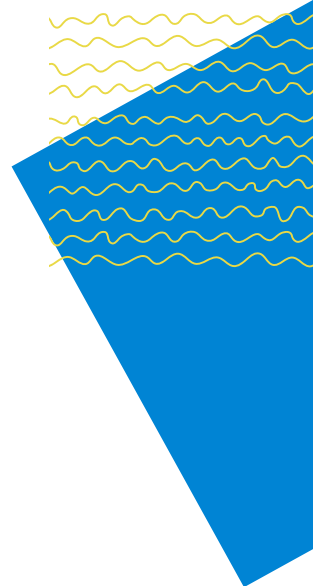




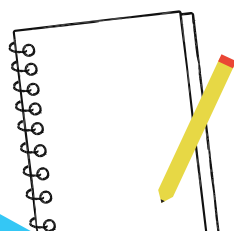
# true to me

Youth Group Activities  
for Body Confidence

*Dove*  
self-esteem  
project



## Workshop Guide for Leaders



FIVE-SESSION GUIDE





# True to Me Leader Guide

## Written by

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## With expert input from

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and Dr. Eric Stice

## With thanks to

The members of...

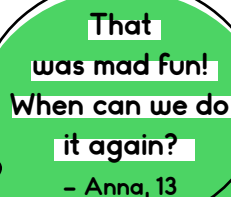
...Oxfordshire Youth, UK

...Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket, USA

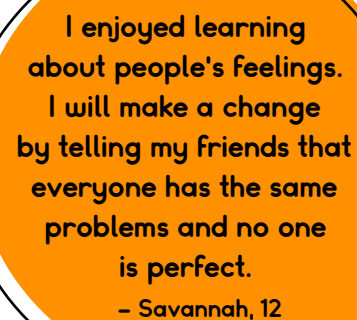
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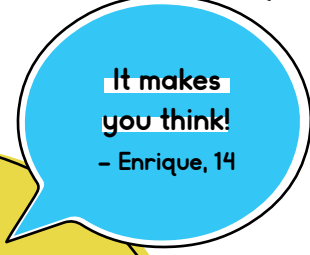
And the experts advising the Dove Self-Esteem Project  
for helping develop this resource.



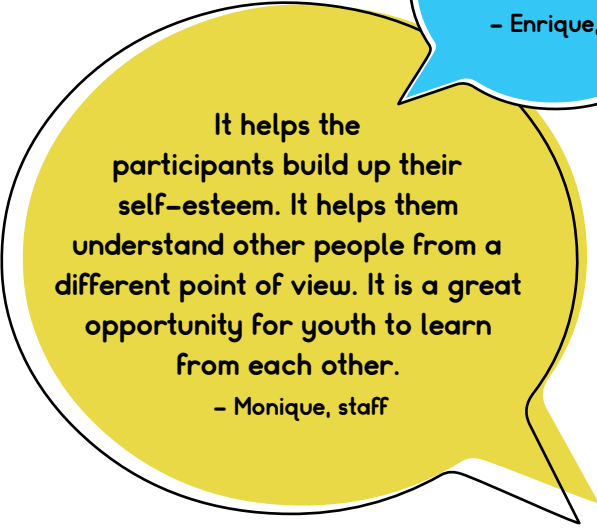
That  
was mad fun!  
When can we do  
it again?  
– Anna, 13



I enjoyed learning  
about people's feelings.  
I will make a change  
by telling my friends that  
everyone has the same  
problems and no one  
is perfect.  
– Savannah, 12



It makes  
you think!  
– Enrique, 14



It helps the  
participants build up their  
self-esteem. It helps them  
understand other people from a  
different point of view. It is a great  
opportunity for youth to learn  
from each other.  
– Monique, staff

# Contents

Welcome to the Dove Self-Esteem Project's True to Me Leader Guide. It will help you effectively lead the program so that you and your group will get the most out of it and enjoy the activities. Please share this guide with any adults who will be helping you deliver True to Me.

Introduction .....	4
How True to Me works .....	6
True to Me at a glance .....	8
Tips for leading True to Me .....	12
Extras .....	16



# Introduction

All around the world, girls and young women are struggling with low self-esteem and body confidence because they feel pressure to be beautiful. They lack body confidence because they are trying to live up to the narrow and unrealistic appearance ideals they see in popular culture and hear their friends and family talk about.

Global research shows that low body confidence holds young people back from reaching their full potential, with more than 80 percent of girls avoiding activities they love because they don't feel good about the way they look.<sup>1</sup> This includes getting involved in classroom debates, trying out for a sports club and, in some cases, even just showing up to school.

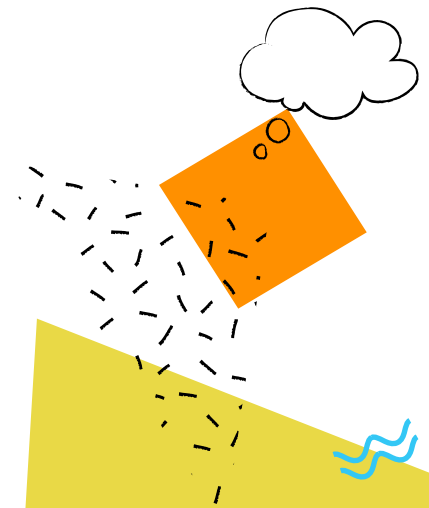
The Dove Self-Esteem Project's True to Me program is expertly designed to help you support your group

in becoming more body confident so that they can overcome those pressures and get the most out of life.

True to Me is based on world-leading research that shows that 6 out of every 10 girls who take part in this type of program have better body confidence at least three years later.<sup>2</sup> Feedback from thousands of girls around the world has also shown that they are excited to talk and learn about body confidence. We hope you have fun and make an impact facilitating True to Me with your group.

## Adaptation for use with boys

True to Me is a fun program that works best for girls, but can make a difference for mixed-gender groups as well. See page 11 for tips on how to make True to Me work for your group.



<sup>1</sup> The Dove Global Beauty and Confidence Report, 2016

<sup>2</sup> Stice, Marti, Spoor, Presnell and Shaw, 2008





## Why body confidence?

When people have body confidence, they are satisfied with how their bodies look and what they can do. They are so busy with other activities that make them happy, like being with friends or participating in sports, that they generally don't worry about how their bodies look. Body confidence is also linked to high self-esteem. Girls who are body confident have better relationships with their friends and family, are more comfortable in different environments like school or work, and are more willing to try new things.

Girls with low body confidence tend to worry a lot about what they look like. They spend a great deal of time, energy and money on their appearance.

Low body confidence can lead to girls shying away from friendships and relationships, holding themselves back from speaking in front of people and quitting things they love doing, such as swimming, dancing or even wearing their favorite clothes. It can discourage them from taking part in essential life activities like school, a part-time job or even a doctor's appointment. It stops them from standing up for themselves.

Low body confidence stops girls from becoming productive members of their communities and gets in the way of pursuing their dreams.



## A global issue

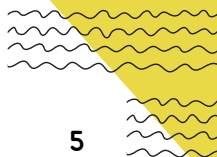
Low body confidence and appearance-related anxiety are global issues. Despite an amazing array of looks and cultures around the world, many girls feel uncertain about their bodies and lack body confidence. At the same time, technology such as social media and photo effects such as airbrushing promote ever more impossible appearance ideals.

True to Me empowers girls to recognize and challenge these global beauty pressures and cultivate their body confidence. The program helps girls gain control of their lives and take advantage of the opportunities available to them. By running True to Me with your group, you are making a real difference in girls' lives.

## About the Dove Self-Esteem Project

Dove is a leading personal-care brand with a long-standing commitment to improving the body confidence and self-esteem of women and girls. We believe beauty should be a source of confidence, not anxiety, for everyone. Which is why we launched the Dove Self-Esteem Project in 2004 – to make real change in the way girls perceive and embrace beauty. We want them to be free of appearance-related anxiety and grow up to become body-confident women. The project has carried out extensive research into self-esteem, and we've already reached millions of young people with our self-esteem programs and content. We are now the largest provider of body confidence education in the world.

The Dove brand always uses real women in its advertising and doesn't alter their shape or natural beauty in postproduction. We believe that beauty should be for everyone, because looking and feeling our best makes us all happier.



# How True to Me works



## **The Challenge:** The appearance ideal

Every day, girls are sent the message that if they want to be beautiful and successful, they need to look a certain way – the “ideal” way. An ideal is something that’s considered perfect, but it normally exists only in the imagination. And although the specific way society defines an “appearance ideal” varies around the world (e.g., in some countries, the ideal for girls is tanned, thin, toned and busty; in others, it is petite with fair skin), globally girls and women, as well as boys and men, feel strong pressure from media, friends and family to try to achieve it. Our global research has shown that girls are more likely to experience low body confidence if they buy into the appearance ideal.

## **The Solution:** Speaking out!



True to Me uses fun participatory activities to boost body confidence by applying a well-known psychological principle called cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is something that happens in our brains when we act in a way that doesn’t match our beliefs. When we say and do the opposite of what we believe to be true about ourselves, our brain changes our attitudes to match our actions.

Research has found that by simply speaking out for a healthier perspective in front of others, we persuade ourselves – as well as others – to adopt a healthier perspective. So say a girl believes in an appearance ideal (even subconsciously because of pressure from the media and through family and peer groups) but argues against it by speaking out to others about why it’s a bad idea – her own beliefs about the ideal will change to match what she is advocating.

*Continued on the next page*



True to Me empowers girls to recognize the appearance ideal and take a stand against it, to create their own solutions that will help them and their friends challenge and resist these ideals. Feeling free of the pressure to look like the appearance ideal lets girls appreciate the bodies they have and value them for what they can do. This can inspire girls to take better care of themselves and make choices to eat well and exercise – not to fit in, but because doing so makes them feel good.

The more instances in which girls warn against the appearance ideal by speaking out to others – writing down challenges to those ideals and acting to convince others they're not worth chasing – the more they will reject it and the more their body confidence will grow. And this is a change that lasts. Studies have shown that even just arguing against the ideal alters how young girls' brains respond to media images that promote an unrealistic appearance ideal.<sup>3</sup>

Body confidence isn't an isolated issue. Choosing to deliver True to Me to your group can make a big difference to girls' personal development as a whole. Instead of just learning about the issue, they will experience a change in their perspective and beliefs that will have a hugely positive impact on their lives.

True to Me is based on a world-leading body-acceptance program. Research shows that three years after participating in activities such as the ones in True to Me...

**60% of girls**

have significantly improved their body confidence.

**78% of girls**

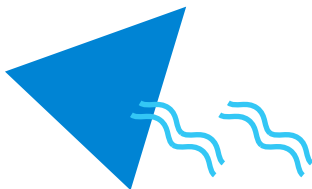
feel more confident and capable at school.

**71% of girls**

have better relationships with their peers.

**53% of girls**

get along better with their families.<sup>4</sup>



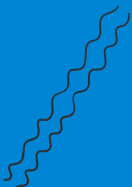
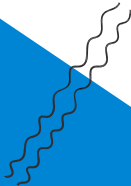
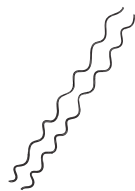
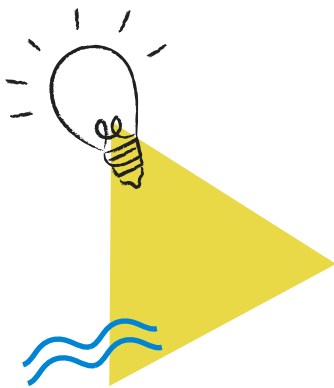
<sup>3</sup>Stice, Becker and Yokum, 2013

<sup>4</sup>Stice, Marti, Spoor, Presnell and Shaw, 2008



# True to Me at a glance

True to Me is a unique program that doesn't just educate girls about body confidence; it actually has a real and lasting impact on how they feel about themselves. It's also fun! Using a participatory approach, True to Me is empowering for girls because it lets them take the lead in the activities and create their own challenges to what society tells them is attractive and valuable.





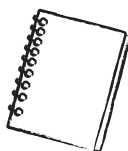
## Who is it for?

True to Me works best with girls ages 11 to 17. Girls tend to feel more comfortable taking part in girls-only groups, but if your group covers a different age range and/or includes boys, see page 11 for some tips on how to adapt the program. It's important to know that boys also have body confidence concerns that this program can help them overcome.

## How long does it take?

True to Me is made up of five sessions of 50 minutes each, plus up to three Personal Challenges for girls to complete between sessions.

Fifty minutes is the minimum time needed to deliver each session; try to stay on track with activities because running out of time might mean missing an essential learning step. If you have more time for each session, spend longer on the discussions and give girls more chances to reflect and speak out against the appearance ideal.



## What do we need?

Not much! Pens and paper are needed in most sessions; if available, access to a computer and a wider range of creative materials are useful at certain points, but they are not essential. Some activities offer handouts that can be printed out in advance, but if printing facilities aren't available, the content is simple enough to be copied out onto a blackboard. If you want to adapt the activities to incorporate more technology and creative approaches, please do so.



## How do we set up the group?

True to Me works best when girls work through the activities in small groups. A ratio of one leader to eight girls is best for the whole program, and there are some activities where girls will work in even smaller groups. The more each girl gets to speak out against the appearance ideal, the more her body confidence will improve.

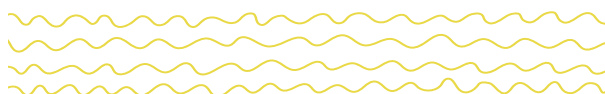


## How do we prepare?

Take about two hours to read through this Leader Guide and the full program, and involve all the leaders you'll be working with so they understand how True to Me works. There are some links to further research on page 17, if you want to extend your knowledge. Each activity contains all the information you need to run it, including support prompts that give an example of what you could say to trigger the key learning outcomes (see page 10).

Look out for the support prompts! Sentences underlined in blue are there as examples of what to say at important stages of the activities. Think of them as verbal signposts and feel free to put them into your own words.

Why not organize a meeting with leaders to talk through the program in advance, and then allot more time between sessions to discuss how the program is going?





## What outcomes should we look for?

True to Me works by taking girls through five experiences:

- 1 Girls **define the appearance ideal** for themselves and connect it to their own experiences. They recognize that it's narrowly drawn, often contradictory and impossible to achieve naturally.
- 2 Girls **explore the costs of chasing the appearance ideal** and the negative impact it has on individuals and society as a whole. They recognize that it's not worth chasing the appearance ideal.
- 3 Girls **challenge the appearance ideal** by coming up with verbal and written arguments against chasing it and sharing these with their friends. They recognize how changing what they say and do can improve their body confidence.
- 4 Girls **celebrate positive characteristics about themselves**, such as their bodies and what they can do; their personalities, attitudes and character strengths; as well as features they like about their appearance. They recognize the importance of reflecting on, and sharing, what they appreciate about themselves.
- 5 Girls **reflect on how best to respond to future pressures** they might face to meet the appearance ideal. They recognize that they have the tools and ideas they need to face these situations positively and with body confidence.

## Can we adapt the activities?

The activities in this guide have been tested and refined with thousands of girls over the past 20 years. We recommend following the program as it's written wherever possible. You know your group best and have the expertise to recognize what will work for them. If you do make any adaptations, here are a few golden rules:

- > Stay true to the context of the activity, so the learning outcome is the same. Use the Why This Matters box to guide you.
- > It's important that discussion does not degenerate into talk about the benefits of chasing the appearance ideal, or which models or actresses are the most beautiful. Doing so would diminish the impact of the program.
- > Don't skip opportunities to discuss and reflect. For girls to build their body confidence, they need to verbally challenge the appearance ideal as much as possible.
- > Take a look at the adapted ideas we've included in the Do It Differently section.
- > Reflect on your group's level of maturity and how your experience may suggest they will respond to the activities.
- > Walk girls through the same activity process to develop ideas, recognize an ideal and speak out against it. Read each activity carefully, paying close attention to the support prompts to understand the process of the activity before you make any attempt to adapt it.
- > Consider the different learning needs in your group and offer girls extra support if they need it to participate fully.



## What about other ages?

Girls as young as 6 and 7 are losing body confidence because of the appearance ideal, and it's not an issue that vanishes when they become adults, either. However, body confidence issues can vary significantly among groups of different ages. If you're working with a wider age range, consider dividing the group with a leader focused on each age group. You can also adapt the activities accordingly, such as including more storytelling approaches for younger girls (try using images of princesses to help them identify the appearance ideal, for example). Challenge older girls to go deeper into discussions about the causes, costs and solutions to the appearance ideal, and to be more ambitious in their plans to share what they've learned with their families and communities.

## What about boys?

Because girls taking part in the program define the appearance ideal for themselves and then use that definitions in all the activities that follow, True to Me can be adapted to any cultural or social context. The same is true for boys. To make True to Me effective, young people need to define the appearance ideal that reflects the gender with which they identify. You will need at least one leader for each gender-identity group and one who will support young people who may identify as gender fluid to participate in a way that feels relevant to them.

If you're using True to Me with a mixed-gender group, consider these points:

- Research has shown that this program works well for single-gender groups. Also, young people often say they are more comfortable talking about body confidence in groups with their own gender but find it interesting to understand other genders' points of view about this topic. You will still get good results in a mixed-gender group, but it will likely be less optimal than if done in a single-gender group.
- Create a single appearance ideal in breakout sessions divided by gender, and make sure everyone is clear that this is the appearance ideal they will challenge throughout True to Me.
- Run the more-sensitive individual activities in single-gender groups, such as feedback to the "What I Know Now" and "Mirror Time" Personal Challenges.
- Consider how the dynamic of your own group will affect the program, factoring in the maturity of your group and how well formed they are as a team.
- Use the group guidelines to keep a safe space and address any challenging behaviors as they arise.
- Use gender-specific handouts.
- You could also consider using a different Dove Self-Esteem Project program, called Confident Me, with a mixed group. This is our school program, and it has been developed for mixed groups of girls and boys.
- The Confident Me program is available to download for free at [dove.com/selfesteem](https://dove.com/selfesteem).



# Tips for leading True to Me



## Who's the lead?

True to Me group leaders must find a balance between taking the lead and putting girls in the lead. Group leaders need to juggle two different roles – the program leader, who shapes the activities, and the facilitator, who steps back wherever possible – so girls can fully experience the learning steps needed to improve their body confidence.

## Put girls in the lead when...

- Identifying the appearance ideal and its costs.  
By defining the ideal for themselves, girls will feel that the True to Me program makes sense and is relevant to their lives, no matter the cultural and social context group leaders work in.
- They speak out! Each activity uses different mechanisms, but in all cases, the moments when girls generate their own ideas, definitions and challenges are the most important part of the activities.  
  
Give girls as much space as possible to speak out against the appearance ideal in a way that will counteract their subconscious beliefs in them.
- Sharing real experiences around the appearance ideal. Try not to give examples of your personal experience with the appearance ideal; as a role model, you may unintentionally reinforce the ideal.
- Taking activities further. When girls spot opportunities to challenge the appearance ideal in their homes or communities, try to support them to take the lead in making this happen. They will practice valuable leadership skills and build a stronger community as a result.





## Take the lead when...

- Planning and setting up the sessions. Make sure you and other group leaders or helpers are clear on how to execute activities and the experience you want girls to have during each one.
- Managing how appearance ideal is talked about. One of the main ways True to Me works is when girls verbally challenge the appearance ideal. Leaders should avoid weakening the program's impact by letting girls verbally agree with or endorse the appearance ideal. If certain activities need a statement or scenario to be read aloud that supports an appearance ideal, it's important that the leader does this and not the girls.
- Discussions go off track. At times, girls may start discussing the appearance ideal in a way that may lead them to positively reinforce it. Watch out for moments when girls may affirm the ideal, and use questions and the True to Me activities to get them to focus back on the costs of the appearance ideal and how to challenge it.

## Create a safe space

Although girls generally find True to Me a fun and empowering experience, they may encounter some upsetting moments because the program touches on issues that are very personal. There is also a chance that group members may not always treat one another's views with respect.

- Before starting session 1, take time to develop your group guidelines (see Five Sessions, page 4). Have these on display and refer to them throughout the program.
- Make sure girls are aware of any support systems your group has in place, in case they need extra help, and who they can talk to about this.
- Make sure leaders understand your organization's rules for well-being, such as child protection policies and how to deal with disclosures.





## What about your own body confidence?

We are all exposed to the appearance ideal every day, so it's not surprising that a lot of women struggle with anxiety about their appearance. Because this program is focused on tackling the issue in girls, leaders need to put aside their own concerns when delivering the program. It's important that girls can see you as a positive role model for the ideas they are exploring in True to Me.

Try not to share your own opinions or examples from your own life. Girls need space to discover True to Me from their own perspective. Pay attention to the language you use when facilitating the program to avoid any statements that could reinforce the appearance ideal. Reading through the sessions in advance will help you understand what this could look like. You can still support your group without sharing personal examples. Use questions and supportive responses such as "It can be hard to feel that way"; "I imagine that can be difficult" or "I bet you're not the only one who's had that experience."

If you know other youth leaders, why not try some True to Me activities with them before starting the program with your youth group? You could also meet with your team after the program ends to discuss your experiences and support one another.





## Dealing with difficult moments

Most of the time, the True to Me program runs smoothly and girls have little trouble engaging with the concepts. However, there are moments when some girls might struggle with critically thinking about body image and appearance pressures and ideals. This is not surprising, given our society's demand that girls

focus on their appearance. If someone is defending the appearance ideal, try to minimize any discussion that reinforces that ideal. This program is about creating a safe space in which girls can challenge the ideal. Here are some of the challenges that may come up, along with examples of how to respond:

**"I disagree – it's good to look like the appearance ideal because beautiful people have better lives."**

"Is that really true? Do celebrities have perfect lives? Can you think of examples from the news when people who come close to the appearance ideal struggle with their lives?"

"Try to keep an open mind and let's see how you feel after the next activity. You are free to go back to your old views after the program if you don't think this new perspective is useful."

"What does the rest of the group think? Do you believe coming close to the appearance ideal equals having a better life?"

**"I don't like this. It feels like you're criticizing women and girls who are thin."**

"There's nothing wrong with any one appearance. If people are confident about their natural body type and take care of themselves positively, they can be any shape or size. What we're criticizing is the idea that there's just one ideal way to look and we should all sacrifice our health, well-being, relationships, success and money to achieve it."

"Actually, we want to celebrate the beauty in diversity and recognize that girls are so much more than simply the way they look."

**"Are you saying it's not good to look after our bodies?"**

"No. Promoting body confidence is about accepting and taking good care of your body."

"When you have body confidence, you are more likely to respect and look after your body, including having a balanced relationship with food and engaging in appropriate and pleasurable physical activities."

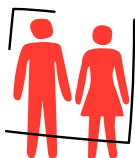
**"I can't find anything I like about my body."**

"We're so used to putting ourselves down it can be really hard to start seeing things differently. What small things can you start with?"

"You could start with thinking about things you like about what's inside you or things your body enables you to do."

"Think about others you care about, like your mom, siblings or friends. What do you like about them? Isn't it true that things you like most about them have nothing to do with the way they look?"

# Glossary



## Appearance Ideal

True to Me talks a lot about the appearance ideal, which can change based on culture and background. This is the narrow definition of a society's belief about what is beautiful or attractive. It is so specific that it's impossible to achieve naturally – even models and celebrities have to be digitally altered to match the ideal. The appearance ideal is spread through media and by people talking positively about it.



## Body Confidence

Someone with body confidence is satisfied with the way his or her body looks and what it can do. Having high body confidence is one factor that can raise self-esteem.



## Cognitive Dissonance

A psychological process that is triggered when people act in a way that doesn't match their beliefs. When they say and do things that contradict their own attitudes, it creates an uncomfortable tension in their brain, so their brain changes their attitudes to match their actions and relieve the discomfort!



## Self-Esteem

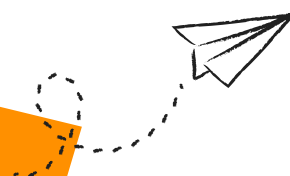
A feeling of self-respect. People with high self-esteem believe in themselves and in their worth as a person. Having high self-esteem helps people reach their full potential; these people are not held back by a lack of belief in themselves or their abilities.



## Support Prompt

A support feature of the activity packs, in which text is shown underlined in blue. It helps leaders deliver key messages of the activities. Leaders should read these, then put them in their own words once they understand the message, to make it relevant to their group.

Learn more about the ideas explored in True to Me and discover other body confidence resources by visiting [dove.com/selfesteem](https://dove.com/selfesteem).



# About this research

The strategies used in this program have been scientifically developed and evaluated over 16 years. Here is a sample of some of this research:

Becker C.B., Smith L.M. and Ciao A.C. (2006).

**“Peer Facilitated Eating Disorder Prevention: A Randomized Effectiveness Trial of Cognitive Dissonance and Media Advocacy,”** *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 53, no. 4, 550–55.

Halliwell E. and Diedrichs P.C. (2014). **“Testing Dissonance Body Image Intervention Among Young Girls,”** *Health Psychology* 33, 201–04.

Rohde P., Auslander, B.A., Shaw H., Raineri K.M., Gau J.M. and Stice E. (2014). **“Dissonance-Based Prevention of Eating Disorder Risk Factors in Middle School Girls: Results From Two Pilot Trials,”** *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 47, 483–94.

Stice E., Becker C.B., Yokum S. (2013). **“Eating Disorder Prevention: Current Evidence-Base and Future Directions,”** *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 46, 478–85.

Stice E., Marti C.N., Spoor S., Presnell K. and Shaw H. (2008). **“Dissonance and Healthy Weight Eating Disorder Prevention Programs: Long-Term Effects From a Randomized Efficacy Trial,”** *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 76, 329–40.

Stice E., Rohde P., Shaw H., and Gau J. (2011). **“An Effectiveness Trial of a Selected Dissonance-Based Eating Disorder Prevention Program for Female High School Students: Long-Term Effects,”** *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 79, 500–08.

Stice E., Shaw H., Becker C.B. and Rohde P. (2008). **“Dissonance-Based Interventions for the Prevention of Eating Disorders: Using Persuasion Principles to Promote Health,”** *Prevention Science* 9, 114–28.

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This Dove Self-Esteem Activity Guide has been adapted, with permission, from an original resource jointly developed by the World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts and the Dove Self-Esteem Project. Further input has come from the DSEP Advisory Board.

This resource would not be possible without the help and energy of a large team, including Andii Verhoeven; Dr. Phillippa Diedrichs; Barbara Kraus; Oxfordshire Youth, UK; Safe in Tees Valley, UK; the Boys & Girls Clubs of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and Greater Washington, USA; Martin Staniforth and all the girls and their youth leaders who helped test the original activities in this resource.

