The Body Project for Males

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Note: This script was designed for implementation with those with body image concerns. Please do not implement with peer leaders unless they have received the training.

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OVERVIEW

EVIDENCE BASE OF THE ORIGINAL BODY PROJECT

This manual outlines a dissonance-based body acceptance intervention, referred to as the *Body Project,* that has been developed and evaluated at Stanford University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Oregon Research Institute. The *Body Project* is the outgrowth of a 25-year program of research on the risk factors for eating disorders by research teams around the world. The original intervention has been delivered to over 6 million women globally.

The intervention consists of verbal, written, and behavioural tasks in which participants voluntarily critique the appearance ideals promoted for females during four weekly sessions. These activities have been shown to result in decreased pursuit of the "appearance ideal" and consequent reductions in body dissatisfaction, negative mood, dieting, and eating disorder symptoms, as well as decreased risk for future eating disorders and improved psychosocial functioning when delivered by research clinicians (Stice, Marti, Spoor, Presnell, & Shaw, 2008; Stice, Mazotti, Weibel, & Agras, 2000; Stice, Shaw, Burton, & Wade, 2006), clinicians who work in high schools and colleges (Stice, Butryn, Rohde, Shaw, & Marti, 2013; Stice, Rohde, Gau, & Shaw, 2009; Stice, Rohde, Shaw & Gau, 2011), and peer educators (Stice, Rohde, Durant, Shaw, & Wade, 2013; Stice, Rohde, Shaw, & Gau, 2017; Stice, Rohde, Shaw, & Gau, 2020).

The Body Project produced a 60% reduction in future onset of eating disorders over 3-year follow-up when implemented by a research clinician and a peer educator compared to assessment-only control participants (Stice et al., 2008). More recently, the Body Project produced a 58% reduction in future onset of eating disorders over 4-year follow-up when implemented by peer educators versus clinicians (Stice et al., 2020). Most critically, the Body Project produced a 77% reduction in future onset of eating disorders over 2-year follow-up when implemented by peer educators compared to a placebo control condition (Ghaderi et al., 2020) which was supported in the 2023 review by Schwartz and colleagues.

The latter results suggest that for every 100 young women who complete this program, there should be 11 fewer young girls who develop eating disorders over the subsequent 2-year period. This intervention also produces superior effects than seven alternative interventions. Numerous independent laboratories have replicated the positive effects for The *Body Project* (e.g., Becker, Smith, & Ciao, 2006; Green, Scott, Diyankova, Gasser, & Pederson, 2005; Halliwell & Diedrichs, 2014; Mitchell, Mazzeo, Rausch, & Cooke, 2007).

Consistent with the intervention theory, reductions in appearance-ideal internalisation mediate the *Body Project* effects on change in eating disorder symptoms (Seidel et al., 2009; Stice et al., 2007) and participants assigned to high- versus low-dissonance versions of this program showed greater eating disorder symptom reduction (Green et al., 2005; McMillan et al., 2011). The *Body Project* also produced larger symptom reductions for youth with initially elevated thin-ideal internalisation, consistent with the theory that they experience more dissonance (Stice et al., 2008) and eliminated the negative effect of exposure to thin models on body dissatisfaction in young girls (Halliwell & Diedrichs, 2014). Participants who completed the *Body*

Project showed a reduction in brain reward region response to thin models compared to controls (Stice, Yokum, & Waters, 2014), indicating that this body acceptance class reduces neural response to stimuli thought to play a key role in promoting body image and eating disturbances.

No other body acceptance class/eating disorder prevention program has been found to significantly reduce future eating disorder onset, outperform alternative credible interventions, produce effects that persist through 4-year follow-up, or produce effects that have been replicated by independent research teams.

THE BODY PROJECT FOR MEN

Evidence suggests that boys and men also suffer from body dissatisfaction throughout their lives (Olivardia, Pop, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2004), representing up to 33% of all eating disorder cases (Hudson, Hiripi, Pope, & Kessler, 2007). The appearance ideal pursued by males is unrealistically lean and muscular (Jones & Morgan, 2010; Rodgers, Ganchou, Franko, & Chabrol, 2012).

Further, evidence suggests that muscularity and thinness internalisation are independently positively related to muscle dysmorphia symptoms and disordered eating in men, and that muscularity internalisation is increasingly related to muscle dysmorphia symptoms as thinness internalisation decreases (Klimek, Murray, Brown, et al, 2018). Behaviours thought to increase muscle mass might also be more prevalent among boys and men. One study of approximately 3,000 adolescents found that 35% used protein powders or shakes and 6% used steroids, and that rates were higher among boys than girls (Eisenberg, Wall, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2012).

Males are also less likely to seek treatment for eating disorders than females, perhaps due to stigma (Griffiths, et al., 2015; Striegel-Moore, Leslie, Petrill, Garvin, & Rosenheck, 2000). Thus, developing effective prevention programs for males that target male appearance and the pressures that lead to the pursuit of them is very important.

Whilst there is a large body of research which supports the efficacy of the original Body Project intervention within female students (e.g. Jarman et al. 2021), there is less research reporting utilisation of the Body Project for males. Traditionally, males have not received the same focus in research and delivery of interventions designed to promote a positive sense of self that is not derived from size and muscularity. The few trials that have evaluated adaptations of the *Body Project* for males, have generally found positive results (e.g., Jankowski et al., 2017). To date, only one adaptation of The Body Project for males ('More than Muscles') has only been investigated in a single pilot study with students over the age of 18 (Brown et al. 2017). The current manual has been adapted from the original Body Project for Males developed by Professor Stice to fit the UK context.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

According to Festinger (1957), cognitive dissonance occurs when there is a discrepancy between one's beliefs and one's actions. This inconsistency creates psychological discomfort, which then motivates the individual to reduce the cognitive discord by changing their beliefs. In this intervention, boys and men who subscribe to the appearance ideal are subtly encouraged to critique the ideal through a series of verbal, written, and behavioural exercises. These activities are theorised to produce cognitive dissonance, which reduces the extent to which they subscribe to the appearance ideal, which in turn is thought to result in improvements in body dissatisfaction, negative affect, and eating disorder symptoms. Thus, the overarching goal of this intervention is to have the participants speak, write, or act in a way that is contrary to the appearance ideal.

It is **vital for the participants to generate the costs** of the appearance ideal, rather than the group leaders, because the latter would not produce cognitive dissonance. In addition, participants should never focus on any benefits of the appearance ideal, because this will only undermine the effects of the intervention. The present manual is for a second generation high-dissonance version of this intervention, in which we have incorporated a number of components that should maximise the dissonance that putatively accounts for intervention effects. This high-dissonance version of this intervention draws from procedures used in the Green and associates' trial (2005).

It is important that group leaders do not embellish this intervention (e.g., discuss a past history of an eating disorder) because this may undermine the effects of the intervention that have been observed in past trials. However, if leaders have ideas about ways to potentially improve the intervention, please contact us at thebodyproject@glos.ac.uk as we welcome this type of input and share this with other researchers in the field including Professor Stice and his team.

STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVENTION

Groups are led by a team of two peer leaders; this is to ensure safeguarding procedures are in place should a participant need to leave the room for any reason. Experience suggests that the optimal group size is approximately 6 participants, as this ensures that all group members will be able to participate verbally. The group meets for four consecutive weeks in 1-hour sessions. Following feedback from some schools we have worked with, there is a 6 x 50-minute session version which allows a better fit for the school schedule in some cases. If this adaptation is of interest to you, please contact us at thebodyproject@glos.ac.uk.

PEER LEADER TRAINING

For optimal delivery of this intervention, we strongly recommend that group leaders carefully read this manual and practice each activity (i.e., role play) before leading a group. Experience indicates that participants quickly lose interest if the group leaders are not familiar with the activities and the flow of the sessions.

GENDER INCLUSIVITY

Gender dysphoria and body dissatisfaction are closely linked to one another, especially with disordered eating for gender affirming purposes. Thus, in a concerted effort to make the *Body Project* more inclusive, this curriculum seeks to be as gender neutral as possible, regardless of identified gender or sex. Facilitators are expected to utilise inclusive and gender-neutral language when moderating group discussions and presenting activities. It is good practice for facilitators to specify their pronouns (e.g. my name is John Smith, and my pronouns are he/they) to signal that it is an inclusive space. (https://www.glsen.org/activity/pronouns-guide-glsen).

COMMON CHALLENGES

'HOMEWORK'

To reduce the connection to 'school homework', these tasks are positioned as 'Bridging Exercises' as they form the content of subsequent sessions and discussions and 'bridge' between the sessions.

Homework assignments can pose difficulties, especially those that seem "school-like." Participants' adherence to between-session bridging exercises depends on whether leaders emphasise the importance of completing these exercises and how well leaders track the assignments in subsequent session. If possible, contacting participants via email or phone a day before the scheduled session can help prompt participants to complete the bridging exercises and bring them to their next session. Peer leaders should email the bridging exercises to group participants wherever possible. Work undertaken by Professor Stice has previously asked that leaders collect completed home exercises (to optimise accountability that contributes to dissonance induction) however we appreciate that there may be data protection concerns over this within the UK and so we ask participants whether they are willing to do this.

This adaptation now includes alternative options for the bridging exercises of letter writing which some students may find challenging academically and to assist those who are neurodivergent; leaders should encourage students to explore which options they feel will help them to complete the bridging exercises most effectively as they also form an essential part of the cognitive dissonance required for the intervention to be most effective.

INVESTMENT IN THE APPEARANCE IDEAL

Participants are often extremely invested in the appearance ideal and may have difficulty letting go of pursing this ideal. **However, it is important not to allow *participants* to argue for the ideal, as this will only solidify their position further. Always keep in mind that the primary goal of the intervention is to get the *participants* to criticise and challenge the appearance ideal**. Group leaders should try to get other group members to speak out against the appearance ideal or pose counter arguments to pro-ideal statements voiced by participants. Experience indicates that the program does not work if ***participants*** do not critique the appearance ideal. It may be helpful for facilitators to say that they are simply trying to follow the script when they ask participants to discuss the costs rather than the benefits of

pursuing the appearance ideal. Leaders can simply ask a reluctant participant to just give the activities their best shot, telling them that they are free to revert to their old opinions after the group is over. It is also crucial for group leaders to keep self-disclosure to a minimum to make sure that participants can maximise the time spent critiquing the appearance ideal.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE APPEARANCE IDEAL AND THE HEALTHY IDEAL

It is useful to make a distinction between the thin/appearance ideal and the healthy ideal. The thin/appearance ideal is about appearing ultra-lean and following the latest trends. People often engage in very unhealthy behaviours to attain this leanness, including excessive exercise and laxative abuse, and go to extreme ends, such as cosmetic surgery, to attain this ultra-lean look. In contrast, the healthy ideal is about striving for a healthy body, which is typically nowhere near as lean as the thin/appearance ideal, because it is healthy to have muscles and body fat. Further, individuals pursuing the healthy ideal do not engage in unhealthy weight control behaviours, such as fasting, excessive exercise and laxative abuse. Likewise, there are costs associated with non-lean appearance ideals of having 'no wrinkles' such as male grooming products, Botox, cosmetic surgery and fillers etc. all of which can be challenged as part of the 'healthy ideal'.

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT IN SESSIONS

It is also important to engage all participants during the group sessions. Although it is crucial to follow the manual closely, participants often get bored if group leaders just read directly from the script. Thus, we recommend becoming familiar with the main points so that you can minimise the extent to which you read from the script.

Maintaining eye contact with participants during the entire session and using first names helps encourage discussion as well. Although eye contact can be tricky via video conferencing because of the different location of the camera versus the screen, looking at the individuals on the screen as much as possible will convey interest and attention. It should go without saying, but please do not multitask and check email while leading a virtual group. Be sure to draw participants into the discussions, paying special attention to those who are less talkative or reluctant to speak up. We also recommend that you consider safeguarding of participants if you choose to run your groups virtually, for example, consider if their home environment is supportive if they need to talk to someone after attending and how you would ensure that they receive support if needed.

If one or two participants tend to dominate the discussion, call on other participants to share their opinions. We recommend going one by one so that *each* group member participates in each main activity (change the order so the same person does not always have to go first). Try to use humour, when possible, be relaxed, smile and laugh when appropriate, and listen carefully to what participants are saying. When a participant shares personal information or discusses difficulties they have with body image, make empathetic statements ("Wow, it sounds like you're really struggling with this", "That must have been hurtful when your father made that comment about your weight").

STICKING TO TIMING

It is also important to manage the time carefully during the sessions. In order for participants to get maximum benefit from the intervention, you should cover *each activity* and allot the recommended time to each activity. Spending too much time processing activities that occur early in the session will result in insufficient time for the activities that occur later in the session and can result in a rushed feeling. It is sometimes necessary to tactfully interrupt particularly talkative individuals so that the group leader can move the group onto the next exercise in the manual. If you find that you are consistently running out of time before completing all the activities in the session, consider using the 6 sessions 50-minute version of the *Body Project,* which provides a little more time for activities and which may fit with a school term-schedule more effectively.

MANUAL GUIDELINES AND FACILITATOR SUPPORT

The curriculum contained in this manual has been demonstrated in dozens of randomised trials to be an effective prevention program for individuals at risk for eating disorders. Adherence to the manual protocol and attendance of all sessions is critical for obtaining positive outcome results.

The manual describes each of the 4 intervention sessions. For each session, information is provided on (a) materials used for the session, (b) a listing of topic areas to be covered, (c) main procedural elements for group leaders to follow, and (d) assigned bridging exercises for the participants to complete between sessions.

For each session, it is good practice to familiarise yourself with the layout:

Each section for each session has a header that **shows the time** you have to cover the content for that session.

Throughout the manual all handouts are distinguished by **<u>underlined bold print</u>**.

Verbal instructions that group leaders should say, or paraphrase, to participants are presented in blue bold italics.

- Instructions to group leaders are presented in regular typeface with this bullet point
- These points also give prompts as to the content you would benefit from drawing out from the participants.

We also recommend that you familiarise yourself with the Facilitator Fact Sheet as this can provide useful prompts for sessions.

<u>SUPPORT FOR YOU</u>

We'd like to remind you that following your training, you can reach out to the Body Project Gloucestershire team by mailing thebodyproject@glos.ac.uk if you have any questions or if you need support or supervision.

You will also be invited to join our community of facilitators for ongoing support and collaboration, and to be updated with latest materials, adaptations and research.

The Body Project for Men: Facilitator Fact Sheet

MEN HAVE BEEN OBJECTIFIED IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA, DEFINED BY THE MUSCULAR IDEAL

- Men's bodies have increasingly been portrayed as muscular, lean, and V-shaped, consistent with the "muscular ideal".
- A qualitative study found that males reported feeling pressured by the media to look muscular and built (Ridgeway & Tilka, 2005).
- The ideal male body marketed to men is more muscular that the ideal male body marketed to women (Frederick, Fessler, & Haselton, 2005).
- Sports Illustrated depicted men's bodies in increasingly fragmented ways and with greater nudity, suggesting objectification, from 1975-2005 (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007).
- In five mainstream magazines, the "erotic male" was the most common depiction of men (Rohlinger, 2002).
- Boy's action figures have shown increased muscle mass over time (Pope, Olivardia, et al, 1999); this muscular ideal is associated with greater drive for thinness and dieting frequency (Harrison & Cantor, 1997) and greater muscularity dissatisfaction in men (Leit et al, 2001).
- Contemporary versions of action figures of superheroes, such as Batman, show that they have significantly larger necks, chests, forearms, thighs, and calves than the originals—representing grossly unrealistic proportions (Baghurst, Hollander, Nardella, & Haff, 2006).

THE IMAGE OF MEN PORTRAYED IN THE MEDIA DOES NOT MATCH WHAT MEN REALLY LOOK LIKE

- As of recent 2024 data, the NHS reports that the average UK man is approximately 5' 9" to 5' 10" tall and weighs around 85–86 kg (13.4–13.6 stone). The average height of a UK male model is between 6'0" and 6'2" while the average weight typically falls between 140 to 165 pounds (63kg – 75kg)
- The average waist circumference for men in England varies by age, generally ranging from approximately 88.7cm (35 inches) to over 104cm (41 inches) for older adults (NHS England).
- British Actor Daniel Craig has a 30-inch waist.
- A qualitative analysis of advertisements from *Men's Health,* a best-selling men's magazines found that advertisements in 2009 depicted men who were more muscular with a smaller body size than the ads from 1999 (Jung, 2011).
- A content analysis of 218 male *Esquire* models in ads from 1955 to 2005 found a significant decrease in male models' fat levels, a significant increase in their muscularity levels, and a significant increase in nudity over time (Shoieb, 2015).

FUNCTION OF A MEN'S HEALTH OR FITNESS MAGAZINE IS TO CONVINCE MEN SOMETHING IS "WRONG"

- Magazines focus on pointing out flaws (e.g., hair, body, sex life, etc.) so that they can sell their product (i.e., the content of the magazine) to fix it. The more anxious they make

you, the more likely you will buy the magazine and the larger their readership, which increases advertising sales.

- A Pulitzer Prize winning article on eating disorders or cancer is not going to win an author a big bonus. However, writing an article which produces the following title will: "You never knew what your butt looked like from the rear! Strategies for a better behind."
- As with female advertising, digital enhancement, make-up, clothes pinning etc., strive to make men appear "perfect".

ADVERTISING STRATEGIES TARGET MEN, TOO

- Physical Tactics: Magazines, such as GQ, use photoshop to create the "perfect" male model. Areas of the body, such as the jaw line and abs are electronically altered to be more appealing.
- Computer Tactics: Once a photo shoot is complete, images are altered even further through a process called re-imaging. By scanning the photograph into a computer, the image can be altered. Almost every magazine uses computer re-imaging.
    - Complexion is cleaned up, eye lines are softened, chins, thighs and stomachs are trimmed, and neck lines are removed.
    - Some pictures of models in magazines are not real. The pictures are computer-modified compilations of different body parts.

SHOP MANNEQUINS

- An average male mannequin used in UK retail does not represent the real average male:

Feature	Average Male Mannequin	Average UK Man (Approx.)
Height	6'1" – 6'2" (185–188 cm)	5'9" – 5'10" (175–178 cm)
Chest	38" – 40" (96–102 cm)	~41" – 43" (104-109 cm)
Waist	30" – 32" (76–81 cm)	~36" – 37" (91-94 cm)

- UK average measurements for clothing/weight are often based on health surveys showing increasing average weights in the population, whereas mannequins remain in a "slim" or "athletic" range.

- **Height Discrepancy:** Mannequins are intentionally tall (6'1"–6'2") to make clothes hang better, whereas the average UK man is 5'9"–5'10".
- **Body Shape:** Mannequins usually have a V-shape, slim torso (40" chest, 32" waist), whereas the average UK man has a higher waist-to-chest ratio.
- **"Medium" Misnomer:** The "Medium" size on a mannequin often equates to a 40R suit, which represents a tall/slim physique rather than the true UK population average.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social media use has been linked to poor body image and disordered eating (de Valle BPsychHons & Wade, 2022, Som et al., 2025)
- Randomised experiments with youths and young adults demonstrate that randomisation to social media use decreased body satisfaction and increased social comparison, especially when pictures were present (Engeln et al., 2020)
- On social media, photo-editing behaviour is actually related to lower self-perceived attractiveness, and estimates of individuals who edit their photos before posting on social media range from 30-90% (and about 12% of photos posted under #nofilter did in fact have a filter; Ozimek et al., 2023)
- A 2019 Mental Health Foundation survey found that **40% of UK teenagers** said images on social media had caused them to worry about their body image.
- A major review published in March 2023 by researchers at University College London (UCL) in *PLOS Global Public Health* synthesised findings from 50 studies in 17 countries, providing a recent and highly relevant UK perspective.
    - **Plausible Risk Factor:** The study concluded that social media usage is a "plausible risk factor for the development of eating disorders".
    - **Mechanisms of Harm:** The core drivers identified are social comparison, the internalisation of "thin/fit ideals," and self-objectification.
    - **Content Type Matters:** The type of content consumed, rather than just the time spent online, is a primary factor. Exposure to weight loss content was associated with higher fears about appearance and more frequent binge eating. Content tagged with #thinspiration and #fitspiration was consistently linked to increased drive for thinness and bulimia symptoms.
    - **High UK Prevalence:** The report noted that 91% of UK adolescents use social media, with over 50% checking their accounts at least once per hour, leading to pervasive exposure to these ideals.
    - **Government Acknowledgment:** In response to this and other evidence, a UK Parliament report in February 2023 noted the "growing problem" of body dissatisfaction and its health consequences, calling for more action from the government and social media companies to regulate harmful content.
- Other very recent studies (2024 and 2025) continue to confirm these findings, highlighting that photo-editing tools, the use of filters, and specific content types (e.g., #WhatIEatInADay videos on TikTok) contribute to a persistent and significant public health issue regarding body image and disordered eating behaviours in the UK.

SOCIAL MEDIA'S DEPICTION OF BOYS/MEN:

- Ofcom (2025) reports, men now use social media almost as often as women (4h 43m vs 4h 17m daily).
- A content analysis of a random sample of 1,000 Instagram images posted by and depicting men with fitness related hashtags (e.g., "#Fitness") in 2017 showed that the majority of men depicted were both very lean and very muscular with very low (6%) body fat (Gultzow, Guidry, Schneider, & Hoving, 2020)—an image that contradicts the realistic body composition of men (the average body fat of UK men is between 21 and

28%). This suggests that social media contributes to body dissatisfaction among men and that low body fat is also important to male body image. Exercise was the most frequently shown behaviour, while diet was promoted in less than 40% of the posts.

- This same analysis of Instagram content analysis showed that while Instagram's user base is fairly balanced (with slightly more Black users), most of the posts depicted showed White men.
- Men have reported wanting to build bigger chests and leaner abs to impress women (Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005).

THE HEALTH DIET AND BEAUTY INDUSTRY

- The Health Food Production industry in the UK was estimated to be worth £1.9 billion in 2025, a figure that includes meal replacements and weight-control foods.
- The broader Weight Management market in the UK was valued at approximately £2.6 billion in 2022 and is projected to reach over £3.7 billion by 2030, with diet being the largest segment.
- The overall Health and Wellness industry in the UK was worth more than £20 billion by 2020.
- In 2024, UK households spent a total of £32.4 billion on personal care products and services combined. Specifically, £10.1 billion was spent on professional beauty and personal care services like salons, spas, and clinics.
- Aesthetics Industry: The non-invasive aesthetics industry (e.g., Botox, fillers) has a market value of around £3.2 billion in the UK, with 7.7 million people having had a treatment in 2023.
- Weight Loss Medications: Spending on private weight loss medications is growing significantly, reaching £784 million by the end of Q1 2025, with an estimated 1.5 million people in the UK using such drugs.
- Health and Fitness Market: The broader health and fitness market (including gym memberships) had revenue of £5.7 billion in 2024.
- As of 2024, the global anti-ageing products market was valued at approximately $52bn (£40bn) and is expected to reach $80bn (£63bn) by 2023.

MANY MEN GET PLASTIC SURGERY NOW

- Based on data from the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) released in 2025, 1,799 surgical, cosmetic procedures were performed on men in the UK during 2024.
- Men accounted for approximately **6.6%** of all cosmetic procedures in 2024.
- The most common surgical procedures for men were rhinoplasty (nose jobs), followed by blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery) and chest reductions (gynaecomastia).
- While total male procedures saw a slight decrease (1.5%) from 2023 to 2024, there was a significant **26% increase in face and neck lifts** for men, suggesting a growing interest in anti-aging.
- These figures are based on audits of BAAPS members, which often reflect trends in private healthcare. While female patients still make up the majority (roughly 93%–94%

of procedures), the number of men opting for surgery has nearly doubled over the past decade.
- These numbers do not include non-surgical treatments like Botox or fillers, which are generally higher in volume, with 2024 seeing a 5% increase in Botox for men.

PROTEIN SUPPLEMENTS AND STEROIDS

- **Problematic protein supplement use** in the UK involves risks of heavy metal contamination (lead, arsenic, cadmium), high-caffeine toxicity, and kidney/liver strain, with sales rising 15-20% annually. Experts warn against using supplements as meal replacements, citing misleading marketing, excessive sugar, and potential "lethal" doses in unregulated products.
- **Contamination and Safety:** Studies have found elevated levels of heavy metals—including lead, arsenic, and cadmium—in many popular protein powders. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) recently warned against a product containing over 5,000 mg of caffeine per serving, which can be fatal.
- **Misleading Marketing:** The British Dietetic Association (BDA) has labelled the marketing of these products to young people as "immoral," and notes that many consumers use them as substitutes for, rather than supplements to, a balanced diet.
- **Problematic anabolic steroid use** in the UK is a growing public health issue, with an estimated 500,000 to over 1 million users, predominantly men, using them primarily for cosmetic, rather than athletic, reasons. Often referred to as a "hidden crisis," the abuse of Image and Performance Enhancing Drugs (IPEDs) has risen due to social media, reality TV, and a desire to achieve extreme, often unrealistic, muscular physiques.
- **Demographics and Motivation:** While traditionally associated with bodybuilding, users now range from teenagers to men in their 70s, with a high concentration of users aged 20–24. Many users are driven by "bigorexia" (muscle dysmorphia), desiring to look bigger and more defined.
- **Health Consequences:** The misuse of anabolic steroids poses severe, long-term health risks, including cardiovascular issues (heart attacks, strokes, heart failure), liver damage, kidney failure, infertility, and hormonal imbalances.
- **Psychological Impact:** Users often report "roid rage" (extreme aggression and irritability), severe depression, paranoia, and addiction.
- **The "Hidden" Nature:** Unlike other drugs, many steroid users do not consider themselves to have a drug problem, often viewing their use as a "lifestyle" or "healthy" practice to enhance their appearance.
- **Legal Status:** Anabolic steroids are Class C drugs. While legal to possess for personal use, it is illegal to import, export, or supply them (including giving them to friends), which can carry a penalty of up to 14 years in prison.
- **Risky Behaviours:** Many users engage in "stacking" (taking multiple types of steroids), "pyramiding" (gradually increasing doses), and "blast and cruise" methods, often buying products from unregulated "underground" labs.
- **Infection Risk:** Due to the injection of these drugs, there is a significant risk of transmitting blood-borne viruses like HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C, as well as local infections and abscesses at the injection site.

- Organizations like UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) and various public health experts have warned that the growing trend of, particularly young, men using these drugs is creating a "ticking time bomb" for the NHS, with the potential for widespread, long-term, and serious health problems.

Risks Associated with Steroid Misuse:

- **Physical:** Shrunken testicles, erectile dysfunction, acne, baldness, and breast development (gynaecomastia) in men and stunted growth in adolescents.
- **Psychological:** Depression, anxiety, and dependency.

MALE USE OF WEIGHT LOSS INJECTIONS

- Approximately 1.6 million adults in the UK used weight-loss injections (such as Wegovy or Mounjaro) between early 2024 and early 2025. While women dominate usage, recent 2025 data show a surge in popularity among men, shifting to a ratio of 60% women and 40% men in private prescriptions.
- Most, including many men, are accessing these drugs through private prescriptions.

THE IMPACT OF TV

- 'The Love Island Effect' - Body pressure from watching Love Island at the midpoint of the series predicted heightened engagement in weight loss and muscle gain strategies, and increased desire for cosmetic surgery, at the end of the series. Furthermore, heightened desire for cosmetic surgery predicted increased body pressure from watching Love Island. Results suggest that prolonged exposure to the idealised bodies on Love Island indicate maladaptive cognitive and behavioural implications for young people (Noon et al., 2025)

CELEBRITY WORKOUTS

- Jake Gyllenhall (Road House) typical training day included multiple sessions, which sometimes incorporated 1,000 sit-ups, an 8-mile run, hours of boxing and sparring, core workouts, and weightlifting. The actor trained six days a week for months, consuming around 4,000 calories per day of clean foods like eggs, chicken, fish, vegetables, and complex carbohydrates. He reportedly cut out sugar, alcohol, and even simple things like chips for the duration of the filming to achieve a shredded physique of around 5% body fat.
- Hugh Jackman (Wolverine) trained two and a half hours, seven days a week. His diet plan included bulking consuming 6000 calories a day, mostly protein. He then changed his diet to achieve drastic 'cutting'. He used heavy-weight-lifting focused on progressive overloading and compound exercises (squats, deadlifts and bench presses). He also used high-intensity interval training for cardio and functional exercises to increase agility.
- Henry Cavill (Superman) uses a similar approach to Hugh Jackman for weightlifting and focuses on high-rep sets. He also uses cardio (10 x 50 yard sprints) and functional exercises to maintain muscle retention. He usually eats 5000 calories of protein rich food a day.

SESSION 1

Materials:

Flip chart (or whiteboard) and markers
Nametags
Packets for each participant containing home exercises for all sessions

Topic Areas:

1) Introduction & Icebreaker (5')
2) Voluntary Commitment & Overview (5')
3) Group Agreement (5')
4) Definition and Origin of the Appearance (20')
5) Costs Associated with the Appearance (15')
6) Bridging Exercises (5')
7) Wrap-up (5')

Session Overview: The focus of Session 1 is to provide an overview and introduce participants to the rules and expectations of the group. The session is largely interactive with discussions of the definition and origins of the appearance ideal, and costs associated with pursuing the appearance ideal. The importance of attendance and completing the bridging exercises is emphasised.

1) INTRODUCTION AND ICEBREAKER (5 MINS)

Welcome participants as they arrive. Distribute packets (instruct participants to bring them to each group) and nametags and ask participants to only write their first name. Group leaders should model this by only using their first name on their name tag. Make conversation with participants as you wait for the group to begin (e.g., "What year are you?" "What are you studying?" "Do you live on campus?").

The facilitators begin by introducing themselves to the group, Introductions should include pronouns, where you work and what you do.

Thanks for signing up to take part in The Body Project. Over the next four sessions, we're going to help you develop greater body acceptance and improved well-being. The Body Project is the best-in-class programme for improving body image, reducing unhealthy weight control behaviours and eating problems. That's why I will be referring to my notes through the sessions. What we do here is based on science and I want to make sure we cover everything we know to be helpful.

Research shows that when men and boys talk about the "appearance-ideal" shown in the mass media, and how to challenge pressures to be muscular and lean, it makes them feel better about their bodies. Likewise, discussing the costs

of body dissatisfaction and unhealthy behaviours has also been found to reduce eating problems. This group program, which involves these activities, has been shown to significantly reduce body dissatisfaction, eating problems, and future weight gain. Most participants enjoy these group meetings and look forward to them.

- **ADDRESS CONCERNS:** Normalise uncertainty that participants may feel before a first group meeting. Ask participant what questions you can answer about what to expect from group meetings. Ask participant if they have any concerns.

Okay, let's warm up our topic using an icebreaker! It's called 'My Biggest Body Image Pet Peeve'. Tell us your name, something interesting about you and what your biggest pet peeve is – it can be social media, gym culture, looks maxing or the fashion industry or anything else that comes to mind when you think of what influences how you feel about your appearance.

I will start then we will go round the room.

Group leaders should spend a few moments with each participant to elicit specific information and show interest (e.g. I can totally identify with shirts / jeans being difficult to shop for).

2) VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT AND OVERVIEW (5 MINS)

Soliciting voluntary commitment to participating in the group

People get the most out of these groups if they attend all four sessions, and if they speak up and tell us what they think because everyone has something interesting to share. It's also important to do the bridging exercises between the sessions as this gives us more to talk about the following week.

It is important that you know that taking part is voluntary. Is each of you willing to volunteer and actively participate in the group? Let's go round the group.

- Go around the room and have **each participant say** they are willing to actively participate.

OVERVIEW

- ***During the four sessions we will:***
- ***Define the appearance ideal and explore where it came from***
- ***Discuss the costs of pursuing this ideal***

- ***Explore ways to resist the pressures to look perfect***
- ***Learn more ways to talk more positively about our bodies***

Attendance

It is important that everyone comes to all four sessions. If you need to miss one, please let us know and we will try to schedule a catch-up session with you before the next regular session, so you are up to date with everyone else.

- If possible, group leaders should **call or e-mail participants** the day before each session to remind them of the session and to bring any assignments they should have completed. If a participant must miss a session for any reason, please schedule a brief (15 minute) individual catch-up session to discuss key points from the session and get the participant "up to date" before the next session. Ask them to complete the bridging exercises before the next session too.

3) GROUP AGREEMENT (5 MINS)

Before we start, let's come up with a group agreement for our sessions together. What can we all do to create a safe space for us to take part in the sessions?

Work with your group to come up with an agreement for your sessions.

- It may be helpful to write this list up on your flipchart or whiteboard to keep for future sessions.

- Topics to consider may include:
  - Confidentiality – this is a safe space
  - Encourage active participation
  - Listening to others – no judgements
  - Being punctual
  - Being honest
  - Active listening
  - Where to go for further support – consider local safeguarding processes.

4) DEFINITION AND ORIGIN OF THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (20 MINS)

<u>Defining the appearance ideal</u>

Now we are going to define the appearance-ideal for men, this will help us understand exactly what we are discussing. Tell me what you think when I say

'The Perfect Man' – what does he look like? Let's create our perfect man list on the board.

- **Scribe writes "<u>Perfect Man</u>" at the top of the board.**

- Have participants "shout out" aspects of the "perfect man." Encourage participants to locate images of the appearance ideal on their phones if group members have a difficult time generating facets of the appearance ideal. You may also ask who they follow on social media and what they look like.
- Write **all** features on the list on the whiteboard. **It can be useful to group the suggestions together to help draw out the contradictions that come up**.

Examples may be lean, muscular and attractive, have a perfect body, toned, large-chested, large shoulders and arms, tall, look like a male model e.g. clear complexion, well groomed. Ask participants to be more specific for example 'what is the perfect body, how tall is tall, what does a male model look like'. You can ask if everyone thinks the examples given are the same for them. Elicit as much detail as possible highlighting incompatible features such as ultra-lean and huge muscular arms and legs. Focus the discussion on the lean part of the lean ideal, though it is fine to note other aspects, such as clear complexion, white teeth, etc.

So, the perfect Man is….

- Read back the list on the board playfully highlighting the incompatible features.

We call this 'look' 'the appearance ideal' – as this is part of the bridging exercise for this week, feel free to take a picture on your phone or make some notes in your workbook if that will help.

- **Cross out phrase "Perfect Man" and write "Appearance-Ideal" on the board.**

Before we talk more about the appearance ideal, it's important to remember that the appearance ideal is NOT the same as the healthy ideal.

With the appearance ideal, people can go to extreme measures to look like the ideal which can mean unhealthy weight control behaviours such as extreme dieting, laxative use, restricting food groups and excessive exercise. The goal of the appearance ideal is to achieve a look that isn't realistic or healthy.

With the healthy ideal, we need to think about our unique bodies and what we need to be healthy, and this is different for everyone. Being healthy includes not

just physical health but also mental health, happiness, our overall quality of life and being able to have fun and balance in our lives. A healthy body has muscles and fat, and a healthy ideal includes feeling good about how our body works and feels.

- You may wish to pause here for questions, often the appearance ideal can be confused with the healthy ideal.

So, let's think – has this 'appearance ideal' always been the ideal for men? In other words, can you think of a time when a different body type was seen as 'ideal'?

No, differs with differing times

- Solicit examples of different ideal male standards over time – prompt with things they may have seen in history lessons, what was it like for their parents or grandparents. Examples can include:
  - **Ancient Times:** Ancient Greece (and to some degree the Romans copied these ideals) idealised muscular, lean male physiques.
  - **Medieval Era:** More robust physiques were favoured because the lower class toiled on the land and leanness was equated to physical labour whilst the upper classes wore armour and trained in combat if they could afford to.
  - **Victorian Era:** Weight equated with social status, so men with larger waists had more social status as they were seen as more wealthy with more access to resources such as food.
  - **1920's** Hollywood shaped the male body ideal. It was thought that cameras added about 20 pounds onto the actors' frame. Because of this, the male ideal body was slim, agile, strong and athletic. Many of the male stars did their own stunts and therefore had to be "in shape". The "Hollywood Icon" body type was born in this era.
  - **By the 1930's**, more muscular body types became popular. The "muscular mesomorph" had a strong upper body with more defined muscles, a chiselled face, broad shoulders, and a small waist.
  - **In the 50's**, the focus was less on strong and more on big. The "Exec Bod" became ideal. Broad shoulders and a tall body with a small waist were considered imposing and commanding. A boxier frame was all the rage.
  - **1960's** - Fighting "the man", androgyny, and ignoring "machismo" became popular in the 60s. Men often grew out their hair, and obtained a very slim, rocker frame. The body ideal was more about self-expression and opinionated ideals rather than muscles.
  - **1970's – 1990's** - While the slim frame remained the same for rock-stars, a very large, bodybuilder frame became widely popular in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Excessively pronounced muscles with definition, and bulky veins was idealised. This "action figure look" was often depicted in movies and in magazines.

- **Today:** Similar to ancient Greece – lean and muscular. Promoted by those with a vested interest in generating sales for specific products and services.

Is this ideal the same for all ethnic groups and cultures?

- Give participants a chance to discuss differences of the appearance ideal (physical characteristics, including the appearance ideal) for various ethnic groups and cultures.
- Summarise discussion to acknowledge that, just as the ideal has not been consistent over time, it also varies across ethnic and cultural groups.

How about other groups that may have different appearance ideals such as non-binary gender people?

- Allow participants to discuss how the appearance ideal might affect everyone differently depending on their experiences with these identities.

Where do these ideals come from?

- Elicit examples – gender stereotypes, social media influencers, celebrity culture, advertising, films, cultural traditions, beauty, fashion and diet industries, family and friends.

Who or what promotes and encourages these standards?

- Elicit examples – social media, celebrity culture, advertising, friends and family, diet and weight loss industry.

How does social media promote this ideal?

- Elicit examples - Increases direct social comparisons focused on appearance, contributes to body dissatisfaction and may promote unhealthy weight control behaviours.

How do body appearance-ideal messages from the media impact the way you feel about your body? Let's go round the group on this one.

- Go around the group and encourage everyone to share one feeling they have experienced.
- Elicit examples - Feeling inadequate because they do not look like a male model or sportsman, dislike of their own bodies, negative mood, low self-esteem.

How much editing or airbrushing do they do in magazines and other media like social media?

- Discuss with the group the various ways fashion and celebrity photos can be altered (e.g., eyes can be made wider, necks can be made longer, waists can be narrowed, and comparative height, leanness and muscularity can be altered).
- Also explain that sometimes photos are edited (e.g., abs can be made to look more chiselled, biceps larger). Also explain that sometimes photos are edited to make very lean or even overweight models look more muscular, such as fake six/12-packs or glutes. This creates a misleading impression.

Let's talk more about that. How does it make you feel to know that even influencers and celebrities are edited and filtered and in other words, are not 'beautiful' enough?

- Elicit examples – angry, sad, frustrated, manipulated, generates mistrust

What do our cultures tell us will happen if we are able to look like the appearance ideal?

- We will be accepted, loved, happy, successful, wealthy.
- Differentiate the appearance ideal from the healthy ideal if they say you are healthier if you conform to the appearance ideal.

Will reaching these standards really make these things happen? Another way to think about this is to ask – do celebrities or sportsmen who often come closest to the appearance ideal, have perfect lives?

- No, they will likely have little impact. Even those who most closely match these ideals have relationship problems, low body confidence, feel lonely and may struggle with addictions. They also often change their own appearance to follow the latest ideal.

- Please do not describe (or allow participants to discuss) the benefits of thinness in general or give the impression that the appearance ideal is close to the healthy ideal (i.e., it is possible to be well within the healthy weight range but not meet the cultural standards for the ultra-perfect ideal).

- Use the worksheet tips provided if participants make pro-lean / muscular ideal statements (e.g., "You *are* more loved if you meet the lean / muscular ideal" or "lean / muscular men make higher salaries than fatter men").

5) COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PURSUING THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (15 MINS)

We've discussed the appearance ideal and where it comes from, now let's think about the costs involved with this ideal.

What are the costs of trying to look like the appearance ideal? Let's think about it personally and for society as a whole. We'll go round the group for this one.

- **Write up the heading 'costs' on the white board with two sub-headings of 'personal' and 'society'**

- Encourage all of the participants to think about the costs. There may be connections between the two which you can highlight.
- As needed to prompt discussion, ask questions such as "Have you seen friends experience negative consequences of strict dieting?" or "Are there ways in which strict dieting can have a negative impact? on [friendships, schoolwork, physical health, mental health, self-esteem, family relationships, etc.]?
- Personal examples:
    - Physical Health – physically exhausting, can hurt themselves, health problems from unhealthy weight management techniques (diet and exercise), supplement misuse, side effects of online products
    - Mental health – low self-worth and mentally exhausting, anxiety and depression
    - Personal relationships – time not spent with friends and loved ones
    - Academic and work life
    - Quality of life (time and money)
- Societal examples:
    - Inequality – Only those who can attain the ideal can succeed in life
    - Culture of discontent and unhappiness
    - Burden on healthcare services – increasing health care costs
    - Shortage of nurses and surgeons as they leave to work in the cosmetic industry
    - Skills shortage (just be an influencer)
    - Environmental costs (fast fashion, child labour, overseas shipping, quick fashion going to landfill)

As part of this week's bridging exercise is to think about these costs, feel free to take a photo on your phone or make notes in your workbook to remind you.

So, let's have a think, what are the negative effects of comparing yourself to others especially on social media?

- Elicit examples - Checking social media can make me feel insecure and increase body image concerns. Can worsen my mood.

Who benefits from the appearance ideal? In other words, who makes money from it?

- Diet industry; fitness business; mass media; fashion industry.

Are you one of the people who benefit from the appearance ideal? In other words, are you getting rich from the appearance ideal?

- Are you the founder of a diet program, a health club, gym, a media executive, a male model? NO!!

Given what we've discussed so far, does it make sense to try to chase the appearance ideal?

- No! Make sure that each participant makes a public statement against the appearance ideal at this stage (and anywhere else possible).

6) BRIDGING EXERCISES (5 MINS)

Group participants are reminded of the home-based assignment for next session:

Now that we have begun discussing the costs of the appearance ideal, would you be willing to write (or type) a letter to a young man who is struggling with his body image about the costs associated with trying to look like the appearance ideal? Think of as many costs as you can and feel free to work with others to come up with ideas.

Instead of writing a letter, you may want to make a reel or story on social media, or a short video that you can share with us, or you can also do it as a voice note if that helps. Another option could be to use artwork to do this, and we can talk about it next week.

Please bring this with you to the next session.

Secondly, we'd like you to stand in front of a mirror and write down 15 positive things about you. This includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities. So, for example, you may like your legs because they let you cycle to school or do that 5k run, that you play an instrument, that you are physically active, your hair, the sound of your laugh, you're good at one of the lessons you enjoy most, the fact that you're in a sports team, that you are a good friend… if you find this difficult, think what your best friend would say are the best things about you.

- Give examples from your experience with the mirror exercise when you went through the Body Project as a participant. Preferably include physical features that are sensitive for some men (e.g., height, chest, arms, shoulders, legs, abs and complexion).

Please make sure that you include at least some physical features on your list. It may be difficult at first and may seem silly, but we really want you to do this because it is important to recognise all the different positives about yourself. Past students have said this exercise was very helpful and empowering!

Please bring this with you next week.

So, before we leave, can someone tell me what the bridging exercises are for this week in their own words?

- Write a letter to a younger man about the costs of pursing the appearance ideal and do the mirror exercise.
- Remind participants of the alternatives of creating a social media post, video, artwork or voice note.

Experience shows that people get the most out of this programme when they do the exercises the best they can, remember, this isn't homework and we aren't going to grade you on it, we are just interested in what you think!

- Get some form of public commitment from each participant.

We want these exercises to be fun as well as thought-provoking, so please feel free to talk about them with others in the group between sessions.

7) WRAP-UP (5 MINS)

We like to end sessions by giving everyone a chance to say one last thing. Can you tell me something that 'worked for you' or 'hit home' in this session or something you just liked?

- Have each participant share one thing they liked the most.

Past participants have found it helpful to keep in touch with each other to continue these discussions outside of the group. If you are interested in this, we encourage you to exchange contact information or connect over social media.

Thanks all for today, thank you for coming. We look forward to seeing you next week!

SESSION 2

Materials: Nametags
Extra home exercise packets

Topic Areas:

1. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment (3')
2. Letter to Adolescent Boy Exercise Debriefing (20')
3. Mirror Exercise Debriefing (12')
4. Group Activity - Discouraging the Pursuit of Appearance ideal (15')
5. Bridging Exercises (5')
6. Wrap-up (5')

Session Overview: The focus of Session 2 is to review the materials discussed in the previous session and discuss reactions to the two bridging exercises. Additionally, this session involves role-plays to elicit verbal statements against the thin ideal.

1) REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITMENT (3 MINS)

Thanks for coming to Session 2. Is each of you willing to participate verbally in today's session?

- Go around the room and get a verbal affirmation that they are willing to actively participate.

2) LETTER DEBRIEFING (20 MINS)

Last week we asked if you would be willing to write a letter to a younger man about the costs of trying to look like the appearance ideal.

We are now going to go around the group so that each of us can share our work. Who would like to start?

- Have each participant read their letter or the alternative way they completed exercise one from last time. After each participant finishes, respond by thanking them and/or making a positive comment about their work.

Everyone clearly spent a lot of time on this and did a great job.

3) MIRROR EXERCISE DEBRIEFING (12 MINS)

The other exercise we asked you to do was to look in a mirror and list some of your positive qualities.

How did you feel when you did this exercise?

- Elicit some responses – difficult, embarrassing, weird, hard to think of things…feeling arrogant

Why do so many of us find it difficult to compliment ourselves?

- Elicit discussion – try to pull out that there are feelings of being arrogant – these lead into the next question.

How can we teach young men that there is a difference between confidence and arrogance, and that being confident is good?

- Participants may not be able to answer this as they may not know the difference, if there is need to, you can ask them what they think it is:

What do you think the difference is between being confident and being arrogant?

- Arrogance is often about comparing yourself to someone and thinking you are better than them and like you are competing with them but not in a good way,
- Confidence is different, it is about feeling good about yourself without having to make others feel less good about themselves – it's more about being content with yourself and appreciating the things about you that are good

So, now we are going to <u>answer with some confidence</u>, what are three aspects of yourself that you are satisfied with, including two physical features?

- Have each participant share positive qualities they listed.
- Discourage "qualified" statements (e.g., "I guess my stomach is not too horrible"). If you get "qualified" statements, accept them and ask the participant for an additional statement that is completely positive (e.g., "Okay, can you give me one more statement you had that is completely positive?").
- Note: If participants have a difficult time generating discussion about this exercise, you may comment on your own experience by saying, for example, "When I did this exercise, I remember thinking that it was challenging because it was so different from the way I usually look at myself in the mirror."
- Note: As needed to generate discussion, ask participants to share more detail about the positive features they list (e.g., "Tell us more about what you like about your hair.")

Hopefully, you recognise the positive things about yourselves and will remember them, particularly as the pressure of the appearance ideal surrounds you.

Okay, let's now practice more ways to resist the appearance ideal.

4) DISCOURAGING PURSUIT OF THE APPEARANCE IDEAL (15 MINS)

Some people in their daily lives wish or want to achieve the appearance ideal. They think or behave in certain ways that support this ideal. This means that they might also talk to others about this ideal and how to achieve it.

In this part of the session, we'd like you to discourage a person who seeks to achieve this unrealistic ideal.

I will play the part of the person pursuing the appearance ideal and I'd like you to tell me what you think a good reply would be, think back to the costs we discussed last week.

- Leaders take the role of either a overzealous weightlifter/steroid and or supplement user or eating disordered individual for each participant. Let each participant spend approximately two minutes attempting to dissuade you from pursuing the appearance ideal (do two role plays if necessary). Make sure <u>each participant</u> tries to talk you out of pursuing the appearance ideal.
- Reassure the participants that they can say the first thing that comes to mind, that there are no rules and you won't be offended by anything they say!

- Tips on being "in character:"
  - Parrot, or echo back, any pro appearance-ideal comments previously made by participants while you are playing an appearance-ideal role.
  - Focus on the unrealistic benefits of the appearance ideal ("I'll be happy all of the time if I'm lean and muscular," "Everyone will like me," "I'll have the perfect partner," "All my problems will be solved.")
  - Make statements that hint at the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal ("It will take time away from my schoolwork and friends, but I'll find a way to do it," or "I really don't think dieting like this is that dangerous") so that the participant can point out those costs to you.
  - <u>Be difficult to persuade (you and the participants should volley the role play back and forth several times), but it is OK to be playful with this exercise</u>. Feel free to go over the top a bit with the more resilient participants.

Now I would like to go through some examples of appearance ideal statements, and we'll practice how you could respond to them. I will play a person that is

obsessed with the appearance ideal, and your job will be to convince me that I shouldn't be. Each conversation will last about two minutes. If you can, think back to the discussions we've already had and use that to discourage me.

We'll model a conversation. Then we'll go around the group so each of you can have a turn. Let's have some fun with this, remember, I won't be offended by anything you say.

- The facilitators should model the role-play before having participants do them. Then select group members to participate, making sure each participant has a turn.
- Start with the liveliest participant, or if no one volunteers, start with the person next to you and go around the room.
- Depending on the group dynamics, you may want to offer the option for them to work together in groups of 2 or 3 but be sure that everyone voices an argument against the statements.

Sample statements for leaders appear below:

- ***"I'm sure that I could date more girls if I could get a little more muscular."***
- ***"I really want to have good abs for summer holidays, so I will start skipping breakfasts to take off some extra weight."***
- ***"I just saw an ad for this new body building pill-- I'm going to order it right away. I can finally be as jacked as I want."***
- ***"I can't meet you tonight because I have to go spend a few hours at the gym. I only went for two hours yesterday."***
- ***"I feel a little dizzy lately, which may be from the two hours I already worked out today, but I'm seeing good results so I'm still planning to work out again later."***
- ***"I'm thinking of going on a gluten-free vegan diet. It's so much healthier and I'm sure it'll help me finally get those abs I've wanted!"***
- ***"To be the best runner, I have to be down to my lightest weight. I am only doing this for my health—this will help me avoid injuries."***
- ***"I have to be lean and muscular or my life is ruined."***
- ***"Anyone could have the body of a football player if they really wanted it."***
- ***"I'm never going to get a date out unless I bulk up a lot."***
- ***"I am never going to be invited to parties unless I gain more muscle."***
- ***"I want to make sure I don't gain fat this summer, so I am going to only have a protein shake for breakfast and lunch every day."***
- ***"I am training for a marathon right now and need to lose another 5 lbs, so I'm going to double my long runs this weekend."***

- ***"My coach says that if I cut out breakfast, I could be a better athlete."***
- ***"My schedule is packed so I never have time to eat. I know I could probably make time, but I like how much weight I'm losing".***
- ***"I just got an app on my phone that helps me budget my calories. It says that in order to gain 10 pounds of muscle by next month, I only have to add on two protein shakes a day."***
- ***"If I want to go out tonight, I'll have to skip lunch and dinner today."***
- ***"To get closer to that 6-pack I've been striving for, I think I'll spend an extra hour working on my abs each day this week".***
- ***"Do you think steroids will help me bulk up? I've heard it's a great way to gain muscle mass."***

❖ Leaders should generate additional statements as needed and may tailor the statements to be appropriate for their group members.

Exercise debriefing

How did it feel to have these conversations?

❖ Let participants reflect on how it felt to argue against someone who is fixated on pursuing the appearance ideal.
❖ As needed, ask additional questions to prompt discussion (e.g., "What was challenging about the role plays?" or "What was positive about them?").

Could you imagine challenging people in this way when they make appearance ideal statements?

❖ Elicit some responses – validate that this will be a new experience and takes time and practice.

What would be beneficial about doing so?

❖ Promote discussion on why it is helpful to speak out against pressure to conform to the appearance ideal.
❖ Please let participants come up with the ideas.
❖ As needed, ask additional questions to prompt discussion (e.g., "Tell me about a situation in which you could imagine challenging appearance ideal statements.").
❖ Examples may include:
  - It starts to break the cycle
  - It shows it's okay for people to be different
  - It can help people early on to recognise things may not be healthy
  - It's good to question as long as we do it kindly

- If we do nothing, then it's like saying it's okay

5) BRIDGING EXERCISES (5 MINS)

<u>Home-based assignment for next session</u>:

Great, now we would like to ask you to do two bridging exercises before our next session.

First, we'd like you to find out from other people what they think about the cost of the appearance ideal. To do this, we'd like you to chat to about three people and ask them! These can be family members, friends, someone on a sports team or someone you know through school. They may think that there aren't any costs so it could be interesting for you to share some of what you have learned.

- If there is a challenge for some of your neurodiverse participants, consider asking them to look online to find three other people who critique the appearance/ thin ideal and then this can be discussed instead.

As we will be chatting about this next week, you may like to take some notes or if possible, record your chat if you have permission. We'd really like to hear who you talked to and what you discovered next week.

- **<u>Pull the Community Interview Form from your packet (Bridging Exercise #3).</u>**

For the second exercise, we'd like you to think of yourself as a social activist – someone who can make a difference and change the things around us that keep the appearance ideal going.

We'd like you to come up with a top 10 list of things we can do to resist the appearance ideal. We know that 10 can sound a lot but think of as many as you can. The goal of this exercise is to do something that will actually change your environment/the world, at least a little bit, in a way that will benefit others. Think of yourself as a social activist who is combating the appearance ideal. Please write your top 10-list and bring it to the next group.

Remember, like last time, if you're more creative and don't like the idea of writing a list, you can use other ways!

Does anyone have some ideas for this right now? Let's think of a few together so it's clearer.

- **<u>Refer to the Top 10 List Form (Exercise #4). Elicit one or two examples.</u>**

- Examples:
  - Invite friends to join you in un-following influencers and 'healthy lifestyle' magazines that promote the appearance ideal.
  - Post a comment on social media to a company or influencer about an ad that is promoting the appearance ideal and tell them why you have a problem with this – or compliment a positive post you see.
  - Share positive body image content on social media 'all bodies are good bodies'
  - Make a pact with friends to stop pro-appearance-ideal talk for a week (or more).
  - Identify a younger friend or relative and commit to helping her fight the appearance ideal as they grow up.
  - Cover all of the mirrors at home for a week so that other men can be freed from the pressure of looking perfect every day.
  - Put post-it notes on mirrors in men's bathrooms saying things like 'appreciate your body' or 'your body doesn't define your worth'.
  - Make a social media post that challenges the appearance ideal and share it with family and friends.
  - Start a social media page aimed at challenging the appearance ideal and invite your friends to join.
  - Throw a "Take Back our Bodies" party with friends (male and female) that challenges the appearance-ideal pressures created by the media and other external sources.
  - Put post-it notes that say, "You're great the way you are" into men's fitness books at a library or book shop.
  - Put up an "accept your body" poster in the men's bathrooms at school.
  - Make a "stuff people say" about body image concerns video and post it on social media.
  - You may not like wearing school PE kit and want to challenge your school on how to make this more acceptable, you may feel the same about other things about the school uniform– explain to school the impact this has on you, maybe even the food choices and prices in the school canteen.

Can someone tell me what the bridging exercises are for this week?

- Talk to three people about the main costs of pursuing the thin ideal and jot down notes
- Make the top 10-list men can do to challenge the appearance ideal.

We will discuss the bridging exercises next session, so please do your best to do them!

6) WRAP-UP (5 MINS):

Can everyone tell me something that "worked for you" in this session, or "hit home" or that you appreciated from today? We will go around the group—who would like to start?

- ❖ Have each participant share one thing they liked the most.

Next meeting, we will talk more about resisting the appearance ideal and how to challenge our personal body concerns. Does anyone have any questions before we leave today?

Thanks again for coming. We are looking forward to seeing you next week!

SESSION 3

Materials: Nametags
Extra home exercise packets

Topic Areas:

1. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment (2')
2. Community Interview Debriefing (10')
3. Body Talk shutdowns (Disrupting Appearance ideal Statements) (10')
4. Reasons for Signing Up (Optional Session) (10')
5. Behavioural Challenge (10')
6. Top 10 List Debriefing (15')
7. Bridging Exercises (3')
8. Wrap-up (Time Permitting)

Session Overview: The focus of Session 3 is to further discuss how to resist the appearance ideal, how to challenge personal body-related concerns, and how to respond to future pressures to be meet the appearance ideal. The in-session exercise is to practice making statements that counter the appearance ideal.

1) REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITTMENT (2 MINS)

Again, it is important to note that participation is voluntary. Are each of you willing to verbally participate in today's session?

- **Go around the room and get a verbal affirmation that they are willing to actively participate.**

2) COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked you to you talk to three people within your community (friends, classmates, etc.) and ask them to discuss the main costs of pursuing the appearance ideal. We also asked you to take notes as you're interviewing these members or to record the conversation - Is each of you willing to share who you spoke to and how it went?

- Go around the room and have **each participant** share who they spoke to and what they talked about.
- Be reassuring and encouraging, acknowledge that these may have been difficult conversations and congratulate efforts made.

What did you learn about how friends and other people around you feel about the costs of pursuing the appearance ideal?

- ❖ Elicit some responses

3) DISRUPTING APPEARANCE IDEAL STATEMENTS – QUICK COMEBACKS (10 MINS)

We often do not notice some of the more subtle ways the appearance and body ideal messages are constantly being pushed in our day-today lives.

Can anyone think of some ways that you or others might be encouraging the appearance ideal without even knowing it?

- ❖ Possible responses include:
  - Complimenting others' weight loss, or gaining muscle
  - Commenting on what or how much you are eating
  - Devoting a lot of time to thinking about how you can cut carb calories and increase protein intake
  - Complaining about your body and talking about celebrities who are either very lean or look as though they have gained weight

Can anyone think of some ways that you or others might promote the appearance ideal, through social media, without even knowing it?

- ❖ Possible responses include:
  - Only leaving positive comments on photos where that person fits the appearance ideal
  - Only posting photos of yourself where you look "perfect" and filtering or taking multiple photos to get 'the perfect one'
  - Only following celebrities/influencers that fit the appearance-ideal

In the last session we asked you to talk someone out of pursuing the appearance ideal in an extended role-play game. This week we are going to do something a little different—we would like each of you to briefly challenge "appearance-ideal" statements with a quick comeback. Your goal is simply to shut-down the body talk and not to have a conversation about it.

For example, if I say: "Does this shirt make me look fat?" You could say: "I think it's best if we don't think about appearance issues like that, let's talk about what you did at the weekend."

I would like each of you to counter two appearance-ideal statements I make.

- ❖ Role-play using counter appearance-ideal statements to resist pressure from peers.
- ❖ Ask each participant to generate a counter appearance-ideal statement in response to two statements that you share.
- ❖ Go around the circle twice.
- ❖ If participants provide a lengthy answer, gently interrupt them and ask them to provide a response in just a sentence or two.
- ❖ Reassure the participants that they can say the first thing that comes to mind, that there are no rules and you won't be offended by anything they say!

Sample statements:

- ***Wow, look at how skinny that guy is!***
- ***He's really lost his six pack over the holidays.***
- ***I think if I cut out dairy and gluten, I can really lose a lot of body fat***
- ***I'm thinking of going on a diet so I can be a better athlete, do you want to join me?***
- ***Don't you think that guy looks fat?***
- ***I would never be friends with someone that out of shape.***
- ***My coach says I need to stop eating breakfast if I want to get to my ideal weight.***
- ***My friend says I look too thin, what do you think?***
- ***If I don't lose some fat, I may be dropped from the team.***
- ***I hate my body so much—I wish I could just wake up in a different one.***
- ***You know if you just stopped eating fried chicken, you would lose enough weight to look attractive.***
- ***Only tall, lean guys are successful with girls.***
- ***He really should work out more if he wants to wear that shirt.***
- ***I really wish I had the body like Tom Holland.***
- ***I was thinking of getting liposuction or a nose job.***
- ***My trainer is working with me so that I can bulk out enough for the next competition.***
- ***Does this shirt make me look too skinny?***
- ***Can you see my muscles in this shirt?***
- ***I'm way too fat to be eating this.***
- ***You are so jacked; how do you do it?***
- ***I'm thinking of cutting out carbs because I hear it helps you lose fat.***
- ***You are so lean/muscular, you have nothing to worry about.***
- ***If I don't lose some fat, I know she's going to cheat on me.***

- ***The summer holidays are coming up, do you really think you should be eating that?***
- ***Coach says only to eat protein and salads for lunch.***
- ***She told me she only dates guys with a six pack.***
- ***I can't believe he would let his body go like that.***
- ***No one respects a guy with man boobs.***

Role play debriefing

How did it feel to do this and just shut down a conversation?

- Elicit some responses – difficult, awkward, empowering…

Do you think you could challenge your friends and family if they make appearance-ideal statements?

- Encourage discussion with additional questions as necessary (e.g., "Which statements were more challenging to respond to?" or "What would it be like in real life to reject the appearance ideal?").

4) REASONS FOR JOINING THE GROUP (10 MINS) – OPTIONAL SECTION

- **NOTE: If you did not require body image concerns to enrol in this class, please just go directly to the next section (behavioural challenge) and ask what participants do not due because of body image concerns.**
- At this point, it is helpful for participants to share the reasons they decided to come and join in.

What body image concerns prompted you to sign come and join this group?

- Facilitators can give examples of their own body dissatisfactions and model supportive comebacks if the group seems hesitant. It is best to start with the most outgoing student.

- Have participants discuss as much as they are comfortable sharing. The purpose is to allow participants to share specific body image concerns and have the group challenge the thoughts and feelings that participants have about specific body parts.

- If necessary, ask "Would you be willing to say what body image concerns you have? Almost everyone has some type of concern!" Encourage participants to give specific, rather than vague answers (e.g., a specific body image concern, rather than a general interest in the topic.) **You could link back to the 'pet-peeve' in session 1 as a reminder**.

5) BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGE (10 MINS)

Listening to everyone, it sounds like it would be helpful to challenge some of your fears and concerns related to your body image.

What types of things do you not do because of body image concerns?

- Examples may include wearing (or not) certain clothes, going to or avoiding specific places, won't go out without making sure hair is styled, not eating in public, restricting foods, prioritising the gym over time with friends and family etc.

We are going to do a challenge to help you feel better about your bodies. We would like to challenge you to do things that you don't at the moment because of body image concerns. Doing this can increase your confidence and reduce your fears.

Examples include:

- ***Going to the pool in swim shorts if you would usually avoid this.***
- ***Exercising in a group.***
- ***Eating in public.***
- ***Going out without a hat if you are self-conscious about what you look like without it – for example, if your hair has to be 'perfect'.***
- ***Not using skin or hair products/not shaving if you normally do***
- ***Going to the gym if you usually avoid it because of body image concerns.***
- ***Not going to the gym if you usually would make this a priority because you have body image concerns.***
- ***Revealing a part of your body, such as your legs or arms, that you tend to cover up.***
- ***Stop mirror or body checking. If you always check in the mirror to make sure you look okay – don't do it. Or if you often check a part of your body (like sucking in your tummy), stop!***
- ***Don't filter or change a photo before you upload it.***
- ***Wear that item of clothing you love but have been too self-conscious to wear.***

Are you willing to do two behavioural challenges in the next week or the same challenge twice?

We would like to hear how it went next week.

Please take a moment to think of two things you would like to do but haven't done yet.

- **Refer to the Behavioural Exercise Form (Exercise #5). Have them record their plan on the form.**
- Note that the purpose of this exercise is not to simply have participants do something they would not normally do (e.g., wear shorts because it just isn't their style preference), but that it **needs to be something they would otherwise do if they did not have body image concerns** (e.g., would like to wear a tight shirt, but do not because they think it makes their stomach look too fat).
- Group leaders should help participants select challenges that are appropriate and that they will be able to do in the next week (e.g., do not select wearing a t-shirt outside if it is winter).
- As needed, encourage participants to be specific in their plan (e.g., who will they do the activity with [if anyone], when will they do it, where will they do it, and how will they do it).

Now let's go around the share the two things that you will do this week.

- **Have each participant share with the group two behavioural challenges that they will do in the next week.**
- You may also wish to do this exercise and share with the participants what your plan is.

6) TOP 10 LIST DEBRIEFING (15 MINS)

The second exercise from last session asked you to list 10 things that we could do to resist the appearance ideal—what you can avoid, say, do, or learn to fight this social pressure. We like to call it "body activism."

Can each of you share three items on your list?

- **Refer to the Top 10 List Form (Exercise #4).**
- Have each participant share three items, encourage discussion around the value of this and how it gives them a voice to challenge social pressures.

We would like each of you to do at least two acts of body activism this week and then let us know how they go at the next session. Take a moment to choose the two forms of body activism that you will do. Now let's go around and share the two things that you will do this week.

Refer to the Body Activism Form (Exercise #6).

1. Share an anti-appearance-ideal video on social media.
2. Challenge others who are making pro-appearance ideal statements in the locker / changing room.
3. Challenge other males who make derogatory appearance statements about women.
4. Write to a magazine, advertising or tv company, or influencer about a particular ad that is pro-appearance ideal and explain why you have a problem with this. Or you could suggest a more positive advertising campaign.
5. Make a pact with friends to only give out complements related to accomplishments and achievements, not appearance.
6. Ask friends to join you in a group fitness activity that is geared toward fun and health, not bulking up or losing weight (e.g., play tennis or ping pong, go on a walk, etc.).
7. Ask a group of friends (male or female) to write a letter to someone in their past who had pressured them to gain more muscle or alter their body in another way.
8. Tell your partner or a friend about body insecurities you have and what you are doing to address them
9. Choose a related theme (e.g., body acceptance) as a class project/essay topic and ask your teacher if you can give a short presentation to the class.
10. Turn fitness magazines around in the checkout aisle so other men do not have to look at them.
11. Create a comic or short story with a positive message about body acceptance and post it on social media.
12. Request permission to start a student club to promote body acceptance.
13. Ask members of your class (or family) to join you in a pact to avoid negative body talk.
14. Make a pact with your friends to only post pictures taken without a filter on your social media accounts for a week (or more).
15. Share a post about your experiences with the Body Project on social media.

- Have each participant choose two behaviours from their list to do during the next week.
- As needed, encourage participants to be specific in their plan (e.g., who will they do the activity with [if anyone], when will they do it, where will they do it, and how will they do it).
- As needed, also remind participants that body activism is intended to have an impact beyond the individual level (e.g., among friends, on the school campus, in the community, etc.).

7) BRIDGING EXERCISES (3 MINS)

So, for the bridging exercises this week, we would like each of you to do two behavioural challenges relating to your personal body image concerns and engage in two body activism exercises.

We would also like you to do a third exercise. Would you be willing to write a letter to your younger self, describing how to avoid developing body image concerns? Draw from what you have learned in these sessions. The goal is to give yourself advice on things you can do, say, avoid, or learn to help yourself develop body acceptance. Remember, if writing a letter is not for you, you can use creative ways to do this such as artwork or creating a social media post or video like we've done before.

- If participants struggle with this concept, you can position it as 'what advice would you want an older version of you to give you?'

Refer to the Letter to a Younger Self Form (Exercise #7).

Can someone tell me what the bridging exercises are for this week?

- Two Behavioural Exercises
- Two Activism Exercises
- Advice to your younger self letter or alternative

8) WRAP-UP (TIME PERMITTING):

Can everyone tell me something that "worked for you" in this session, or "hit home"?

- Have each participant share one thing they liked the most.

Once again, thanks for coming. See you next week for the final session!

SESSION 4

Materials: Nametags
Extra home exercise packets

Topic Areas:

1. Reinforcing Voluntary Commitment (2')
2. Behavioural Challenge Debriefing (10')
3. Body Activism Debriefing (10')
4. Letter to a Younger Self Debriefing (10')
5. Discussion of Benefits of Group (10')
6. Self-Affirmation Exercise (10')
7. Closure (3')

Session Overview: The focus of Session 4 is to discuss participants' experiences with the behavioural challenge and body activism exercises, and to discuss how the ways in which we talk about our bodies may promote the appearance ideal. This final session focuses on having participants come up with more positive alternative ways of talking about their bodies and encouraging participants to continue to challenge their body image issues in the future.

1) REINFORCING VOLUNTARY COMMITTMENT (2 MINS)

I'm excited to have one last chance for us to meet together today. I'd like to make sure everyone else is ready to participate as well.

- Go around the room and get a verbal affirmation that they are willing to actively participate.

2) BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGE DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked you to do something that you don't normally do because of concerns about your body.

Let's go around the room and describe what each of you did and how it turned out.

- Have <u>each participant</u> discuss their experiences.

- If they did not do the exercise, ask about the barriers to doing it. How can they overcome them? Is there something they can do that might be easier to try out first? Encourage participants to continue challenging their body-related concerns.

How did you find this exercise? What did you learn?

- Elicit some responses – that no-one notices the things I think they do, that it wasn't as bad as I expected…

We appreciate that you were willing to try something new. Hopefully you will continue to challenge yourselves and your body image concerns in the future in a similar way.

3) BODY ACTIVISM DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last time we also asked you to do two body activism exercises. Let's go around the room so we can hear what each of you did and how it went.

- Go around the room so each participant describes what they did and what happened.
- As needed, ask questions to prompt additional discussion (e.g., "X, it sounds like you enjoyed doing this exercise, tell me more about what made it enjoyable" or "X, what aspects of this exercise were challenging?").

How do you think this type of exercise could make a difference?

- Elicit some responses – raises awareness that appearance ideals are everywhere but we don't always notice them, builds confidence to have a voice, can build a community where people feel noticed, can be empowering…

Do you think you will continue to do more body activism in the future? If so, what would you do?

- Give participants an opportunity to talk themselves into doing more body activism activities in the future.

4) LETTER TO YOUNGER SELF DEBRIEFING (10 MINS)

Last week we asked if you would be willing to write a letter to your younger self about how to avoid developing body image concerns.

We are now going to go around the group so each of us can share our letter or the other way we did the exercise.

- Have each participant read their letter or share the alternative format they chose – if they did an alternative, have them discuss this to increase dissonance.
- After each participant finishes, respond by thanking her and/or making a positive comment about her work.

Everyone clearly spent a lot of time on this and did a great job. How did it feel to do this?

- Elicit some responses- difficult, self-reflection, cathartic, a relief, it was like giving myself a hug.

How would your younger self react to that message?

- Elicit some responses – made me think, realise that I'm doing it, someone may be saying it, but I wasn't hearing it, reassured, supported, heard.

5) DISCUSSION OF BENEFITS OF THE GROUP AND CLOSURE (10 MINS)

Given that this is our last session, I wanted to talk about things you may have learned from participating in this group.

Can you tell me some of the benefits of body acceptance?

- Elicit some responses – liberating, self-esteem, more conscious of it, more time and money, feeling authentic and different, self-confidence, less guilt, revolutionary. –

Have you noticed that you feel differently about your own body?

- Elicit some responses – realism, I'm not buying into it, validation, will stop weighing, will think more about how I look at myself, will stop editing, or they may not feel different at this stage.

How has your participation in the Body Project changed what you do, or will do in the future, to promote your own body acceptance?

- Elicit some responses – stop buying things, have confidence to shut down the conversations, think about others around me and how it impacts them, think about food rules and behaviours.

Do you think this group has affected how you feel when you interact with people?

- Elicit some responses – be mindful of my actions, words and deeds. Think more about who people are and not what they look like.

Do you think your use of social media has changed as a result of this group?

- Elicit some responses – tailoring feeds, training the algorithms.

What else do you feel you have gained out of this group?

- Elicit some responses – Inspiration, power, hope, realised I'm not alone, sense of community.

Did any particular activity really stand out as helpful to you?

- Elicit some responses

- **Try to get all participants to reflect on any growth they have shown or insights they have learned. The idea is for them to consolidate what they have learned.**

6) SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISE: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE – WHAT NEXT? (10 MINS)

As we come to the end of our sessions, we would like to encourage you to continue challenging some of your body-related concerns. Part of doing this is talking about our bodies in a positive, rather than a negative, way. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ***Choose a friend or family member and discuss one thing you like about yourselves.***
- ***Keep a journal of all the good things your body allows you to do (e.g., sleep well and wake up rested, do well in that exam, play tennis, etc.).***
- ***Pick one friend to make a pact with to avoid negative body talk. When you catch your friend talking negatively about their body, remind them of the pact.***
- ***Make a pledge to end complaints about your body, such "I hate my arms." When you catch yourself doing this, make a correction by saying something positive about that body part, such as, "I'm so glad my arms got me out of bed today."***

- ***The next time someone gives you a compliment, rather than objecting ("No, I look terrible"), practice taking a deep breath and saying, "Thank you."***
- ***Pledge to do the mirror exercise once per week.***
- ***If you use social media, pledge to focus on the experience your photos/posts represent, rather than how you look (e.g., "My body did such a good job keeping me healthy and energised while I went camping"***
- ***Keep a 'Body Appreciation Jar' – Everyday, write down something your body enabled you to do.***

Can each of you choose one of these ideas (or one of your own) and do it sometime during the next week and let us all know how it goes?

Consider this an "exit exercise." Doing these kinds of things makes it more likely that you will talk about yourself in a more positive way. Think of which specific exercise you can do. I'd like to go around the room and ask each of you to share.

Refer to the Self-Affirmation Exercise Form (Exercise #8).

- ❖ Have each participant state which affirmation exercise they are willing to do during the next week.
- ❖ Have them record this in their workbook.

7) CLOSURE (3 MINS)

Thanks again for deciding to be a part of this group and sticking with it. We have been very impressed with your thoughtful comments and participation—they are much appreciated! It's been great to meet you all, we've really enjoyed working with you!

Is there one last thing you'd like to share before we leave?

- ❖ Have each participant share if they wish to.



The Body Project for Males

Participant Workbook

Your Facilitator is:

This workbook contains the information that you need to complete the bridging exercises between sessions.

There are also some blank pages at the end for you to make notes as we go through if you want to as we know that there will be lots of interesting discussions and it may feel like a lot to remember.

You are free to take pictures of the group work in session 1 but please be mindful to keep in line with the group agreement ☺

We would love to be able to use your work and share your ideas in sessions with others (obviously we won't identify you) – if you are happy for us to do this, please send a copy of your workbook to: Thebodyproject@glos.ac.uk

SESSION ONE, EXERCISE #1: LETTER TO A YOUNGER MAN

Please write a letter to a younger man who is struggling with body image concerns. Write about the costs associated with pursuing the appearance ideal. Think of as many costs as you can.

If writing a letter isn't for you, instead of writing a letter, you may want to make a reel or story on social media, or a short video that you can share with us, or you can also do it as a voice note if that helps. Another option could be to use artwork to do this, and we can talk about it next week.

Feel free to work with a friend or family member in generating ideas or use any of the ones we discussed in the group. Please bring your work to our next meeting so we can discuss your responses and feelings about this assignment.

SESSION ONE, EXERCISE #2: MIRROR EXERCISE FORM

Please stand in front of a mirror and look at yourself and write down your positive qualities. Please list as many as you can, we'd love to see 15! This includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and social qualities.

For instance, you may like the shape of your arms, the strength of your legs, your hair, the sound of your laugh, or the fact that you are a good friend. Please make sure to include at least some physical attributes on your list. You can think about what your friends or family would say about you.

1_____

2_____

3_____

4_____

5_____

6_____

7_____

8_____

9_____

10_____

11_____

12_____

13_____

14_____

15_____

SESSION TWO, EXERCISE #3: COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

Please talk to three people and ask them to discuss the main costs of pursuing the appearance ideal, these can be family members, friends, someone on a sports team or someone you know through school.

Please take notes as you're talking to them, jotting down important points and key takeaways from your discussion. If it's easier, and you have permission, you can record the sessions and then you can tell us the key things next week.

Interview #1:

_____

_____

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Interview #2:

_____

Interview #3:

SESSION TWO, EXERCISE #4: TOP 10 ACTIVISM LIST

Please generate a top 10 list of things boys and men can do to resist the appearance ideal. What can you avoid, say, do, or learn to battle this appearance ideal?

We discussed some examples in session such as:

- Invite friends to join you in un-following influencers and 'healthy lifestyle' magazines that promote the appearance ideal.
- Post a comment on social media complimenting a positive post you see.
- Make a pact with friends to stop pro-appearance-ideal talk for a week (or more).
- Identify a younger friend or relative and commit to helping her fight the appearance ideal as they grow up.
- Cover all of the mirrors at home for a week so that other men can be freed from the pressure of looking perfect every day.
- Put post-it notes on mirrors in men's bathrooms saying things like 'appreciate your body' or 'your body doesn't define your worth'.
- Make a social media post that challenges the appearance ideal and share it with family and friends.
- Put post-it notes that say, "You're great the way you are" into men's fitness books at a library or book shop.
- Put up an "accept your body" poster in the men's bathrooms at school.

You could use these suggestions, but we would also like to see if you can think of others!

Please write your top 10 list down and bring it to the next group.

1_____

2_____

3_____

4_____

5_____

6_____

7_____

8_____

9_____

10_____

SESSION THREE, EXERCISE #5: BEHAVIOURAL EXERCISE FORM

We would like to challenge each of you to do two things that you currently do not do because of body image concerns to increase your confidence. For example, wearing shorts in the summer, going to the pool in a swimsuit, exercising in public, going out without make-up on, or posting unedited photos on social media.

We would like each of you to do two behavioural challenges next week (or the same one twice) and then let us know how it turned out during the next session.

The behaviours I plan to change are:

_____

_____

_____

To do this, I will:

_____

_____

_____

I will do these new behaviours by (date): _____

I will know I've succeeded in changing these behaviours when I:

_____

_____

_____

Completing these new behaviours is important to me because:

_____

_____

_____

SESSION THREE, EXERCISE #6: BODY ACTIVISM FORM

The second exercise from last session (number 4) asked you to list 10 things that we could do to resist the appearance-ideal – what you can avoid, say, do, or learn to combat this social pressure. This might be referred to as "body activism."

Please choose two things from your list to do during the next week. You may want to write your body activism goal on this sheet to remind yourself of it.

This week I will:

1_____

_____

_____

_____

2_____

_____

_____

_____

SESSION THREE, EXERCISE #7: LETTER TO A YOUNGER SELF

Please write another letter, this time to a younger version of yourself (approx. two pages), on how to avoid developing body image concerns. Use any of the information you have learned in these session, and any additional ways you may think of on your own. The goal is to help the younger version of you understand the different things they can do, say, avoid, or learn that will help him develop or maintain a positive body image.

SESSION FOUR, EXIT EXERCISE #8: SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISE FORM

Part of challenging body-related concerns involves talking about our bodies in a positive, rather than negative, way. We discussed some examples of this in the group, for instance, making a pledge to end complaints about your body or accepting compliments rather than objecting to them. Please choose three ideas that we talked about, or one of your own, to practice over the next week.

I pledge to myself that I will:

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PLEASE USE THESE PAGES TO MAKE ANY NOTES OR DOODLES THAT MAY HELP THROUGH THE SESSIONS!