

Proud To Be Me



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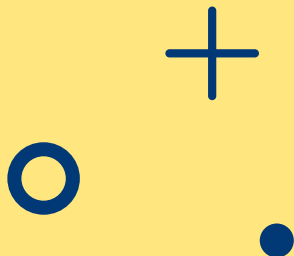
Acknowledgements

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We're on a mission to change beauty.

Will you join us?



At Dove, we're on a mission to encourage young people to think positively about the way they look, enabling them to reach their full potential in life.

Around the world, young people struggle with accepting their appearance and face pressure to change the way they look. LGBTQ+ youth may be especially vulnerable.

LGBTQ+ youth may experience greater body dissatisfaction and are also between 2 to 6+ times more likely to engage in disordered eating behaviors (e.g., fasting, binge eating, self-induced vomiting, laxative use, diet pill use, anabolic steroid use) compared to their same-aged peers.

Sources: Austin, Nelson, Birket, Calzo, & Everett, 2013; Blashill & Safren, 2014; Calzo, Sonnevill, Scherer, Jackson, & Austin, 2016; McClain & Peebles, 2016; Watson, Adjei, Saewyc, Homma, & Goodenow, 2017.

About this program

Proud To Be Me is a single session, two hour body image program designed for LGBTQ+ youth and allies ages 11-14. In the program, youth will explore different sources of pressure to change their appearance and practice with different skills to push back against the urge to conform to appearance norms.

The goal of *Proud To Be Me* is to actively engage each group member in thinking about the impact of appearance pressures and practice challenging these messages in different ways.

Proud To Be Me was designed by body image and LGBTQ+ experts and in tandem with queer youth to specifically address the experience of being young, queer, and authentic in the world. The goal is to encourage unique expression of the self, while also exploring the cultural messages and appearance pressures that can discourage being authentic.

Proud To Be Me is a research-informed intervention but has not been explicitly evaluated in research studies with queer youth; until there is more research on this program with LGBTQ+ youth specifically, we recommend closely adhering to the facilitation recommendations below.

Theoretical foundation of *Proud To Be Me*

- + This program is designed to create attitude and behavior change through active participation and practice. It is important that each group member engages with the program and actively contributes to conversations. This includes completing all exercises designed to challenge ideals and push back against appearance pressures (for example, critiquing the gender binary in appearance ideals through a written exercise).
- + It is critical that youth generate the costs/cons of the appearance ideals, rather than the group leader, to help produce attitude change. Importantly, participants should never focus on any benefits/pros of the appearance ideal, because this will undermine the effects of the program.

Facilitating the program



Program Structure

Groups are led by **1-2 leaders**.

The ideal group size is typically between **6-8 participants** to ensure that everyone can participate verbally in the discussion.

Who should lead this program?

Ideally, leaders of *Proud To Be Me* should meet the following criteria. This is critical to help ensure that the content of this program is delivered in an effective, inclusive, and meaningful way for LGBTQ+ youth:

- + Lived experience as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and
- + Group facilitation experience (preferably with youth)

If leaders are not members of the LGBTQ+ community, they should have:

- + An existing relationship with queer youth advocacy (e.g., Gay Straight Alliance or Genders & Sexualities Alliance (GSA) leader)
- + Identify as an ally to the queer community
- + Have experience in LGBTQ+ education

Training in *Proud To Be Me*

Ideally, program leaders should be trained directly by someone with expertise in this program (e.g., one of the developers).

A train-the-trainer model may be suitable for leaders who have significant experience facilitating groups within the LGBTQ+ community.

Who should participate in this program?

Proud To Be Me should be delivered in spaces specifically dedicated to serving queer youth and allies (e.g., GSA programs, LGBTQ+ clubs or youth centers).

It is important to include allies for this age range, since it invites participation for youth who may still be exploring their sexual and/or gender identity or who consider themselves to be advocates.

Program Length

Proud To Be Me is divided into several structured sections which should take **two hours** in total.

Before you begin

How to use this manual:

The text underlined reflects content that leaders should say or paraphrase.

Facilitation Tip



These sections include information and tips or additional points that facilitators should cover within the section.



Text in red reflects key actions to be taken.



Supply checklist

- + Whiteboard and markers (or large pieces of poster paper and pens)
- + Sticky notes
- + Program handouts (x5)

Set up room for facilitation

- + Create a physical space where folks can see each other and talk to one another easily, while still being able to view notes made in the session (e.g., chairs in a circle)
- + Make sure everyone can view the whiteboard



General tips

Leaders are responsible not only for adhering to the protocol but also for managing group dynamics (e.g. developing a safe and inviting environment, facilitating conversation, and dealing with challenging participants).

Adhere as closely as possible to the recommended time limits to ensure that all topics are covered and are covered in sufficient detail.

When a participant shares personal information or discusses difficulties they have with body image, make empathic statements that show both compassion and appreciation for their contribution to the group.

(e.g., “It sounds like you are really struggling with this,” or “That must have been hurtful when your mother/father said that comment to you about your weight”).

Although it is extremely important to stay on track and cover the necessary information for each session, participants also want to feel heard and understood.

Additional information about facilitation, including frequently asked questions and common difficult situations, are included in the Appendix.



Program Sessions

Let's get started



Timeline

Introduction | 5 mins

Voluntary commitment | 5 mins

Ideals | 30 mins

Costs | 20 mins

Break | 10 mins

Roleplay | 20 mins

Activism | 15 mins

Session wrap-up | 15 mins

Introduction

 5 mins



Introduce yourself and your pronouns.
Have one facilitator not share their pronouns to show that it's okay if participants are not comfortable with sharing them.

Hi everyone. Welcome to *Proud To Be Me*.
My name is _____ and I'm one of your
facilitators for today. My pronouns are _____.

Before we get started, we want to get to know
all of you, too. How about we go around the
circle and you can each tell us your name and
if you'd like, your pronouns as well.

Go around the circle.

Thank you all for introducing yourselves.
We're excited to get to know you more
throughout this program and hear what
you have to share.

This is a body acceptance program that
discusses what affects body image concerns
in the LGBTQ+ community. What comes
to mind when you think about **unique**
things that influence body image
in the LGBTQ+ community?

For those who don't know, body image refers to how you think and feel about your body shape, size, or overall way you look.

How do those things make you feel?

When it comes to things like (mention ideas
the participants talked about; i.e. passing)
and experiences like (i.e. gender dysphoria,
gender euphoria). Your experience as
a human is full of good things and bad.
That doesn't change when you're part of
the LGBTQ+, but you may have different
good and bad experiences such as gender
dysphoria or gender euphoria.

Voluntary commitment & space agreement

 5 mins

Why this matters

- + The importance of creating a respectful and comfortable space where we can all speak freely and share our perspectives
- + Tell participants where they can go for additional support either during or after the workshop

We find that people get the most out of these groups if they contribute to the conversation and complete all of the outside exercises. We also want to remind you that your participation is voluntary.

Are each of you willing to keep an open mind and give this program a try? Let's all go around the room and make a verbal agreement – I'll start... I am willing to keep an open mind and give this a try.

Go around the circle and have each member state that they are willing. Can acknowledge that this can feel somewhat awkward.



Group rules

We will be talking about personal details of our lives in this group, and we want to hear diverse perspectives so we'll be asking everyone to share. It can be hard to open up and talk about personal things like pressures to change the way you look. One thing that might help us to have these conversations is if we agree to keep everything said in the group confidential. Obviously, you can discuss what you learned with other people, but personal information and stories should remain in this group. Does everyone agree to this?

Get general agreement from group.

Now let's set up some other group rules. What else would help to make this a space where you feel comfortable contribute respectfully, share our experiences, and be heard? Think about this for about a minute on your own and then let's come together to make a list on the board.

After 30 seconds to one minute:

What ideas do you have so far?

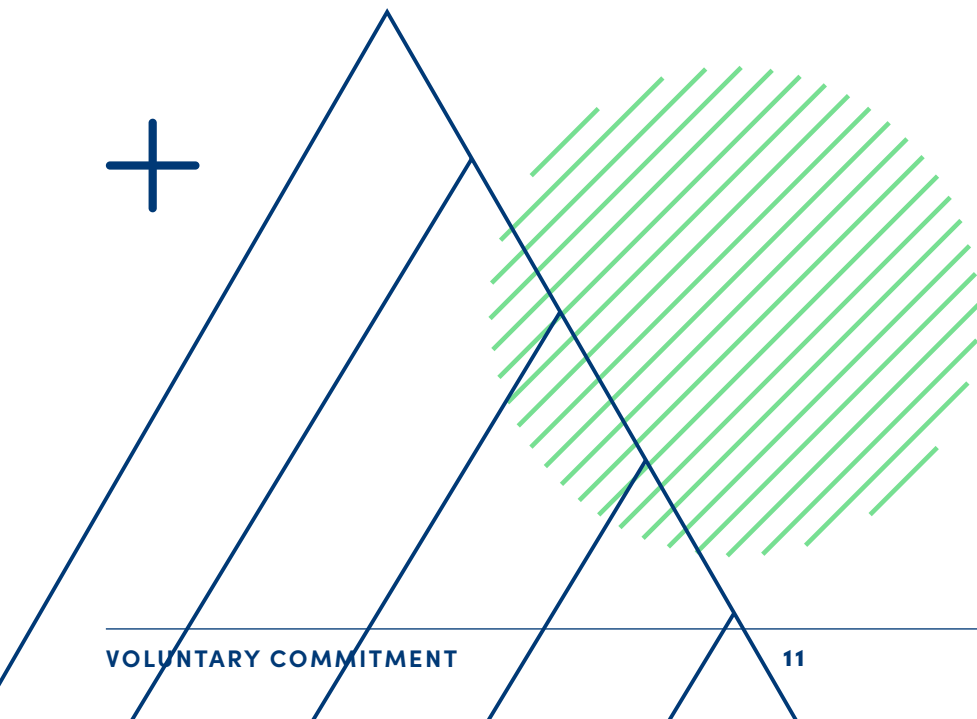
Let group members suggest ideas before jumping in.

Suggestions include

- + No interrupting
- + Be respectful of what people contribute
- + Refrain from using derogatory language in reference to people's individual identities
- + Don't pretend that you know what something means- ask questions!
- + Give people room to say "wrong" things and grow
- + Validate others' contributions
- + Challenge yourself to understand and grow
- + No judgement: challenge ideas, not people
- + Active listening

Does everyone agree to this list?

Get general agreement from group.



Defining the appearance ideals

 30 mins

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Why this matters

Before youth can start to challenge an appearance ideal, they will need to understand what it is and where it comes from. They have been unconsciously affected by its damaging messages for years but might not have been aware of it. It's time to look at the appearance ideal consciously and critically.

You will need

- + Large piece of paper / whiteboard
- + Pens / markers

What happens

Participants brainstorm features of society's appearance ideals.

Let's get started



Defining the “ideal” woman

Now we are going to define and describe some of the ideals promoted in our culture. Our society tends to send us very specific messages about what “ideal” attractiveness looks like –think about celebrities or other people highlighted in the media.

It’s important to remember that the media often represents a false gender binary. A binary is something that has or is made up of two parts. In the gender binary, you’re supposed to be only masculine or only feminine, but many people identify with both and others identify with neither.

Can you think of any examples where people or items are forced into gendered categories?

Possible responses include

- + Girls play with dolls vs. boys play with action figures
- + Girls wear pink vs. boys wear blue
- + Girls like princesses vs. boys like superheroes
- + Women cook, clean, and raise children vs. men are expected to get a job to bring home income for his family
- + Women shop for fun vs. men play sports for fun

Those are some great examples! A lot of things get gendered for boys and girls, but thinking about gender as a binary, or thinking there’s only two genders is pretty exclusive.



If you think about gender on a binary, it completely leaves out folks who might not feel like they’re a man or a woman. This also suggests people are one or the other, but that isn’t true.

It’ll be helpful moving forward to think of gender identity existing on a spectrum rather than a binary.



Draw this on the board



This is not the only way to represent a spectrum but in this example, the two ends of it are what we know as traditionally “masculine” or “feminine”. A person can fall anywhere on this line whether it be completely feminine, completely masculine, or somewhere in between, or exist outside of the line completely. Some people identify as genderless or their gender may change over time and across situations. The main idea here is that there are not only two things to be, and you are the only one who gets to define what your gender identity is.

Gender existing on a spectrum isn’t something new, though it can be often thought of as more modern or white-washed. However, many Indigenous cultures have thought of **gender on a spectrum** for decades.

For example **Two-Spirit** refers to a person who has both a masculine and feminine spirit with gender fluidity and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. Internalized gender norms are something a lot of people struggle with and it's important for us to talk more about gender, so we'll come back to it after this activity.

Facilitation Tip



See appendix for more information on Two-Spirit identity.



Arrange the group so that everyone can see the large piece of paper. Write "The Ideal Woman" at the top.

First, let's describe the "perfect woman" according to our society.

You don't have to agree, but what images come to mind when you think about what the "perfect woman" should look like? These could be things you see in magazines or on social media, or maybe even things you've heard from your family and friends. Be as detailed as you can!

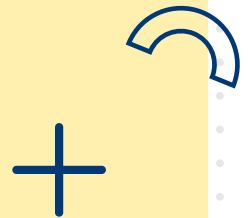
As participants call out features, write them down under "The Ideal Woman" heading. This list will show how detailed and limiting the appearance ideal can be.

Encourage the group to come up with as many physical features as possible. Prompt the group to make each feature very specific – this emphasizes how narrow the ideal is.

For example, if someone says "perfect skin," ask them to describe what that looks like (e.g., no blemishes, no wrinkles, a glowing quality).

Possible responses include

- + **Thin and attractive**
How thin? How attractive?
- + **Perfect body**
Get details on each body part
- + **Toned physique**
How toned? Muscular?
- + **Large breasts**
How large?
- + **Tall**
Get specific height
- + **Flat stomach**
Muscular or flat?
- + **Hair**
Textured or smooth? Body hair?
- + **Age**
Young or old?
- + **Tan but their race is white**



Facilitation Tip



You do not have to bring up all of these points; many of them will come up naturally in the conversation. Your role as a facilitator is to bring up points in this topic that may have been forgotten (i.e. the race of the ideal).



When you've filled the page and the group is out of ideas, step back.

So, society tells us that the perfect-looking woman has... (read through responses, highlight inconsistencies, e.g. thin but also large breasts). We call this the "feminine ideal".

Facilitation Tip



Emphasize the overall importance placed on thinness within the feminine ideal.

Defining the "ideal" man

Now, what are we told the "perfect man" should look like?

Like before, you don't have to agree but what images do you think about when you picture the "perfect man"?

As before, write down features as participants respond under "The Ideal Man" heading. This list will show how detailed and limiting the appearance ideal can be.

Possible responses include

- + **Muscular or toned**
How muscular? Which body parts?
- + **Perfect body**
Get details on each part of body
- + **Broad Shoulders**
How large?
- + **Tall**
Get specific height
- + **Facial characteristics**
Strong jaw
- + **Hair**
Length? texture? Facial hair?
Body hair?
- + **Age**
Young? Old?
- + **Skin complexion**
Get details

So, society tells us that the perfect-looking man has... (read through responses, highlight inconsistencies, e.g. thin but also muscular). We call this the "masculine ideal".

Facilitation Tip



Emphasize the overall importance placed on muscularity within the masculine ideal.

Clarifying the gender binary



As we talked about before, these ideals reference body parts of **cisgender** men and women and promote thinking about gender as a binary, masculine vs. feminine, boys vs. girls. It sends the (false) message that the only attractive way to present yourself to the world is very feminine or very masculine.

If we think of gender as a binary and that there are only two genders, who is left out?

Possible responses include

- + Some transgender people
- + Nonbinary people
- + Genderfluid people
- + Anyone who identifies differently than male or female

Facilitation Tip



It's important to highlight that there are trans folk who **do** fit into the binary.

We can see that this binary is very restrictive. How might it feel to be left out or to be forced into a category that doesn't fit who you are?

Possible responses include

- + It doesn't feel good
- + Feel like you're not good enough

So we can see how thinking about gender on a binary might make others not feel good about themselves, and how thinking about gender on a spectrum instead is more accurate and supportive. It's important to also clarify the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation because they often intersect with one another.

Your **gender identity** is how you personally think about yourself and how you want to be perceived. While **sexual identity** describes who an individual is attracted to. It's important to know the difference and also know that while they can intersect with each other, both gender and sexuality should be thought of on a spectrum.

Facilitation Tip



You can use visuals to explain these new concepts. For example, refer to the gender identity spectrum again or draw a similar one to explain sexual identity.

Reflect



Facilitate a brief discussion with the group around these questions:

Who (else) is left out of these binary ideals?
/ How inclusive are the ideals?

Possible responses include

People of different:

- + Races
- + Ethnicities
- + Genders
- + Sexual orientations
- + Body sizes
- + Abilities
- + Ages

Facilitation Tip



This is a good point in the program to elaborate if you need space. After participants respond, you should bring up identities that they have not mentioned.

Where do these appearance ideals come from? How do we learn about them?

Possible responses include

- + Social media (instagram, tiktok, youtube, twitter, twitch, netflix/hulu)
- + Family and friends
- + Television and magazines
- + The internet and online ads
- + Fashion industry, diet industry etc.

How does pressure to match these appearance ideals make you feel?

Possible responses include

- + Feels awful to be on the outside
- + Anxious or depressed
- + Not good enough
- + Shy
- + Negative about self in general

What are we told will happen if we look like these ideals? Is that true?

Possible responses include

- + Be more popular
- + Happier
- + More successful
- + In a relationship
- + No, it is not true.



Clarifying the healthy ideal

Key words summary



Before we talk about this some more, it is important to talk about something called the “healthy ideal”. So, we’ve learned that appearance ideals are unachievable for most people and you’d need to use pretty extreme measures to make your body fit into those ideals. For most people, the ideal isn’t realistic or healthy.

The **healthy ideal** is different – it’s how your unique body looks when you do things to support your physical health, mental health, and overall quality of life. This can include eating lots of different food to fuel your body, exercising, and engaging in school, social activities, and other things you value. The focus here is really on how your body feels on the inside and works to get you through each day, it’s not about how your body looks.

Your **body image** is how you think and feel about how your body looks and functions. It’s important to note that your body image changes and is not fixed. How you view your body can change within the day and also throughout your lifetime. For example, you may love your body one day and feel bad about it the next. Your body may confuse the way you think about your gender identity, and your identity itself might change many times.

It can sometimes be helpful to think about the idea of **body neutrality**, which is when you don’t have negative or positive ideals about your own or others bodies. This way of thinking is important because you don’t have to love every part of your body. For example, there might be things you don’t love about your body, but negative feelings about a few things won’t stop you from also having positive thoughts about other parts of your body. Specifically, when we think about things like

Healthy ideal

How your body feels on the inside and works to get you through each day.

Body image

How you think and feel about how your body looks and functions.

Body neutrality

When you don’t have negative or positive ideals about your own or others bodies.

Gender dysphoria

The feelings of discomfort or stress that can occur in people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.

gender dysphoria, which describe the feelings of discomfort or distress that can occur in people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth, body neutrality can be really helpful. It's important that we highlight that if you do experience gender dysphoria it doesn't mean you hate your body, it can often mean if you did something to your body it could help you feel better.

There is a healthy way to have gender dysphoria and part of that starts with thinking about if you would be happier changing or without a part of your body. It can also be helpful to focus on the parts of your body that do make you feel good, this doesn't have to relate to appearance either, it can also be functionality.

Can you all think of parts of your body that make you feel good? If you're comfortable sharing also, why does that part of your body make you feel good? For example, my legs allow me to run really fast which makes me feel good about my body.

What parts of your body make you feel good about yourself?

Possible responses include

- + My teeth let me chew food
- + My hands let me play with toys
- + My stomach because my cat likes to lay on it
- + My height allows me to reach things up high, etc.

Facilitation Tip



Write key concepts on a board/chart paper to support visual learners.

We talked about how the appearance ideals are narrow and very difficult to obtain. It's also important to acknowledge that the ideals are constantly changing in terms of what is popular or trendy. It's a waste of time and energy to try and pursue these ideals. This is why this program places a focus on the healthy ideal, which highlights all shapes and sizes and is individual and flexible.

Facilitation Tip



It is important not to convey that trying to be healthy is bad – continue to make a distinction between the healthy ideal (engaging in eating a variety of foods and exercise behaviors to promote overall health) and the feminine or masculine appearance ideal (striving for an unrealistic “look” by whatever means necessary).



Costs of pursuing ideals

 20 mins



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02

Why this matters

It's not enough to know that the appearance ideal exists. Within the LGBTQ+ community, there are often sub-ideals that can have people feeling excluded or that they are not enough. To help youth build both body acceptance and confidence, we need to encourage them to speak up about the costs of chasing the ideal and how being free from it can make them happier and healthier.

You will need

- + Costs handout
- + Pens

What happens

In this activity, participants come up with a long list of costs (downsides or major negative impacts) associated with chasing the appearance ideal. They think about what it costs an individual in terms of personal health, relationships, finance and achievements, and what it costs society in general.

Let's get started



Thinking about costs



Pass out Costs handout before starting this section.

Trying to look like the appearance ideal has major negative impacts on people and society as a whole. What would you be giving up if you tried to look like the ideals? What challenges would you face?

On your handout, write down some costs or negative things that would happen if you or someone you know chased these ideals and in a few minutes we'll come back together and share. These can be general ideas like lower self-esteem or specific things like not feeling like you can wear the clothes you want.

Give a few minutes to write down ideas.

Let's go around the group and name some of these costs.



Possible responses include

- + Losing money
- + Gender dysphoria
- + Decreased self-worth
- + Expensive
- + Physically and mentally exhausting
- + Can cause health problems
- + Encourages unhealthy weight management
- + Depression or anxiety
- + Eating disorders / not enjoying food
- + Not having fun with friends
- + Being unhappy
- + Avoiding specific activities

Facilitation Tip



When asking the next few questions, tailor them to the answers that participants gave. For example, if someone mentions eating disorders, connect that idea by talking about mental health and health in general.



These are all great answers. Let's go into this idea a little bit more in depth.

How do these ideals affect your health?

What does chasing the appearance ideals do to your time?

How would trying to change your appearance to fit the ideals make you feel about yourself?



Possible responses include

- + People aren't fully engaged in their own or others lives
- + Overall these ideals make most people feel negative feelings about their body
- + The internalized transphobia we may gain from these ideals can affect other trans people in our lives that we care about, etc.

Facilitation Tip



Again, you don't need to touch on all these ideas, facilitators should use their best judgment with acknowledging what identities are present in the group and if certain identities are not being talked about.

i.e. is the group all white-passing and not acknowledging that these are white-ideals, is it acknowledged that these ideals play into internalized transphobia, etc.

Costs to the LGBTQ+ community

Members of the LGBTQ+ community can often face additional costs. We've talked about pressures of the masculine and feminine ideals, but there are often harmful stereotypes in the media about what a LGBTQ+ person "should" look like. For example, stereotypes about gay men are often portrayed as more feminine while lesbian women are seen as more masculine. What are other examples that you have seen, maybe on TV or in other media?

Those are really good examples of these harmful stereotypes. Even within the LGBTQ+ community itself, there might be different stereotypes and expectations about ideal bodies. There is a stereotype that trans folk need to medically transition and that all trans folk want to personally medically transition. There's also constant erasure in the media for other sexual identities, bisexual and pansexual people are rarely talked about.

Raise your hand if you can think of a show or movie where they accurately represent bisexuality or pansexuality.

Wait for response.

See? Not many, right? While gender identity and sexuality can intersect with one another, these stereotypes can actually be really harmful.

How do you think it would feel to be a part of the LGBTQ+ community and not see yourself represented in the media?

Possible responses include

- + Alone
- + Excluded
- + Alienated
- + That you're not good enough
- + Invalidated in your identity because it doesn't fit the model we see through media
- + You could strive for the ideals even more as a result

Facilitation Tips



- + It's important to highlight that costs for transgender folk are often thought of as medically transitioning due to gender dysphoria. However, not all trans folk do medically transition and not all trans folk experience gender dysphoria.
- + The acronym LGBTQ+ is used above, facilitators should use their own judgement if it would make more sense to use a different acronym or word (i.e. LGBT+ LGBTQ+ LGBTQIA+, etc.) If facilitators are unsure, ask the group what acronyms/words they are comfortable using.



Thinking more about the LGBTQ+ community, it's important that we talk about people who are transgender who do fit into the binary. "Passing" refers to whether someone is perceived as female or male.

Why do you think someone might want to pass?

Possible responses include

- + So they don't have their gender invalidated
- + Their pronouns are misused

For many trans folk, there's a stereotype that you need to "pass" to validate your identity, but this simply isn't true. Additionally, someone might want to pass for safety reasons. It is important to acknowledge that these ideals we talked about can often have a stronger pressure on transgender individuals for various reasons. You can "pass" without looking like the ideals we've discussed.

Can you think of what someone who is trans might experience when trying to achieve these ideals?

Possible responses include

- + Gender dysphoria
- + Gender euphoria stricter ideals which can oftentimes be more unattainable
- + You might feel like you're not "trans enough"
- + High rates of eating disorders among trans youth
- + Loss of family and friends, etc.

Facilitation Tip



It's important to emphasize that there is often a societal pressure to "pass", but this does not need to be your goal. There are numerous safety concerns that go into wanting to "pass" due to fear of discrimination and violence. However, it's also important to acknowledge there are risks and benefits to being your authentic self. The goal is to empower youth with information so that they are able to make the decision for themselves when they feel it is safe to do so, no one else gets to make that decision for them.

What if people didn't want to meet the ideals that society says you have to? Would the gender identity of transgender and non-binary folks who didn't try to fit the ideals be valid?

Possible responses include

- + You shouldn't have to meet the ideals to be valid in your identity.
- + Your gender identity would still be valid regardless of what society says.



Reflect

Given this long list of costs, who benefits from the ideals? Who makes money when people try to pursue them?

Possible responses include

- + The media
- + The fashion industry
- + Diet/weight loss/fitness industry
- + Beauty industry

Are we part of the group that benefits?

Possible response

No, we're not profiting off of people trying to achieve these ideals

Given all of the costs, is chasing the ideal worth it? Does it make sense to aggressively pursue the appearance ideal versus the healthy ideal?

Possible response

No, it doesn't make sense.



Facilitation Tip



If participants say "yes," you can respond with ideas from the discussion about how high the costs are.

I.e., "Your physical and mental health is not worth doing all of this" or "People at school who are worth hanging out with will accept and love you as you are".

As we can see, these ideals take so much from you. Let's go around the room so that each of us can share one reason why pursuing society's ideals doesn't make sense. This can be as simple as saying "it's impossible to achieve" or "the costs are too high".

Go around circle.

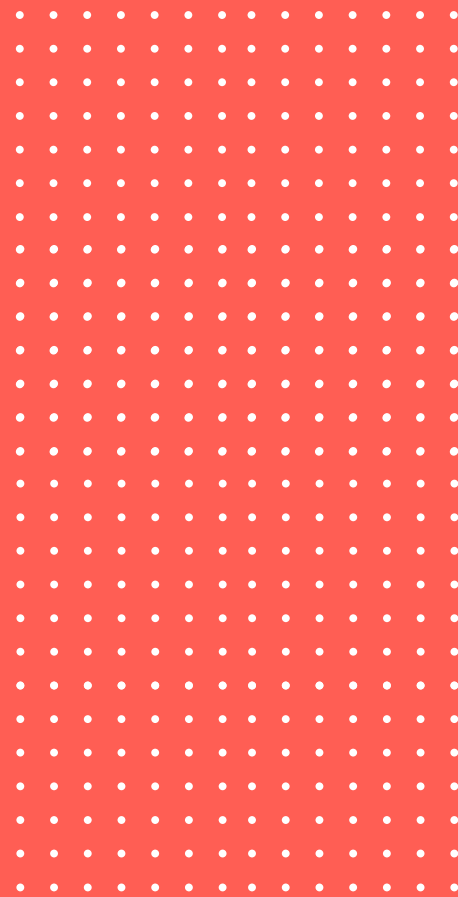
Thanks for sharing everyone. Remember that there is no perfect look and no perfect body type. Having a body that enables you to do the things you want to do is important, so we need to appreciate and take care of our bodies.

Speaking out against the appearance ideal isn't about criticizing anyone's natural body or features, or the choices people make about their appearance. It's about challenging the idea in society that there's one perfect way to look, and the pressure this idea puts on people. Also, be mindful that it's impossible to naturally achieve the ideal; even models and celebrities need surgery and Photoshop to match it. Chasing the ideal, and what this does to you, is the problem.

Break



10 mins



Challenging Body Talk

 20 mins



Why this matters

Practicing how to challenge the appearance ideal in everyday conversation gives kids a way to do it in real life. By giving them the tools to counter the appearance ideal, they become less engaged in trying to chase it and their body confidence improves.

You will need

- + Large poster paper
- + Sticky notes
- + *Body Talk List* handout

What happens

On the whiteboard, write the five negative body talk statements. Pass out five sticky notes to each kid. Everyone will write down a response to each of the statements. When they finish, they will stick their responses on the board. One of the facilitators will review the responses and can correct any that may still support the ideal. Then, each participant can pick one response to say out loud- this can be any statement, it does not have to be the one that that individual wrote.

Let's get started



Negative body talk



Pass out *Body Talk List* handout before starting this section.

As we've said throughout this program, there are so many ways that these ideals are found in our daily lives. Often, comments about our bodies come up in conversations with friends or family. Sometimes other people bring them up, and sometimes we are the ones that bring them up about ourselves.

Your first handout in today's packet is a list of common statements people make that subtly support the bodies within societal appearance ideals. This is called the "**Body Talk List.**" Please take a moment to read these statements to yourself.

Give group a few minutes to read over list. Can also ask for other statements they hear.

Facilitation Tip



For the upcoming activity, pick six statements from each of the different categories below (for a total of **six** statements) for participants to practice responding to.

Muscularity

- + Real men have muscles.
- + My arms aren't toned enough.
- + Wow, he is so ripped!
- + I'm too scrawny.

Gender identity

- + My mom says short hair is only for boys.
- + Why is that boy wearing makeup?
- + What are you, a girl or a boy?
- + Girls should have curves.

Sexual identity

- + Why did you cut your hair so short, are you a lesbian?
- + He has such a great fashion sense, he must be gay.
- + You don't look queer.

Healthy/unhealthy food-related

- + I can't eat that; it will make me fat.
- + If you want to lose weight you should try eating healthier.
- + I'm not going to eat so I can look good for the day.
- + I need to stop eating junk food so I can lose weight.

Thinness

- + I wish I could be as skinny as you.
- + How are you so thin?
- + She's way too skinny; it's not cute.
- + They're too out of shape to be wearing a swimsuit.

Anti-fat

- + You look great! Have you lost weight?
- + They're too big to be wearing those pants.
- + You'd be more attractive if you lost weight.
- + They really let themselves go.



Use these prompts below to focus the conversation.

01 How do the statements on this list support the appearance ideals?

Possible responses include:

- + The statements encourage the idea that skinnier is prettier
- + That muscular is better, and promote negative body talk
- + They enforce gender roles

02 How might these statements make someone feel if they do not fit into the gender binary?

(Specifically gender based statements)

Possible responses include:

- + They may feel like they're dressing or expressing themselves the "wrong" way
- + They might feel like who they really are is not acceptable
- + On top of normal body-related pressures, they're being told that their identity is "wrong"

03 How would your feelings toward your body change if you stopped talking this way?

Possible responses include:

- + I would appreciate myself more
- + I would be nicer to myself, less critical
- + I'd be happier, feel better or even just okay
- + I'd be able to enjoy the food I like to eat
- + I would feel comfortable enough to wear what I want

04 If you stopped making statements on this list, how might it affect others around you?

Possible responses include:

- + They might stop making these statements too
- + People would feel less judged and free to express themselves
- + We'd create a more positive environment for everyone
- + We would all feel more accepted

05 So how can we continue a conversation without body talk? Or what could we talk about instead of our or other people's appearance?

Possible responses include:

- + Comment on things we value about others that don't include appearance (personality, being smart, kind, etc.)
- + Think about qualities and interests that make you or others unique and focus on those
- + Talk about shared interests outside of appearance

06 What can you do to change the conversation when someone does start to Body Talk?

Possible responses include:

- + Change the subject to something else if body talk comes up
- + Let people know this kind of talk makes you feel uncomfortable
- + Challenge people to think about why body talk is harmful

It can be hard to change the conversation when people use Body Talk. **We'll do a mini role-play game to practice with this.**

Pass out sticky notes to each participant.

On this poster, we have five Body Talk statements from the handout list. You are all going to respond to each of these statements in a way that shows that you do not support the ideals. For example, if I say "that person is HUGE" what could you say in response?

Get at least one example from the group.

Okay, that is what you would write on your post-it. Then, you'll stick it under the statement you're replying to. After you've responded to all of them, we'll group back up and go over the statements together. Does that make sense?

Let's take a look at some of the responses we have.

Correct any that may still support the ideals.

Facilitation Tip



Names will not be on the post-its so there is no need to call out anyone specifically.

Work together as a group to craft a statement that better rejects the ideal.

For example, if the statement is "I'm too scrawny" and someone responds "No, you're not!" a better response might be, "Your body is okay the way that it is, even if you don't love it."

Okay, now that we've gone through some of these together, we want you to each take a turn reading one of these responses out loud. It does not have to be one of the ones that you wrote yourself, but it can be if you'd like.

Let me know which statement you're responding to, I'll read it out loud, and you can read out the reply. Does that make sense? Would anyone like to go first?

Thank you all for participating. We know it can be really hard to hear these statements even in a roleplay type of setting. You've all done a great job at fighting against the ideals by practicing these responses.

We hope that by doing this, you all find it easier to speak up when you hear this kind of negative body talk.



Body Activism

 15 mins



Why this matters

Body acceptance is a social issue. By becoming body acceptance activists, youth get to practice voicing their own rejection of the appearance ideal and help others feel less pressured to chase it, creating more accepting communities.

You will need

- + Paper
- + Pens
- + *Body Activism* handout

What happens

After brainstorming with the group, youth choose a simple action that will allow them to share what they've learned from this program with others.

Let's get started



Pressures to conform



Pass out *Body Activism* handout before starting this section.

Let's think about the LGBTQ+ community once again. This is a safe and confidential space where you all can support one another. It's important to remember that while you may never be able to fully control what other people do outside of this room, you can trust each other in this group. We are all here to listen, understand, and validate one another. This is a space where we've all come together to make a difference and we want you to leave this group with some creative ways that you can make changes to your community.

So, remember what we discussed about the ideals, the way that they're not representative of many people, and why we can feel pressured to conform to them.

What could you do to open the eyes of your friends and family, and even your wider community like your school, to the things you've learned today about the appearance ideal and the importance of body acceptance?

Possible responses include

- + Have discussions with family members and friends
- + Don't laugh at jokes when they're directed at the expense of another person
- + Practice the golden rule - treat others how they want to be treated



Activism

Doing something that will change your environment, community, or even world in a way that will benefit others.

So how can you be a body activist and share what you've learned with other people to battle these appearance ideals in the LGBTQ+ community. This might seem like something that's not possible for you to do as one person, but the truth is that every single one of you is capable of making a difference.

For example, you could post an unedited and unfiltered picture of yourself on social media or make a pact with your friend to avoid talking badly about your body. That changes the world around you in a positive way. What are other ways could you do this?

Write down some ideas on your piece of paper and we'll share our answers in a few minutes.

Let's have everyone share two items from their list. Would anyone like to go first?

Have participants share.

These are really awesome ideas! Thank you for sharing them with us.

Here are some other things that we didn't list that you could do as well:

Body activism ideas

- + Think about what content you watch and what creators/influencers you follow on social media - are you following people of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, abilities, etc.
- + Ask yourself, do the people you follow on social media make you feel good about yourself and your body?
- + Put positive post-it notes up saying "you look great the way you are" on mirrors or walls in your home in a public space
- + Put out a pail with sidewalk chalk and a sign that tells people to write down something they like about their appearance on the sidewalk
- + Share body-positive content on social media, this could be an instagram post, a youtube video, a tiktok video, etc.
- + Make comments about what you like about a person that is NOT appearance-related (e.g., "Lucy is kind, thoughtful, funny, smart, creative, etc.")
- + Create content on social media (tiktok, youtube, instagram, etc.) on body positivity
- + Post unedited photos of yourself on social media
- + Talk to a friend or family member about diversity and representation in the media

- + Make a pact with a friend to avoid talking badly about your body
- + Putting messages in magazines that challenge the appearance ideal
- + Change your media consumption to things that are body positivity or that help you boost your body confidence

We'd like to invite you all to become body activists by doing at least two of these acts over the next two weeks. Would you be willing to do that?

Get general agreement from the group.

Great! Let's go around the group again and share one of the things we're going to do.



Reflect



Thank you all again for sharing!



Even though we see these ideals everywhere in our culture, there are ways we can fight them.

Remember that it is possible for every single person to make a difference, including each of you. It is really important that we as individuals reject the ideal and help others do the same so that we can create more accepting communities.

Session wrap-up

 15 mins



Mirror Exercise Homework



Pass out *Mirror Exercise Homework* handout before starting this section.

Before we end this workshop, we also would like to ask you to do something called the “Mirror Exercise” before next week.

This involves finding some time to stand in front of a mirror and write down at least 15 things you like about yourself. This includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities. For example, you might like the shape of your arms, your strong legs, your dark hair, your laugh, or your humor.

Please make sure to include at least some physical qualities on your list. Don't forget that sometimes we like body parts because of the way we look, and other times we like them because of what they allow us to do. For example, you may say "I really like the shape of my legs" or "I appreciate that my legs can help me run fast."

The Mirror Exercise may feel silly or be hard to do at first, but we really want you to do this because it is important to recognize each of these strengths about yourself. People who have done this in the past have found it to be very helpful and empowering.

When I did this exercise, I really enjoyed it because _____
Make statement about why you found this helpful.

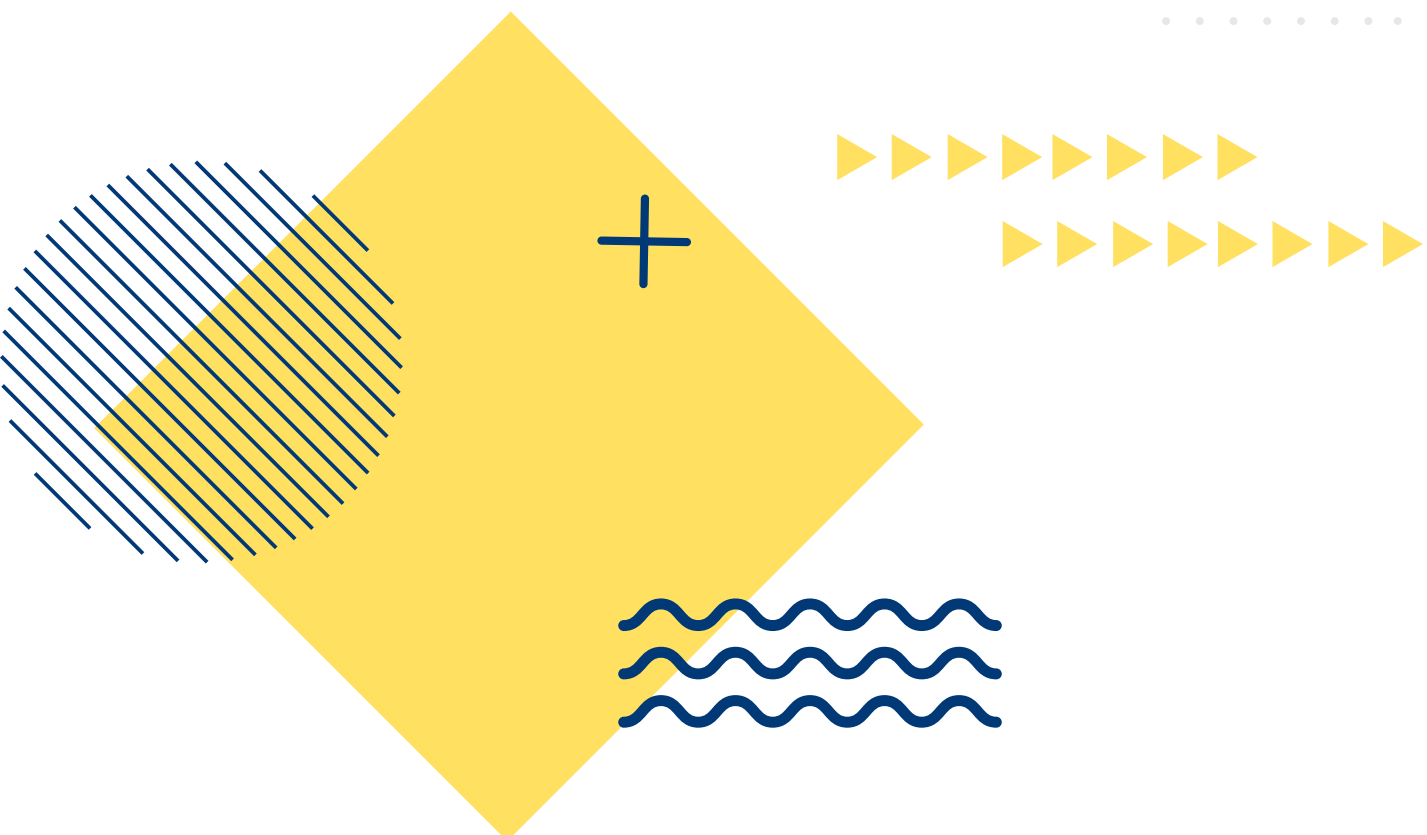
Please use your Mirror Exercise worksheet to complete this activity. Please bring your worksheet with the list of positive qualities next week. We will ask you to share something on your list and we will collect your worksheet.

Facilitation Tip



Mirror time makes the most impact when kids can identify body image characteristics that are very personal or meaningful to them. But if they aren't comfortable doing this alone or you're worried they won't be able to identify things they like about themselves, suggest:

- + Trying it with a friend they trust. They can encourage each other to identify positive traits and give examples of things they like about each other.
- + Encourage participants to start with small with the physical traits if struggling and to build up to more prominent features when they're ready.
- + Thinking about things their bodies enable them to do, not just what they look like.



To summarize

Over the next few weeks you will have two different home exercises: first, you will engage in two Body Activism activities and second, you will do the Mirror exercise.

You can think of these as “exit exercises” and we encourage you to try and complete them all because we believe they will help you work toward improving your own appearance confidence and creating a positive and accepting culture around you.

Does everyone agree to do these exercises?

Get general agreement.

Before we end our discussion today, we want to give each of you an opportunity to say one last thing. It could be something you liked, learned, something you didn’t get to say but wanted to, reflections, basically anything.

Let’s go around the circle and share one thought or feeling that you are leaving our session with today.

Once again, we’d like to thank you for deciding to be a part of this group. We’ve been very impressed with your thoughtful comments and participation! We hope that you use what you’ve learned here today to help create a more accepting world around you.



Pass out *Evaluation* handout and encourage students to give honest feedback about how they found the program.





Program Handouts

Recommended Evaluation Questions

We recommend giving a handout for youth to complete after their program. These questions ask about their experiences in the program and its impact on body image.

Body Talk List

Activity Sheet



- + They really let themselves go.
- + How are you so thin?
- + I need to stop eating junk food so I can lose weight.
- + What are you, a girl or a boy?
- + Real men have muscles.
- + I wish I could be as skinny as you.
- + Wow, he is so ripped!
- + My mom says short hair is only for boys.
- + I'm not going to eat so I can look good for the day.
- + If you want to lose weight you should try eating healthier.
- + Why is that boy wearing makeup?



- + Girls should have curves.
- + You'd be more attractive if you lost weight.
- + You look great! Have you lost weight?
- + I'm too scrawny.
- + They're too out of shape to be wearing a swimsuit.
- + She's way too skinny; it's not cute.
- + They're too big to be wearing those pants.
- + I can't eat that; it will make me fat.
- + My arms aren't toned enough.

Body Activism

Activity Sheet



Generate a list of things people can do to resist the appearance ideals on a larger scale.

What can you avoid, say, do, or learn to battle the narrow, non-inclusive appearance ideals?

✓

01 _____

02 _____

03 _____

04 _____

05 _____

06 _____

07 _____

08 _____

09 _____

✓

10 _____

11 _____

12 _____

13 _____

14 _____

15 _____

Circle the two activities you plan to do over the next two weeks as an Exit Exercise.

Mirror Exercise Homework

Activity Sheet



- 01** Wear something you can look at your body in.

- 02** Find a quiet space with a mirror in it.
We often use mirrors to criticize ourselves. Let's try to see things differently and use the mirror to reflect the things we like about us!
Find a full length mirror if you can so you can see your whole body.

- 03** While looking at the mirror, think about positive things about yourself. List at least 15 qualities.

Try to think of physical traits first, then non-physical. For example, you may like your legs or your sense of humor or your accomplishments outside of school. Please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list.

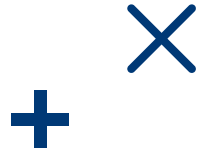
A large rectangular box with a dark blue border, containing 15 horizontal lines for writing. The box is positioned on the right side of the page, overlapping a yellow background that features a dotted pattern and various geometric shapes like a diamond, a plus sign, and a triangle.



Program Evaluation



Thank you for being part of *Proud To Be Me*. Your honest feedback is valuable as it helps us to continue to improve the program.



What is your current gender identity?

- Cisgender girl/woman
- Cisgender boy/man
- Transgender girl/woman
- Transgender boy/man
- Non-binary
- Genderqueer
(Neither only female nor only male)
- If the above options do not describe you, please specify a term that does:



Which of the following best describes you?

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- Asexual
- Straight
- If the above options do not describe you, please specify a term that does:

Which activity or part of the program was especially helpful for you?

Did anything in this program make you feel uncomfortable?

Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?



What did you think about *Proud To Be Me?*



	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
01 I enjoyed this program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
02 The program was relevant to my life and experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
03 The activities were helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
04 The activities helped me to understand how body image pressures impact the LGBTQ+ community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
05 The group leaders were effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
06 I would recommend this program to my LGBTQ+ friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
07 This program has changed the way I think or feel about my body	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
08 I will practice or apply what I learned in the program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
09 I will talk about the program with other people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10 This program will change the way I interact with friends, family, and other people in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix

Identity Terminology
p.44

**FAQ and Frequently
Made Comments**
p.50

Identity Terminology

Please note

This list of terms is not exhaustive. Language related to this community changes over time and across culture. As a facilitator, it is good practice to do your own research about culturally appropriate terms to use in addition to referring to this section of the manual.

This particular list was created with the help of CANVAS, a Canadian organization. Please also reference their glossary:

www.canvasprograms.com/glossary



LGBTQ+

An acronym which stands for “Lesbian Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and more”.

- These differing communities are linked by their shared experiences of homophobia and transphobia.
- The plus sign (+) recognizes the many other identities who may likewise be affected by heteronormativity and cisnormativity.
- There are many variations of this acronym which include other identities.
- CANVAS use 2S (two-spirit) at the front of this acronym (2SLGBTQ+) to honor the indigenous land we live on and to recognize the ways in which colonialism forces homophobia and transphobia onto Indigenous communities where these discriminations did not originally exist.

ALLY

A person who doesn't share a particular identity, but advocates for the safety, rights, and liberation of that community.

- For example, a non-LGBTQ+ person who supports the acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community might be considered an ally.
- Perhaps “being an ally” is the term that should be used. Allyship is not an identity that you can claim; rather, it is an ongoing, continuous process of learning and acting in solidarity with people who experience discrimination.
- Being an ally involves asking how you can provide

- support; listening and being open to having your views challenged; using your time, money, and connections to give power to others; and speaking up against your peers who are showing prejudice.
- Friends who stand by you and accept you just as you are, are an example of an Ally.

AGENDER

A non-binary gender identity; a person who does not identify with any gender, or who identifies as genderless.

ANDROGYNOUS

A word to describe a behavior, trait, or style of expression that either blends both masculine and feminine forms of gender expression, or is culturally read as gender-neutral.

AROMANTIC

A person who experiences little or no romantic attraction (i.e. crushes).

- Aromanticism is a spectrum. People can also identify as “grey-romantic” if their romantic attraction falls into the “grey-area” between “typical” romantic attraction and “total” aromanticism.
- Sometimes shortened to “aro”.

ASEXUAL

A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction.

- Asexual people may still experience romantic attraction, and may have a romantic identity in addition to their sexual identity. For example, an asexual person who is romantically interested in two or more genders may identify as biromantic as opposed to bisexual.
- Asexuality is a spectrum. People can also identify as grey-asexual if their sexual attraction falls into the “grey-area” between “typical” sexual attraction and “total” asexuality.
- Sometimes shortened to “ace”.

BIGENDER

A non-binary gender identity, a person who identifies as both man and woman or other genders.

BISEXUAL

A person who is attracted to two or more genders

- Different people define bisexuality different ways. Some explain it as being attracted to the both the same gender as themselves as well as other genders than themselves.

BOY / MAN

A gender identity that relates to masculinity, though has a different exact meaning for everyone; can refer to cisgender or transgender people.

CISGENDER

A person whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

- For example, a person who was assigned male at birth and understands themselves to be a man is a cisgender man.
- This is sometimes shortened to “cis”.
Examples include cis woman and cis man.

DEMIBOY / DEMIGIRL

A non-binary gender identity.

- A demigirl sometimes identifies as a girl/woman, or identifies with aspects of femininity.
- A demiboy sometimes identifies as a boy/man, or with aspects of masculinity.

DEMISEXUAL

A person who only experiences sexual attraction once they have formed a strong emotional connection to someone.

- This term is most commonly found in the asexual and grey-asexual community.

DYADIC

A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall within the conventional classifications of male or female.

FEMALE

A person who is assigned the sex “female” at birth.

- Doctors and parents might say a baby is “female” based on body parts, sex chromosomes, and/or hormones.
- In the general population, this is often used interchangeably with “woman”, which is a gender identity.

FEMININE

A word to describe a behavior, trait, or style of expression that has cultural associations with “being a woman”. These associations change over time, between cultures, or person to person.

- Societal gender roles often expect men to be “masculine” and women to be “feminine”.
- In the LGBTQ+ community, the words “femme” and “fem” are sometimes used to describe a feminine expression.

GAY

A term for people who are attracted to the same gender as themselves.

- Sometimes used as an umbrella term for the wider LGBTQ+ community. Specific members may use

this label in addition to or in place of other ones (i.e. someone referring to themselves as gay AND lesbian).

GENDERFLUID

A non-binary gender identity; a person whose gender is not fixed. It may change over time and/or between situations.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING

A person whose gender expression or gender identity falls outside of what is expected of someone with their gender or sex.

- A person who is gender non-conforming can be trans, but does not have to be. For example, a girl who identifies as a “tomboy” or dresses in masculine clothing might be considered gender non-conforming.

GENDERQUEER

A non-binary gender identity; related to the word queer.

GIRL / WOMAN

A gender identity that stereotypically relates to femininity, though has a different exact meaning for everyone. Can refer to cisgender or transgender people.

INTERSEX

A person whose anatomy or biology at birth does not fit into the traditional categories of “male” and “female”.

- A person can be intersex when their combination of reproductive organs, hormones, and/or chromosomes vary from the medical understandings of “male” and “female”. For example, someone with XY chromosomes (associated with maleness) and a uterus (associated with femaleness) could be considered intersex.
- People who are labelled intersex when they are born (usually due to ambiguous genitalia) often receive non-consensual surgery or hormones as they grow up, in order to make them fit the “male” or “female” category. These invasive medical procedures can have damaging effects on body functions as well as mental health.
- Some people discover they are intersex at puberty (where they may experience changes they didn’t expect), or when they attempt to conceive children.

LESBIAN

A woman or non-binary person who is attracted to women, or who identifies with the lesbian community.

MALE

A person who is assigned the sex “male” at birth.

- Doctors and parents assign the sex “male” based on body parts, sex chromosomes, and/or hormones.
- In the general population, this is often used interchangeably with “man”, which is a gender identity

MASCULINE

A word to describe a behavior, trait, or style of expression that has cultural associations with “being a man”. These associations change over time, between cultures, or person to person.

- Societal gender roles often expect men to be “masculine” and women to be “feminine”.
- What is considered “feminine” and “masculine” varies historically and from culture to culture.
- In the LGBTQ+ community, the word “masc” is sometimes used to describe a masculine expression.

NON-BINARY

A gender identity describing a person who identifies outside the gender binary of “man” and “woman”.

- A non-binary person might identify as being both, neither, changing between the two, or something else beyond a “man” or “woman”.
- Some non-binary people consider themselves part of the transgender community.

PANSEXUAL:

A person who is attracted to all genders, or a person whose attraction is not limited by gender.

- A pansexual person is not necessarily attracted to every human being, but may find that gender does not play a role in who they are attracted to.
- People define this term differently, according to what it means to them

QUEER

An umbrella term for people who are not straight and/or not cisgender.

- The LGBTQ+ community is sometimes referred to as “the queer community”.
- This was historically a hurtful word, but was reclaimed by some LGBTQ+ people to describe themselves. It is not appropriate to use this term to describe someone within the community if you do not know whether or not they have reclaimed it for themselves.

QUESTIONING

When a person is uncertain about their sexual or romantic orientation and/or gender identity.

- A person can be questioning at any age, and may do so multiple times throughout their life.

STRAIGHT

A person who is attracted to a different gender from their own.

- For example, a man who is attracted to women could be described as straight.

TRANSGENDER

A term for a person whose gender identity does not “align” with the sex they were assigned at birth in the way that society expects.

- For example, a person who was assigned male at birth, but understands themselves to be a woman might call themselves a transgender woman.
- A person who was assigned male at birth, but understands themselves to be non-binary might also consider themselves transgender.
- This is sometimes shortened to “trans”.
- People can identify as transgender regardless of if they can or want to medically transition.

TRANSSEXUAL

An older term for a person who is transgender, though this term is less preferred nowadays.

- This term usually indicated that a person had transitioned medically. Because not all trans people can or want to medically transition, the term “transgender” or “trans” is more popular.

TWO-SPIRIT

A term that references historical gender traditions in many indigenous North American cultures (i.e. **Native American**, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis)

- Two-spirit might refer to an Indigenous person who settlers would consider queer or trans.
- Throughout history, many Indigenous nations did not have a gender binary and recognized gender identities on a spectrum and beyond “man” and “woman”. These exact identities varied from nation to nation.
- Two-Spirit refers to gender and sexual identity AND spiritual and community responsibilities. In many historical traditions, two-spirit people have important community roles, like healers and teachers.
- Because of ongoing colonization, many Indigenous peoples no longer know the words in their ancestral languages to describe this diverse spectrum of genders and sexualities. “Two-spirit” was coined as a temporary alternative while ancestral words are being remembered and reclaimed.
- Today, many indigenous people use the word “Two-Spirit” to refer to their identity and role in the community. They may also identify as LGBTQ+, but by calling themselves “Two Spirit” they also refer to their spiritual role in their community.

- A comprehensive definition from <https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php>: "Two-spirit refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. As an umbrella term it may encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender variance, including people who might be described in Western culture as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, gender queer, cross-dressers or who have multiple gender identities. Two-spirit can also include relationships that could be considered poly. The creation of the term "two-spirit" is attributed to Albert McLeod, who proposed its use during the Third Annual Inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference, held in Winnipeg in 1990. The term is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term niizh manidoowag, two spirits."

Other LGBTQ+ terms

THE GENDER BINARY / THE SEX BINARY

The system of thought which believes that there are only two genders (man and woman) or that there are only two sexes (male and female).

- The gender binary excludes people who are non-binary or trans.
- The sex binary excludes people who are intersex.

BIPHOBIA

Negative stereotypes and attitudes targeted at bisexual people.

- Importantly, "biphobia" describes the unique prejudices faced by bisexual people that differ from homophobia. (i.e. People assuming that a bisexual woman dating a man is actually just straight.)

CISNORMATIVITY

A cultural system in which being cisgender is considered the normal or default way of being.

- An example of cisnormativity might be when there are only "men's" and "women's" washrooms in a building. This assumes that everyone identifies as either a man or a woman.

COMING OUT

The process by which someone reveals their LGBTQ+ identity

- Coming out is rarely a one-time event; it is often a continuous decision throughout life with each new friend, family member, or coworker.
- A person may be "out" to everyone, to some people and not others, or "out" to only themselves. There are many reasons why someone may not come out, and this does not mean they are less LGBTQ+.

DRAG

The act of dressing up in a different gender expression, often for fun or as performance art.

- "Drag queens" often refers to people for whom drag means becoming more feminine, while "drag kings" often refers to those for whom drag means becoming more masculine.
- Drag performance, events, and competitions have a rich history that goes back decades.
- People who do drag are not necessarily trans.
- The term "transvestite" is related, but is uncommon today and many consider it to be a slur.

GENDERED

Indicates that something is associated with a particular gender or sex.

- Toys, colours, and clothing are often gendered or seen as being either "for boys" or "for girls".
- Language can be gendered as well. Terms like "ladies and gentlemen" address certain genders specifically.

GENDER-NEUTRAL

Indicates that something is not associated with any particular gender or sex.

- For example, gender-neutral bathrooms are bathrooms that anyone can use, regardless of their gender.

GENDER DYSPHORIA

Negative feelings associated with being perceived as a gender that is not true to you, or having a body that does not feel true to your gender.

- Many trans people experience dysphoria, though not all do.
- Dysphoria can lead to distress and mental health complications.
- Dysphoria may be a reason some trans people choose to medically transition.

GENDER EUPHORIA

Positive feelings associated with being perceived as your actual gender identity or having a body that feels true to your identity.

HETERONORMATIVITY

A cultural system in which being straight is considered the normal or default way of being.

- For example, asking a woman "do you have a boyfriend" assumes that she is straight, while asking "are you dating anyone" does not.
- A common form of heteronormativity is making assumptions about babies and young children regarding who they will be attracted to when they grow up.

HOMOPHOBIA

Negative stereotypes and attitudes targeted at gay and lesbian people, or more broadly at LGBTQ+ people.

MISGENDERING

Using the wrong pronouns or gendered language to describe someone.

- Many trans people experience misgendering on a daily basis. For example, calling a trans woman “he”, when she uses the pronoun “she”.
- This can cause dysphoria and have damaging effects on mental health.
- Misgendering can be intentional or accidental. If you accidentally misgender someone, correcting yourself going forward is one way to be an ally.

OUTING

Revealing someone else’s LGBTQ+ identity without their consent or their permission

- Outing can be uncomfortable or dangerous to the person being “outed”. It can risk someone’s physical, emotional, and/or mental safety

PRONOUNS

Small words used to refer to people without using their name (i.e. she/her/hers)

- Some people use gender-neutral pronouns such as “they/them” or “ze/hir”.
- Many non-English languages don’t use gendered pronouns at all. In some languages that traditionally use only “he” and “she”, people are making new gender neutral pronouns.

QUEER-FRIENDLY

Indicated that a place or person is supportive of the LGBTQ+ community.

- Being “queer-friendly” is related to being an ally.

REPRESENTATION

The inclusion of an identity or culture in media and other aspects of society.

- Some examples of representation are the inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters on TV, the presence of LGBTQ+ leaders in government, or the presence of LGBTQ+ role models in a community.
- Without representation, LGBTQ+ people can feel different and alone, or may not believe there are other people like them.
- Good representation can challenge stereotypes and change societal perspectives.
- Poor representation can reinforce stereotypes. For example, if the only representation of LGBTQ+ people is of white people, then we may wrongly assume that LGBTQ+ people are usually white.

TRANSITION

The process by which a trans person changes the way they present themselves to more accurately reflect their gender and live their truth.

- Socially transitioning can involve changing one’s name, pronouns, or gender expression (for example, dressing or acting differently).
- Medical transition can involve hormone therapy (such as taking testosterone or estrogen), or having gender-confirming surgery to change body parts.
- Transition can mean different things for everyone. Not every trans person feels the need to transition.

TRANSPHOBIA

Negative stereotypes and attitudes targeted at trans people.

Consent terms

CONSENT

The right to say “yes” or “no” to an interaction or activity; and agreement or permission for something.

- Not exclusive to romantic and sexual activity, and can relate to many different situations.
- Consent must be mutual (everyone involved has to agree), continuous (you can stop at any time), and specific (every part of the activity is agreed upon).
- In sexual scenarios, everyone is responsible for ensuring that an activity is consensual, but especially the person who is initiating the activity.
- An activity is NOT consensual if a person is forced, coerced, manipulated, or pressured into agreeing or going along with it.

CONSENT CULTURE

An environment where consent is respected and valued and where everyone feels comfortable expressing their needs and personal boundaries.

RAPE CULTURE

A society where sexual violence is common and is seen as normal, inevitable, and even sexy.

- In a rape culture, some people (usually women) are seen as objects rather than full people with needs/ desires/independence
- In a rape culture, survivors of sexual violence are blamed for the violence they received.
- Examples of rape culture can be seen in TV and movies, in songs and music videos, in court proceedings, and in conversation and news regarding sexual assaults.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Any unwanted act of a sexual nature.

- Some people use “sexual assault” and “rape” interchangeably, however survivors of sexual assault should be able to define their own experiences.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Unwanted acts of a sexual nature that often involve coercion, societally considered “milder” compared to sexual assault.

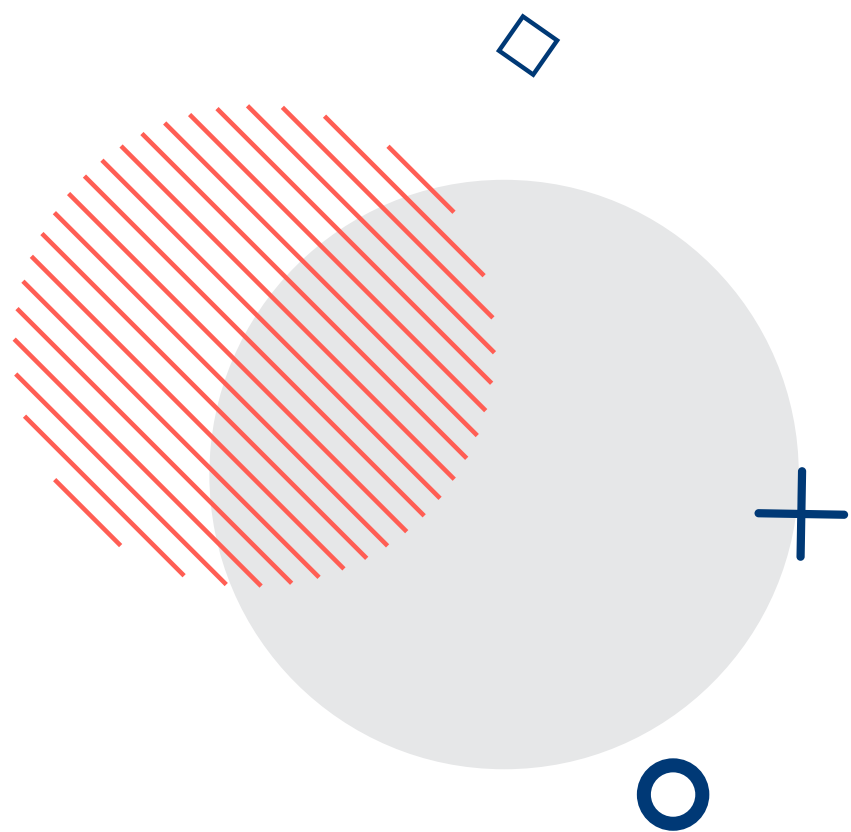
- Examples of sexual harassment include pressuring someone to agree to sexual activity online, touching someone’s bottom, putting hands suggestively on someone’s shoulders, and cat-calling (whistling or making sexual remarks at strangers).
- Without intervention or prevention, sexual harassment can elevate to sexual assault.

SURVIVOR

Someone who has been sexually assaulted.

CANVAS uses the term “survivor” as opposed to “victim” because:

- People who are sexually assaulted are often at risk of additional violence and death before, during, and after the assault.
- Sexual assault can have incredibly damaging effects on a survivor’s mental health.
- Survivors have the ability to process their assault and trauma.



FAQ and Frequently Made Comments

How do I facilitate the discussion around gender dysphoria and body change vs. acceptance?

- Leaders should acknowledge this tension (change vs. acceptance) and how social norms around gender expression influence these pressures
- Leaders should speak to the fact that the way we choose to express ourselves in the world is a personal decision and there are many options for how people choose to do this (i.e., if someone is considering/has questions about body change, highlight that there are many options including choosing clothing that makes you feel good/comfortable, wearing clothing items like binders, etc. Other people may take hormones and others may choose to get some form of surgery.)
- All of these are personal choices and ones that you may take a few years to think through and decide what is best for you.

What do I do if someone is openly invested in appearance ideals?

- It might be helpful to ask questions that encourage self reflection (e.g., “That’s an idea many of us believe. Where do you think that idea comes from? Where do we learn these things?”)
- It also can be useful to turn this to the bigger group and validate it (e.g., “Does anyone else sometimes think that? It’s really hard to shut off those messages, isn’t it?”)
- If it persists, it might be necessary to directly address it without dismissing the participant (e.g., “I know it’s hard to push back against these ideas when they seem to go against everything we’ve learned and are told — for today and the rest of the session, why don’t we practice pushing back, even if we don’t fully believe it yet?”)

What do I do if someone makes a trans-phobic or homophobic comment?

- These comments should be addressed directly and immediately.
- First, open with “Do you mind explaining what you mean by that?” Sometimes people say harmful things without realizing it/meaning to. Giving them an opportunity to explain often helps to diffuse the comment.

- If they continue to say something harmful, here are a few options (depending on the type of comment and if it seems intentionally rude or is just due to ignorance):

1. “I’m glad you brought that idea up. I think this is a really common idea that many of us are taught growing up. However, it can actually be harmful. Can anyone think how [the comment] might impact someone who is part of the LGBTQ+ community?”
2. Refer back to the space agreement created at the beginning of the session, i.e. I’m going to remind you that we all agreed to be respectful of other identities and perspectives.
3. If a participant is consistently saying harmful things, a facilitator should speak with them 1:1. Remember that sometimes people who are disruptive may be reacting because the discussion is getting too close to home for them, so it’s good to have an opportunity to check in privately about what’s going on.

What do I do if my group is really quiet?

- First, know that some groups (and leaders!) are just more quiet than others! If participants seem hesitant to speak up, you can “go around the circle” to give them a chance to say something, while reinforcing their comments (e.g., “great point!” “thanks for sharing” etc.)
- Look for body language cues that someone has something they are thinking about sharing and invite them to contribute (e.g., “Sal, was there something you wanted to share with the group?”)
- Make sure that you as a leader are setting the tone for sharing and being vulnerable (e.g., not saying the perfect thing) — this might help draw people out.

What do I do if I am running out of time?

- Call attention to it and gently move the group on (e.g., “Wow it seems like we could talk about this all day! But we have a lot more to get to, so let’s move on”).
- Leaders should stick to the time but also be flexible — you want to cultivate a space where participants can share and be vulnerable, so sometimes slowing down will be necessary to validate and allow for the sharing that is happening. Use your best judgement about when to linger and when to move forward.

If one person or a few people are talking significantly more than others

- It can be helpful to call in folks who aren't sharing as much (e.g., "for this one, let's hear from someone who hasn't contributed yet") — this also sends a message to those who are participating more to step back and create space for others.
- You may want to call on people directly if it looks like people want to contribute but there hasn't been space for them.
- "Going around the room" is a good way to have equal contribution when you pose a specific question — feel free to adapt any of the prompts to ask folks to each take a turn sharing their response. You may also want to start with the participants who are more quiet to allow space for them to speak first.
- It may be necessary to call attention to the person sharing a lot — people can get excited to share and you'll want to encourage this while also making room for everyone. You could try saying something like "Wow Lucy you have so much wisdom to share — I love it! I do want to make sure we hear from everyone though — what do other people think?")

