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# Body Image in Physical Education for Middle School

By Molly, Courtney, and Judy

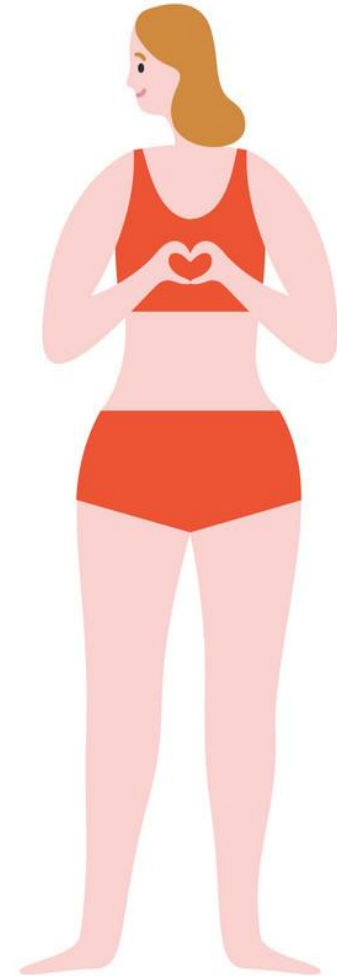
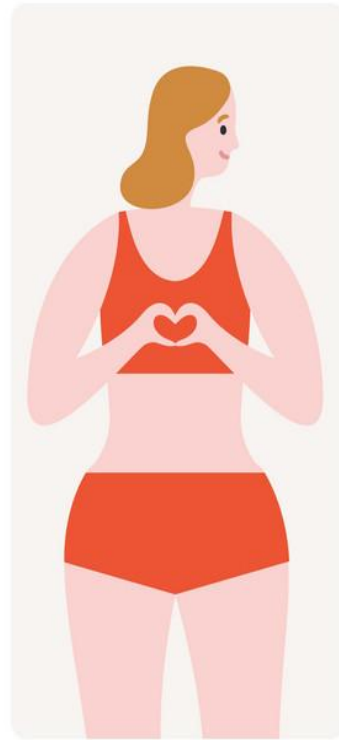
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## What is Body Image?

Body image is the picture in your head of how you view your physical appearance, how you want to look it, and how you feel in your own body.

Body Image and self-esteem interconnect with each other tremendously. “It is hard to feel good about yourself if you do not like your body”

Body Image plays a role on your whole body; physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional.

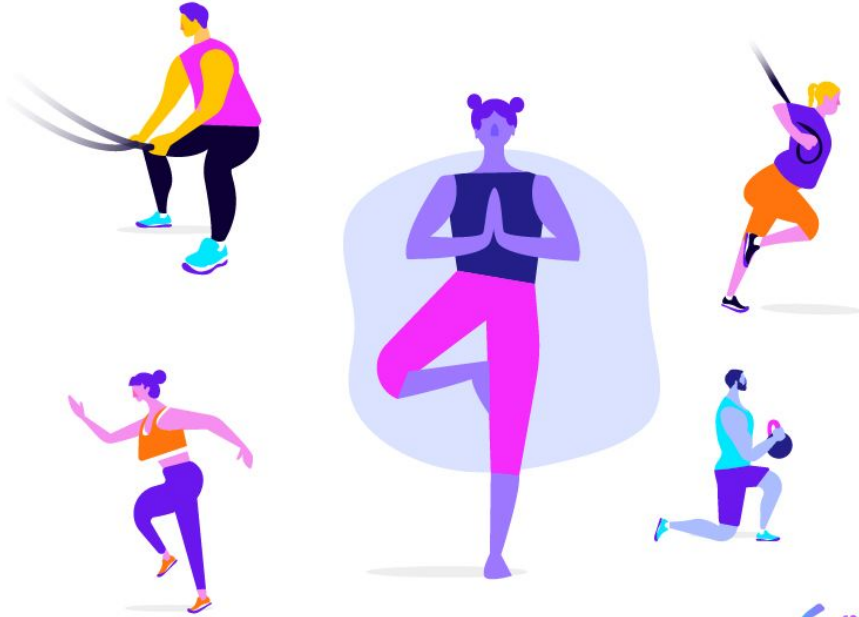




## Why is it important to teach and talk about body image in middle school PHE?

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- Many bodies are changing and are going through puberty
  - Social Media (stereotype looks)
  - Respecting everyone around you/yourself and acknowledging everyone is different but also contains similarities
  - How to maintain a healthy lifestyle

# How Physical Health Education affects Body Image



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FITNESS

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- Causes low Self Esteem
  - Puts insecurities, and anxiety on display
  - Competition, evaluation, and degradation
  - Negative PE experiences = less likely to participate in physical activity

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# Social Media and Body Image

Social media has become a huge part of modern society. It has become so integral in our everyday lives that it has a major influence over us.

Most students today have never experienced life without social media. They have grown up with infinite content at the tip of their fingers before they could even type.

Social media portrays an unrealistic ideal body standard, which enhances the risk of developing body image issues.





## Negative Effects of Social Media

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- Constant comparison to others in their picture perfect form
  - Place self-worth on amount of likes and followers
  - Establishes unrealistic body standards, thin girls and muscular boys, which pressures adolescents to try and change their bodies and increases body shame (often leading to unhealthy behaviours)
  - Increases self-objectification behaviours, in which adolescents focus on their bodies based on what others think



# HEALTHY

# Lifestyle




## What areas of PHE class should be modified?

- Emphasis on body appearance, rather the importance of a healthy body
- Competitive traditional team sports
- Talking about health in connection to body image
- Peer evaluation
- “Beep Test”, “Yo-yo test”, BMI scale

# How to teach about Body Image in PHE

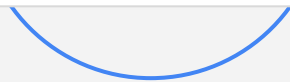


Differences are  
OKAY




Mixed messages from  
social media

How to live a healthy lifestyle  
with nutrition exercise



Body positivity and  
self-esteem





# Annotated Bibliography

Brown, D. (2014). Negative Experiences in Physical Education Class and Avoidance of Exercise. *FHSU Scholars Repository*.  
<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=theses>

This article correlates body image and self-esteem and shares how primary education may be causing low self-esteem by focusing on appearance rather than a healthy lifestyle. It exposes that when students have a negative relationship with gym class, they are more likely to not participate in fitness later in life. It highlights the background of students' mental health that teachers may be unaware of and exposes the areas of education that are counterproductive to increasing students' mental and physical health. It outlines some encouraging ways gym classes should be modified to increase self-esteem and confidence, in order to increase a positive relationship with fitness. It shares the importance of educating students' strength, endurance, and fun, in physical activity to encourage motivation and daily activity.

Cristante, D. (2021) Personal Conversation.

In this personal interview I spoke with a grade 9/10 physical education teacher at Oak Bay High School who explained how he teaches body image to his 'male' PE class. He states that this is not an easy thing to do because of the stereotype image that guys are supposed to look like. Therefore when discussing this topic he talks about how social media wants you to think that there is a perfect body out there and how that can really cause mental health issues. He really tries emphasize the fact to look after yourself and to not believe everything that social media is showing you. Lastly, he also stated that it is part of his job to go over on how to live a healthy lifestyle through nutrition and exercise.

Cristante, K. (2021) Personal Conversation.

In this personal interview I spoke with a grade 5 teacher at Rogers Elementary who walked me through how she teaches body image in her classroom. Her main point throughout the interview was that it is so important for students to acknowledge that everyone is different and everyone's differences make us who we are as a person. She also taught me this fun little exercise to do with students that is for any grade level for them to understand how there is no perfect body and everyone is unique in their own beautiful way.

Hutchinson, N., & Calland, C. (2019). *Body Image in the Primary School: A Self-Esteem Approach to Building Body Confidence* (2nd ed.). *Routledge*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.4324/9780429198694>

This journal article talks about the ongoing problem of children's body dysmorphia and poor mental health that is a side effect in primary education. It shares what percentage of students are facing body image issues, and what problems arise from low self-esteem and anxiety. The article highlights how a student's negative body image may begin in their developing years and explains how teachers may be causing it without intention. Social media is a highly problematic source in causing body image anxiety. Overall, it outlines the importance of teachers not exposing students because it is counterproductive in creating a healthy lifestyle and increases a negative association with fitness and well-being.

Monks, H., Costello, L., Dare, J., & Reid Boyd, E. (2020). "We're continually comparing ourselves to something": Navigating body image, media, and social media ideals at the nexus of appearance, health, and wellness. *Sex Roles, 84*(3-4), 221-237. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01162-w>

This study explains how women think about the way social media and the media present appearance, health, and wellness. It highlights the association of social media to thin-idealisation, which ultimately leads to body displeasure in women. Media and social media present extremely rigid appearance standards for women. Body dissatisfaction is higher when women put more worth into how people react to their posts, what people comment related to their appearance, and how much time they spend on altering their images. Even the online activity aimed to inspire fitness causes more pressure to achieve an ultra thin body and negatively impacts body image. The women interviewed recognized and were critical of the unrealistic body expectations and the harmful comparisons that they could potentially result in. They also expressed the pressure that is created by the socially created health standard and the measures they take on social media to avoid interaction with false health posts.

Salomon, I., & Brown, C. S. (2019). The selfie generation: Examining the relationship between social media use and early adolescent body image. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 39*(4), 539-560. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431618770809>

This study explores the relationship of time spent using social media and body shame. Researchers measured this relationship with the use of a survey in a sample group made up of boys and girls in grade 7. They hypothesized that the greater daily time spent on social media and the more self-objectifying behaviours the students engaged in would result in more body surveillance and body shame. They found that while the consequences of social media were far higher in girls than boys, this was due more to the specific behaviours the students engaged in while using social media rather than the time spent on it. They highlighted the important developmental period that adolescents are in and the major impact social media has while they are developing their self-worth.

TEDx Talks. (2019, December 9). *Our Body Image and Social Media: Live Life Unfiltered* | Keisha & Teagan Simpson Simpson | TEDxOttawa [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWc5rQ\\_YvYw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWc5rQ_YvYw)

This TEDx Talk highlights the impact social media has on mental health. Through recounting their personal experiences and the experiences of their friends the speakers, Keisha and Teagan, draw attention to the constant comparisons social media causes us to make. They talk about how we compare our lives, bodies, and relationships to what we see on Instagram even though we know what we are seeing is highly filtered and only portrays the best of others. They also mention how social media gets us to focus on creating the most perfect version of ourselves and then measuring our self-worth on how many likes we can get. The focus and worth we put into social media can lead to major issues like body dysmorphia, bulimia, anxiety, and more.