

Confident Me

School Lesson for Body Confidence

Lesson Guide for Teachers



1

Lesson One:
Appearance Ideals



Learning Outcomes



In this lesson students will:

- + **Understand** the concept of appearance ideals and where the pressure to achieve them comes from
- + **Analyse** external influences related to body confidence



Preparation

Lesson One: Resources and Materials Needed

From Your School



- A way to show/stream a video
- Post-it Notes (three per student)

Lesson 1 Materials



- Online access to or printed copy (one per student) of PDF containing:
 - + Appearance Ideals
 - + What Can Trying to Match Appearance Ideals Cost You?
 - + Extension Activity



Appearance Ideals

Name: _____

Label the body below with as many features as you can that make up today's appearance ideals.

What are appearance ideals for males?

What can trying to match appearance ideals cost you?

Time (e.g., late for school because of spending too much time styling hair)

Money (e.g., buying all the latest "must-have" products)

Emotions (e.g., not feeling good enough)

Appearance Ideals

Name: _____

Label the body below with as many features as you can that make up today's appearance ideals.

What are appearance ideals for females?

What can trying to match appearance ideals cost you?

Time (e.g., late for school because of spending too much time styling hair)

Money (e.g., buying all the latest "must-have" products)

Emotions (e.g., not feeling good enough)

Going Further

Name: _____

What action could you take to place less importance on how you look and prevent yourself and others from focusing on appearance ideals? Record your answers below.

Taking action for yourself

What I did: _____

How I felt: _____

Appearance Ideals: Main messages to remember

- Trying to match appearance ideals can be harmful.
- They are based on opinion, not fact, and are changing all the time. This makes them unrealistic and actually impossible for most people to live up to.
- The way you look is not a measure of your worth.
- Rather than focusing on appearance, value other qualities about yourself and your peers, and celebrate your real successes in life!

Things you could do

Carry out three feel-good actions instead of spending time, money and emotional energy trying to match appearance ideals. Celebrate a random act of kindness by praising someone with a non-appearance-related compliment.

Celebrate your individuality and the diversity of the people you know. Aim to be the best you can be – you are one of a kind!

What I did: _____

How I felt: _____

Lesson Overview

 50 mins



Page 6 **Introducing Appearance Ideals** | 25 mins

- + Introduction and group agreements
- + What do we mean by appearance ideals?
- + What do we mean by external influences?
- + How are appearance ideals constantly changing?
- + Can we match appearance ideals?
- + Where do we learn about appearance ideals?

Page 13 **Appearance Pressures** | 22 mins

- + What are the costs and impact of pursuing appearance ideals?
- + What is the impact of these appearance pressures?
- + What else can we value?

Page 18 **Plenary** | 3 mins

- + What have we learned today?
- + Congratulations!
- + Extension Activity - Taking Action to Focus Less on Appearance Ideals



How to Use This Guide

Suggested Time Allocation

This is the amount of time generally recommended for students, to achieve learning outcomes and improve body confidence. This may be adapted to suit the needs of your class.

 15 mins

Lesson Learning Objectives

Students should achieve these objectives by the end of each section.

Presentation

These are visual cues and learning objectives to help you facilitate the lesson effectively.

Introducing Appearance Ideals

By the end of this activity, students will understand the concepts of body confidence and appearance ideals.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Welcome students to the program.

Say:

We are going to discuss a variety of topics related to body confidence.

Explain the lesson agreements will help create a supportive, nonjudgmental environment.

It is worth taking time to ensure these agreements feel collaborative and, if necessary, to adjust them to suit the needs of your class.

Ask:

Does anyone have any other agreements to add?

Ask students

(verbally or using technology, like clicker devices):

Teacher Actions

Bullet points highlight important questions to ask students to ensure key concepts are addressed with optimum impact on body confidence.

Text in *ITALICS* indicates directions for the Teacher.

Underlined text is what the teacher should say.

Teacher Notes

Students will understand the lesson agreements and feel comfortable being active participants. If you have already established lesson or classroom agreements, you may skip this piece.

Teacher Notes

This quick informal assessment will give you a good idea of how many students are already familiar with the term and whether they have methods to improve their body confidence.

Desired Responses

Body confidence is feeling comfortable with your appearance and accepting your body for how it looks.

Notes/Desired Responses

Possible answers to look for from students, but also offers ideas for guiding their responses as they develop their understanding of key concepts and improve their body confidence.

Introducing Appearance Ideals

 25 mins

By the end of this activity, students will understand the concept of appearance ideals and where the pressure to achieve them comes from.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Welcome students to the lesson.

Say:

Explain that today is the first in a series of five lessons that will help students think about the appearance pressures young people face. The lessons will encourage them to explore helpful ways to manage these pressures and build body confidence.

Explain the lesson agreements will help create a supportive, non-judgemental environment.

Ask:

Does anyone have any other agreements to add?

Teacher Notes

Students will understand the classroom agreements and feel comfortable being active participants. If you have already established classroom agreements, you may skip this piece.

It is worth taking time to ensure these agreements feel collaborative and, if necessary, adjusting them to suit the needs of your class.



What Are We Learning Today?

Briefly explain the areas of focus for today's lesson.

Teacher Notes

Students will focus on understanding appearance ideals and how they can challenge the pressure these ideals create.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Ask:

What do you think we mean by appearance ideals?

Say:

We are going to understand what society currently tells us is the ideal appearance for boys and girls.

Arrange students in groups, or have them self-select into small groups. The students will remain in these groups for the next few activities. They can be in any mixed-gender groups.

Hand out or share access to the Appearance Ideals Handout (one per student). Have them complete the left side of the sheet only.

>>> Desired Responses

The way our society or culture tells us is the ideal way to look at a certain moment in time.

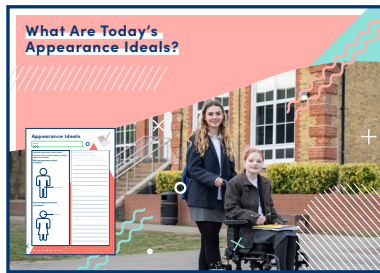
Teacher Notes

Take the time to ensure all students understand what is meant by appearance ideals, so they can use the learning in the rest of the lesson.

Note: Research and feedback from young people who have taken part in this workshop show that girls are less likely to speak up about appearance ideals when in groups with boys. Further, sometimes boys don't like hearing girls talk about what society tells them boys "should" look like (and vice versa) as it can be perceived as a form of appearance pressure that can make young people feel self-conscious. To maximise the comfort of students of all genders, it is recommended, where possible, that students self-select their own groups. Experience suggests that students feel most comfortable and forthcoming when working with friends. If that is not possible, at minimum, the group agreements should be revisited to remind students about the importance of respecting others.



Presentation



Teacher Actions

Say:

We are going to think about what society currently tells us is the ideal appearance for boys and girls. In your groups, discuss the following two questions and have one person write down what you came up with. Create a list as long as possible of the physical features that make up today's appearance ideals.

- 01 **What does society tell us are the appearance ideals for girls?**
- 02 **What does society tell us are the appearance ideals for boys?**

Bring students back after 7-8 minutes and have them share their responses.

Teacher Notes

Push students to be specific in their responses. "For example, when a student says "hair", ask them to give specific details (e.g., length, color, texture). Or, when they say "perfect teeth" or "perfect skin" ask them to explain what these attributes look like (e.g., straight, white teeth; clear skin without blemishes or wrinkles).

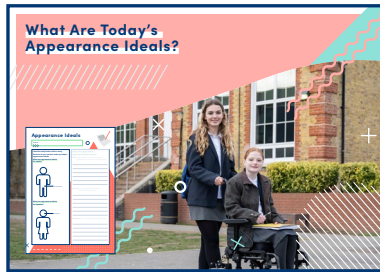
>>> Desired Responses

Example appearance ideals include:

- 01 Girls/women – long, slim, hairless legs; slim/skinny; clear, blemish-free skin; toned; big eyes; flat stomach; straight, white teeth; hairless body; long, manicured nails; thick, defined eyebrows; long eyelashes; large lips; long, shiny hair.
- 02 Boys/men – muscular; tall; slim waist; lean, v-shaped torso; low body fat; broad chest; flat stomach; six pack; straight, white teeth; blemish-free skin; some facial hair; thick, styled hair.

Continued >

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Say:

Listening to these ideals do you think it is possible to have all of these characteristics?

Discuss.

Say:

Can you think of any other issues with these appearance ideals?

>>> Desired Responses

No, it is not possible because:

- + There are inconsistencies between the different features e.g., long legs and small feet, or curvy hips (which require body fat), and a flat stomach with a six-pack (which requires very low body fat). It's therefore not realistic to have all at once.
- + Our looks are defined by our genes, inherited from our birth parents and their birth parents. Therefore, this makes it impossible for most of us to match appearance ideals.

Teacher Notes

You may need to acknowledge that though different groups of students might uphold different appearance ideals, they all are narrow ideas and encourage us to work towards an unrealistic goal.

>>> Desired Responses

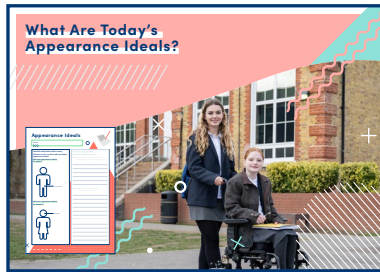
These appearance ideals take a narrow view of what different genders should look like. They draw on gender stereotypes in our society. Additionally, adopting a binary approach is not inclusive of other genders.

It doesn't allow us to celebrate natural beauty or what makes each of us unique.

Appearance ideals are constantly changing across time, countries, and cultures. They never stay the same!

Continued >

Presentation



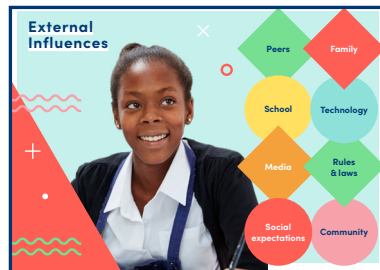
Teacher Actions

Say:

An influence is something that impacts us, even our behaviours.

Ask a student to read the definition on the slide of an external influence.

Explain to students that an external influence is one that is outside of them and is usually brought to them by a person or actions outside of themselves.



Explain that appearance ideals are an example of an external influence. The list of features we just discussed are what society currently tells us are appearance ideals, but these ideals are constantly changing.

Teacher Notes

Push students to make specific comments on how these images differ, especially with regard to changes to their physical appearance (including clothes). Direct students to particular parts of the images to draw attention to the differences.

Teacher Actions

Play the animation.

01 If all of these images represent appearance ideals, why do you think they don't all look the same?

Lead your students in a quick game of spot the difference.

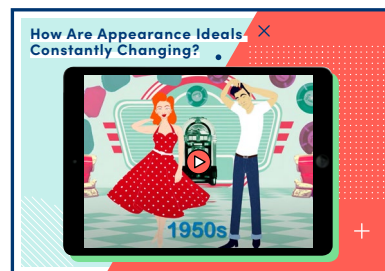
02 Thinking about all of the images, what differences do you notice between them?

03 How are they different to today's appearance ideals that you identified earlier?

04 Can you think of any examples of appearance ideals from other cultures, from the past or present?

Questions continued on next slide >

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Play the animation.

- 01 **If all of these images represent appearance ideals, why do you think they don't all look the same?**

Lead your students in a quick game of spot the difference.

- 02 **Thinking about all of the images, what differences do you notice between them?**

- 03 **How are they different to today's appearance ideals that you identified earlier?**

- 04 **Can you think of any examples of appearance ideals from other cultures, from the past or present?**

Reinforce that all these images represent appearance ideals: (what was considered attractive and desirable) at different times in the past.

Facilitate a short class discussion.

Say:

What do you think future appearance ideals might be – is it a look you would want?

>>> Desired Responses

- 01 They show us people at different times throughout history in Western society.

Examples include slim versus curvier bodies; muscular versus slimmer bodies; face shaved versus facial hair; and formal versus casual clothes.
- 02 Appearance ideals are constantly changing across time, countries and cultures. They never stay the same!

Centuries-old historical examples include foot binding in China to make women's feet smaller and the use of neck rings to make women's necks longer among specific tribes in Southeast Asia.
- 03 Today in Western society, tanned skin is considered attractive for people with white skin; if you are born with tan or brown skin, having lighter skin is considered more attractive. Likewise, in many Eastern cultures, such as India and Indonesia, fairer skin is glamorised and idealised.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Say:

Given what we've already discussed about appearance ideals:

- 01 **How realistic is it for someone to match appearance ideals?**
- 02 **Thinking about how naturally different we all are, how easy is it for all of us to match appearance ideals?**

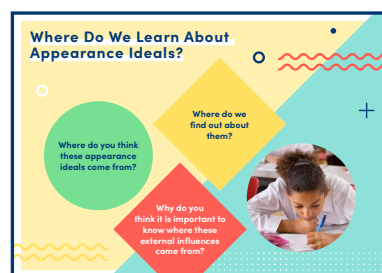
>>> Desired Responses

It is almost impossible for someone to match appearance ideals because the ideals are always changing, and it is a really narrow ideal that often contains contradictions (such as small feet, long legs).

01

Because our looks are mainly defined by our genes, it is not possible for us all to look the same – and why should we want to?

02



Teacher Actions

Have a class-wide discussion, call for volunteers to answer.

- 01 **Where do you think these appearance ideals come from? Where do we find out about them?**

Explain that by knowing where these external influences come from, we can begin to change how we respond to these ideals.

- 02 **Why do you think it is important to know where these external influences come from?**

>>> Desired Responses

Answers may include: advertisements, magazines, fashion industry, websites, celebrity culture, diet industry, parents or family, friends, other young people, bullies, social media influencers.

01

It is important to know where these external influences come from to help us recognise that appearance pressures are a societal issue, not a personal one.

02

Teacher Notes

Be careful not to create a blaming atmosphere (for example, blaming parents or friends). Messages about appearance ideals are part of our daily environment and are so common that those around us may not even be aware of them.

Appearance Pressures

 20 mins

By the end of this activity, students will recognise the pressures caused by trying to match appearance ideals and how external influences related to body confidence impact behaviour.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Now that students understand what appearance ideals are and where appearance pressures come from, explain that the class will next explore some of the pressures that appearance ideals can create in their daily lives.

Say:

Sometimes external influences impact our behaviours. We make decisions based on how we are influenced. Sometimes they are positive for our health and sometimes they impact us in negative ways.

Ask the students to “think, pair, share” for the questions below. Pose the questions, allow the students to first think by themselves for a moment before discussing quickly with their partner and then have them share their answer with the class.

Continued >

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Ask:

- 01 How much time would it take to try and match appearance ideals?
- 02 How much money would it cost?
- 03 How would constantly trying to achieve changing appearance ideals make you feel?



Teacher Notes

Take a few responses, but don't take too much time. The primary objective is for students to realise it takes a lot (rather than coming up with a specific quantity).

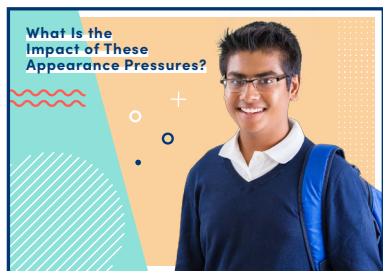
Ensure that the students do not take this as an opportunity to share tips.

You may need to make it clear that it's okay to take care of your appearance through hygiene and self-care activities. What students are exploring here is when they might get too caught up in trying to achieve a look that is impossible for most, and squander too much time, money, and mental energy in pursuit of it.

Desired responses

- 01 Examples of negative consequences include: Spending too much time on hair, make-up or skincare, extreme exercise, dieting, checking or comparing your appearance with others, dwelling on negative emotions.
- 02 Lots of money spent on hair products/ treatments, skincare, make-up, clothes, magazines, beauty treatments, gym membership, dieting products or surgery.
- 03 Feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, jealousy, anxiety, shame, embarrassment, dread, dissatisfaction, unhappiness.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Explain that students are going to explore in more detail the pressures that trying to match appearance ideals can cause. Divide the class into three groups and assign one group to time, one group to money and one to emotions.

Invite all three groups to share their ideas for time, money, and emotions in turn. Which group generated the most ideas?

Make a list of students' ideas. (Or have students come up with their own on Handout 2.)

Teacher Notes

Giving students a fixed, short amount of time for this activity can also help increase focus.

Ensure that the students do not take this as an opportunity to share tips.

If students are struggling, refer them to the list of appearance ideals they previously generated. It can also help to ask students to imagine someone of similar age, background and interests to themselves.

Students may provide examples of people who have had cosmetic surgery. Take care not to criticise, but help them see that surgery is a serious step and does not guarantee that a person will feel confident with their looks.

Students might use this task to argue that some people can match appearance ideals with little time, money or emotional energy. Remind these students that such people still might not feel satisfied with their appearance and will not always feel that they look their best; just because people might easily meet appearance ideals doesn't guarantee their lifestyle is any more ideal.



Desired Responses

Examples of negative consequences include:

Time - on hair, make-up, skincare, extreme exercise, dieting, checking or comparing your appearance with others, dwelling on negative emotions.

Money - spent on hair products or treatments, skincare, make-up, clothes, magazines, beauty treatments, gym membership, dieting products or surgery.

Emotions - frustration, anger, sadness, jealousy, anxiety, shame, embarrassment, dread, dissatisfaction, unhappiness.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Explain that now students have considered the pressures trying to meet appearance ideals can cause, they are going to examine the reasons why people might still put these pressures on themselves.

Facilitate a short class discussion.

- 01 What do you think people believe they will achieve by meeting appearance ideals?**
- 02 Aside from a change in appearance, what else do they think might happen or change in their life?**
- 03 Is it true that if someone meets appearance ideals, they are automatically happy, confident or successful?**
- 04 Do you think we should try to challenge or resist these appearance pressures, given all of the sacrifices? Why?**

Desired responses

- 01** Physical changes to the body (e.g., lower body weight, flatter stomach, bigger muscles, etc.)
- 02** They may feel that they would get the ideal romantic relationship, be more popular or receive positive attention. They may also believe that they will feel more accepted or loved.
- 03** Not necessarily.
- 04** It is worth trying to challenge or resist these pressures because it is not realistic to meet appearance ideals, and we sacrifice time, money and energy into trying to achieve something that is not possible. It would be better to put our time, money and energy into more worthwhile activities we enjoy.

Teacher Notes

Students might suggest examples of celebrities that show they are no happier than other people. However, make sure this doesn't turn into 'celebrity bashing', and help students understand that celebrities (like everyone else) don't always feel happy all the time and are unlikely to feel their appearance or life is ideal all of the time.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Say:

Now that you have recognised that trying to match appearance ideals can cost a lot of time, money and emotional energy, and be harmful for our self-esteem, you are going to consider ways you can feel better about yourself.

Hand out two post-it notes per student. Let them know their 'ticket out the door' includes writing the following answers to the prompts below on the post-it notes.

Say:

- + On one post-it, write a quality that you admire about yourself (not appearance-related)
- + On another post-it, write something you enjoy doing.
- + On the final post-it, write down one way you can champion for changing the external influences people your age face.

After the plenary, have students post these on the door to review in Lesson 2.

Teacher Notes

Encourage students to not write down appearance-based qualities, and highlight that they are of minor importance when compared to all of the other qualities they identify – and that they matter more than appearance.

Plenary

 3 mins

By the end of this section, students will have reflected on their learning throughout the workshop, committing to one action to champion body confidence.

Students have...

Understood the concept of appearance ideals and where the pressure to achieve them comes from; and
Analysed external influences related to body confidence.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

Ask:

What did we learn during today's lesson?

Invite volunteers to read aloud key learning points from the slide, as well as summarise any points students may have missed.

Desired Responses

Social media is unrealistic; we shouldn't compare ourselves; recognise the appearance ideal is unachievable; follow people that make you feel good on social media.

Presentation



Teacher Actions

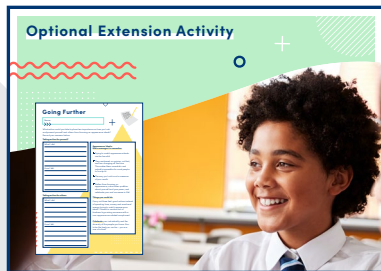
Thank students for their participation in today's lesson.

Encourage them to think about and apply their knowledge and understanding every day from now on.

If possible, offer to stay behind or speak to students at another time about anything covered in the lesson.

Teacher Notes

Preparation for Lesson 2: In preparation of the next lesson, you will need to source examples of advertisements. You might find these on social media, in magazines, or via an internet search. It is important to select ads that feature female and male appearance ideals. Aim to find at least two examples advertising different products. They should be celebrities or social media influencers popular with students in your class. It can be useful to search online for popular celebrities or influencers with the following search terms: "celebrity/influencer name + advertisement". For example, "Kylie Jenner advertisement" or "K-pop advertisement".



Optional Extension:

Encourage your students to explore the ideas raised in today's lesson by completing the Extension Activity handout on their own time or during class time if you have it.



Curriculum Links

England

PSHE

Health & Wellbeing

Self-concept

- » **H1.** To know how we are all unique; that recognising and demonstrating personal strengths build self-confidence, self-esteem and good health and wellbeing

Relationships

Social Influences

- » **R42.** To recognise peer influence and to develop strategies for managing it, including online
- » **R43.** To know the role peers can play in supporting one another to resist pressure and influence, challenge harmful social norms and access appropriate support

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

Physical health and mental wellbeing

Mental Health

- » To know how to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary

Internet Safety and Harms

- » To know the similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including: the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online (including through setting unrealistic expectations for body image)
- » To know how people may curate a specific image of their life online, over-reliance on online relationships including social media, the risks related to online gambling including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online

English

Spoken English

- » To give short speeches and presentations, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point
- » To participate in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said

Scotland

Health and Wellbeing

- » **3-01a** I am aware of and able to express my feelings and am developing the ability to talk about them
- » **3-15a** I am developing my understanding of the human body and can use this knowledge to maintain and improve my wellbeing and health

Literacy Across Learning

- » **3-08a** To help me develop an informed view, I am learning about the techniques used to influence opinion and how to assess the value of my sources, and I can recognise persuasion
- » **4-08a** To help me develop an informed view, I can identify some of the techniques used to influence or persuade and can assess the value of my sources
- » **3-10a** I am developing confidence when engaging with others within and beyond my place of learning. I can communicate in a clear, expressive way and I am learning to select and organise resources independently
- » **4-10a** I can communicate in a clear, expressive manner when engaging with others within and beyond my place of learning, and can independently select and organise appropriate resources as required

Wales

Health and Well-being (PSE framework)

Developing thinking skills

- » To identify and assess bias and reliability, e.g. evaluate messages from the media

Developing communication

- » To communicate confidently personal feelings and views through a range of appropriate methods
- » To express opinions clearly and justify a personal standpoint

Literacy

Oracy

- » To defend a point of view with information and reasons, e.g. in role or debate
- » To respond positively and thoughtfully to new ideas and alternative points of view
- » To consider the relevance and significance of information and ideas presented to them



Northern Ireland

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding

Self-Awareness

- » To explore the different ways to develop self esteem
- » To investigate the influences on a young person

Relationships

- » To examine and explore their own and others' feelings and emotions.

Communication

Talking & Listening

- » To listen to and take part in discussions, explanations, role-plays and presentations
- » To contribute comments, ask questions and respond to others' points of view



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Confident Me, US version, was revised and updated for a US student audience by Jessica Lawrence, Director of Cairn Guidance.