



# Learning outcomes and resources

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## IN THIS WORKSHOP STUDENTS WILL:

- **Understand the concept of appearance ideals** and where pressure to achieve them comes from.
- **Recognise the pressures caused by trying to match appearance ideals**, and the impact this has on their everyday lives.
- **Develop strategies to challenge appearance ideals**, resist appearance pressures and build body confidence.

## RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED:

### Workshop materials

**Workshop guide**

**Workshop presentation**

**Two activity sheets** (one set per student)

**Going further sheet** (one per student)

### From your school

**Projector and whiteboard**

**Students will each need a pen**

**OPTIONAL:**

**Spare paper**  
**Flipchart and markers**



# Overview

Total time: 45 minutes



## INTRODUCING APPEARANCE IDEALS

20 MINUTES page 5

- What are we learning today?
- What do we mean by appearance ideals?
- What are today's appearance ideals?
- How are appearance ideals constantly changing?
- Can we match appearance ideals?
- Where do we find out about appearance ideals?

## APPEARANCE PRESSURES

20 MINUTES page 10

- What appearance pressures do we face?
- What is the impact of these appearance pressures?
- What else can we value?

## BE A CHAMPION FOR CHANGE

5 MINUTES page 14

- What have we learned today?
- How will you be a champion for change?
- Congratulations!
- Going further

# How to use this guide

**Learning outcome.** Students should achieve this by the end of the section.

**Visual cues and learning objectives.** To help you steer the workshop and deliver it effectively.

**Teacher actions.** Non-italic bullet points highlight important questions to ask students to ensure key workshop concepts are addressed with optimum impact on body confidence. Text in italics indicates instructions to help structure workshop activities, e.g. where you should play films or use activity sheets. These can be adapted by you to suit the specific needs of your class.

Workshop 1 of 5  
Appearance Ideals

## Appearance pressures

By the end of this section, students will recognise the pressures caused by trying to match appearance ideals, and the impact this has on their everyday lives.

20 minutes 5

**1** **PRESENTATION**

Students will give examples of the time, money and emotional energy it can take trying to match appearance ideals.

**2** **TEACHER ACTIONS**

- > Explain that now students understand what appearance ideals are, and where pressures come from they are going to explore some of the pressures they can create on our daily lives.
- > Ask the students to 'think, pair, share' for the question below. Pose the questions below, before allowing the students to first think by themselves for a moment, before discussing quickly with their partner and then feeding back to the class.

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

> Take one or two responses.

**3** **DESIRED RESPONSES**

Ideas could include being late for school because you are taking too much time on your hair, running out of money because you have spent it all on beauty products, not feeling good enough because you can't match changing and narrowly-defined appearance ideals.

**4** **DESIRED RESPONSES FROM STUDENTS.** To help you guide students' answers in a way that develops their understanding throughout the workshop and has greatest impact on their body confidence.

**5** **DESIRED RESPONSES**

Take a few responses, but don't take too much time. The primary objective is for students to realise it takes a lot (rather than specific quantities). You may need to make it clear that it's ok to take care of your appearance! What students are exploring here is when they might get too caught up in trying to achieve a look that is impossible for most, and use up too much time, money or emotions in the process. Note feelings in this context refers to emotional energy, effort and stress.

**6** **DESIRED RESPONSES**

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**7** **DESIRED RESPONSES**

**Suggested time allocation.** Reflects the relative importance of each section for achieving learning outcomes and improving students' body confidence, but may be adapted to suit the length of your lesson.

**Notes.** Ideas and guidance for optimising the effectiveness of the workshop for students.

**Key activities.** The key activities are those that are most effective for improving body confidence. These are shown in blue and should be prioritised if you are short of time.

# Introducing appearance ideals

20 minutes



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

## PRESENTATION



Students are welcomed to the workshop.

## TEACHER ACTIONS



- > Introduce the workshop.
- > Explain that today is the first in a series of five workshops that will help students think about the appearance pressures young people encounter. The workshops will help them to explore more helpful ways to manage these pressures and build body confidence.

## DESIRED RESPONSES



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Sharing rules with your class is a useful mechanism for establishing a different feel from normal lessons across these workshops.

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



Share the ground rules.

- > Share the ground rules to help create a supportive, non-judgemental environment throughout the five-workshop series.

PRESENTATION



What are we learning today?

- Introducing appearance ideals
- Sources of appearance ideals
- Appearance pressures
- Challenging appearance pressures



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

TEACHER ACTIONS



> Briefly explain the areas of focus for today's workshop.

DESIRED RESPONSES



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What do we mean by appearance ideals?

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

Students will understand what is meant by appearance ideals.

- What do you think we mean by 'appearance ideals'?

> Invite a student to read the definition aloud.

Appearance ideals:

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

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

## PRESENTATION



Students explore the concept of appearance ideals, giving examples of what society currently tells us is the ideal look for boys and girls.

## TEACHER ACTIONS



- > Explain that before the students start challenging appearance pressures, they need to establish what society currently tells us is the ideal appearance for boys and girls.
- Can you give me one or two examples of what society tells us are the appearance ideals for boys? And for girls?
- > Arrange students into small, single-sex groups.

- > Instruct students to complete **Activity sheet 1, Task 1.1** (for girls or for boys).
- **Create as long a list as possible** of the physical features that make up today's appearance ideals.
- > Invite different groups to share their ideas with the class, collating their ideas on a whiteboard.

- > Highlight the inherent contradictions in the list of features – such as small feet and long legs, or no body fat and large breasts. This will help students recognise the futility of trying to match appearance ideals.

## DESIRED RESPONSES



Ask girls to suggest appearance ideals for girls, and boys to suggest appearance ideals for boys.

Research has shown that students feel most comfortable completing this activity in single-sex groups, and when working with friends.

Push students to be specific in their responses.

Whilst it can help for students to complete their own sheet so they have a record of this activity, they may feel more comfortable pooling their ideas on one group sheet.

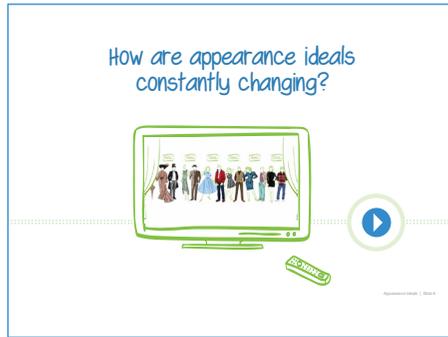
You may need to acknowledge that though different groups of students might uphold different appearance ideals, they all are narrow ideas and encourage us to work towards an unrealistic goal.

Example appearance ideals include:

Girls – long slim legs; slim/skinny; clear, flawless skin; toned; big eyes; flat stomach; straight white teeth.

Boys – muscular; tall; slim waist; lean, v-shaped torso; low body fat; broad chest; flat stomach; six pack; straight, white teeth.

## PRESENTATION



Students watch an animation that shows different appearance ideals for men and women across time.

## TEACHER ACTIONS



> Explain that the features we have just listed are what we feel are society's current appearance ideals, but these ideals are constantly changing.

> **Play the animation.**

- What do you think all these images show?
- > Lead your students in a quick game of spot the difference.
- Thinking about all of the images, what differences do you notice between them?
- How are they different to today's appearance ideals that you identified earlier?
- > Reinforce that all these images represent appearance ideals: (what was considered beautiful, glamorous and attractive) at different times in the past.
- If all these images represent appearance ideals, why do you think they don't all look the same?
- > Facilitate a short class discussion.
- What do you think future appearance ideals might be – is it a look you would want?

## DESIRED RESPONSES



> Contrasts between different images, e.g. trim waists versus curvy body, formal clothes versus casual shirts and tattoos.

> Appearance ideals are really different and are always changing across time, countries and cultures. They never stay the same!

> They show us people at different times throughout history.

Push students to make specific comments on how these images differ, especially with regard to changes to their physical appearance (including clothes).

Direct students to particular parts of the images to draw attention to the differences.

PRESENTATION



Students understand that appearance ideals represent narrow, changing ideas about how people should look that are based on opinions, not facts. Matching these appearance ideals is actually impossible for most people so trying to match them is unrealistic, pointless and possibly harmful.



Students understand that pressures to look beautiful and attractive are all around us and come from a range of sources, including society, media, family, friends and peers.

TEACHER ACTIONS



- > *Given what we've already discussed about appearance ideals:*
  - How realistic is it for someone to match appearance ideals?
  - Thinking about how naturally different we all are, how easy is it for **all** of us to match appearance ideals?

- > *Explain that, now we've identified that it isn't realistic for people to match appearance ideals, students need to consider where they come from so we can challenge them.*
- > *Class-wide discussion, calling for volunteers to answer.*

- Where do you think these pressures to look beautiful or attractive come from?
- Why do you think it is important to know where these ideals come from?

DESIRED RESPONSES



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

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

Answers could include: advertisements, magazines, fashion industry, websites, celebrity culture, diet industry, parents or family, friends, other young people, bullies, social media, our own thoughts.

By knowing where these ideals come from, we can begin to change how we react to these ideals when we see them.

Appearance pressures:

Pressures we feel to look like an appearance ideal and to be beautiful, glamorous and attractive.

**Be careful not to create a blaming atmosphere. Messages about appearance ideals are part of our social environment and are so common that those around us may not even be aware of them.**

# Appearance pressures

20 minutes



By the end of this section, students will recognise the pressures caused by trying to match appearance ideals, and the impact this has on their everyday lives.

## PRESENTATION



Students will give examples of the time, money and emotional energy it can take trying to match appearance ideals.

## TEACHER ACTIONS



- > Explain that now students understand what appearance ideals are, and where pressures come from, they are going to explore some of the pressures they can create on our daily lives.
  - > Ask the students to 'think, pair, share' for the questions below. Pose the questions below, allow the students to first think by themselves for a moment, before discussing quickly with their partner and then feeding back to the class.
- How much **time** would it take to try and match appearance ideals?
  - How much **money** would it cost?
  - How would constantly trying to achieve changing appearance ideals make you **feel**?
- > Take one or two responses.

## DESIRED RESPONSES



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

Ideas could include being late for school because you are taking too much time on your hair, running out of money because you have spent it all on beauty products, not feeling good enough because you can't match changing and narrowly-defined appearance ideals.

You may need to make it clear that it's okay to take care of your appearance! What students are exploring here is when they might get too caught up in trying to achieve a look that is impossible for most, and use up too much time, money in the process.

## PRESENTATION



Students generate a full list of pressures associated with trying to match appearance ideals in terms of time, money and emotional energy.

## TEACHER ACTIONS



> Explain that students are going to have a competition to explore the pressures that trying to match appearance ideals can cause in more detail. Divide the class in half, and within each half arrange students into small groups focusing on time, money or emotions and feelings.

> Instruct students to complete **Activity sheet 1, Task 1.2.**

- What can trying to match appearance ideals cost you?

> Invite both halves of the classroom to share their ideas for time, money and emotions and feelings in turn. Which group generated the most ideas?

> Make a list of students' ideas.

## DESIRED RESPONSES



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

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

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

Students may provide examples of people who have had cosmetic surgery. Take care not to criticise anyone the students might personally know, but help students see that surgery is a serious step, and can't guarantee that a person will always feel confident with their looks. Students might use this task to argue that some people can match appearance ideals with little time, money or emotional energy. Remind students that these people might still not feel satisfied with their appearance, and will not always feel that they look their best – and just because people might easily meet appearance ideals, it doesn't guarantee that their lifestyle is any more ideal.

Examples of negative consequences include:

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

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

**Emotions and feelings** – frustration, anger, sadness, jealousy, anxiety, shame, embarrassment, dread, dissatisfaction, unhappiness.

## PRESENTATION



Students understand that people put pressure on themselves to meet appearance ideals because they feel it might help them achieve an ideal lifestyle. However, achieving what society considers is an ideal appearance does not automatically make your life ideal, nor does not meeting the ideals mean you won't be happy.

## TEACHER ACTIONS



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

> Facilitate a short class discussion.

- What do you think people feel they will achieve by meeting appearance ideals?
  - What else do they think might happen or change in their life?
  - Is it true that, if someone meets appearance ideals, they are **automatically** happy, confident or successful?
- > *Initiate a class vote.*
- **Raise your hand** if you feel the opposite holds true: are people who don't have appearance ideals automatically or always unhappy, lacking in confidence or unsuccessful?
  - How could you spend your time, money and energy in a better way?

> *Initiate a class vote.*

- **Stand up** if you think it is worth trying to challenge or resist these appearance pressures, given all of the sacrifices? **Why?**

## DESIRED RESPONSES



> They may feel that they would get the ideal boyfriend or girlfriend, greater popularity or positive attention or they may believe that they will feel more accepted or loved.

It is worth trying to challenge or resist these pressures because it is not realistic to meet appearance ideals, and we sacrifice time, money and energy into trying to achieve something that is not possible. It would be better to put these resources into more worthwhile activities that we enjoy.

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

Voting in this way allows students to demonstrate their personal commitment to engaging with the workshop and building their body confidence.

Having students put this in their own words helps to reinforce the learning outcomes and it encourages other students to take the messages on board.

PRESENTATION



Students will generate other positive qualities and activities that shape their self-worth and help them to celebrate their individuality.

TEACHER ACTIONS



> Explain that now students have recognised that trying to attain appearance ideals can cause lots of problems and be harmful for our self-esteem, they are going to consider ways they can feel better about themselves.

> Ask several students for ideas.

- What do you enjoy doing?

> Instruct students to complete **Activity sheet 2** independently.

- Think about the qualities and interests that make you unique.

> Invite one or two people to share their ideas, if they are comfortable.

DESIRED RESPONSES



If students still select appearance-based qualities, highlight that they are of minor importance when compared to all of the other qualities identified – and that there are elements of their person that matter more than appearance.

If students choose to reduce the time, money or effort they spend on trying to meet appearance ideals, they will have more time, money and energy for other activities that can help them develop their confidence and potential further.

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PRESENTATION



Students will use what they have learned today to make a commitment to personally challenge appearance ideals.

TEACHER ACTIONS



- What will you do to personally challenge appearance ideals from now on?
- > Invite one or two students to share their ideas with the class.

DESIRED RESPONSES



For example, students could write a short statement celebrating their own personal qualities, or practise staying alert when they or their friends compare their appearance to others.

Help students to choose a small and specific action, which will make it easier for them to keep to their commitment.

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

Remind students that the workshops they are undertaking are all about learning to challenge or resist the pressures we face to match appearance ideals, and how we can focus on other qualities that help us all make the most of life.

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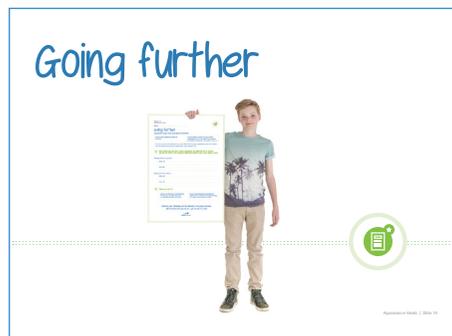
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- > Thank students for their participation in today's workshop, and draw the workshop to a close.



- > Encourage your students to explore the ideas raised in today's workshops by completing the **'Going further' sheet** before the next workshop.
- > Ready for next workshop, find three examples of where the media promotes appearance ideals.



