media. Tell them to take a moment to think of a celebrity picture they've recently seen. Now, on the paper, write down all the things that went into making this photo. Think about what was done to the person in the photo, and what was done behind the camera to make the picture look that way.
- Ask youth, **"What does the person in the photo do to look this way?"** (flipchart responses) Photoshop, personal trainer, personal stylist, makeup, plastic surgery, etc.
- Ask youth, **"What has been done to the photo to make it look this way?"** (flipchart responses) Expensive camera, lighting, photo editing, professional photographer, etc.
- Ask youth, **"Is it easy to remember all the things that were done when we look at the photo?"** Not really. Looking at these photos may lead to feeling pressured to look a certain way and create an idea that there's such a thing as a 'perfect' body. But

these images are not realistic. What's going on in these photos takes a lot of money, special equipment, and a team of people to end up looking the way it does. **Try to be critical of these photos and remind yourself, and others, that these photos are not what we are meant to look like. Many photos are trying to sell an image or products to make a profit by encouraging us to change our natural beauty.**

- Remind youth that media is supposed to be entertainment, not real life, and social media is supposed to be a tool for connecting with friends and having fun. If you're following something that doesn't promote your overall health, wellbeing, or creativity, then unfollow it.<sup>i</sup> Replace them with people and stories that make you feel good about yourself and others. *Note: Place bin in middle of the room.*
- Now, we want you to do one last thing with your list. Crumple up that piece of paper and throw it away!
- Asking youth in two groups to brainstorm "What beauty means to me" on a flipchart can close this activity nicely.

## Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity should be followed by:

- Body Image Action Planning Activity
- Body Image Discussion Cards
- Body Image Boosters

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<sup>i</sup>WOWPresents. (2016, September 12). *UNHhhh Ep 22: "Social Media" w/ Trixie Mattel & Katya Zamolodchikova*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eN9ce0EVD2o>