

# True to Me

## Youth group activities for body confidence

A graphic with the text "Five Session Guide" in a white, rounded font on an orange circular background.

*Dove*  
self-esteem  
project





# Why True to Me?

*True to Me* creates a space for you to explore an issue that really matters; low body confidence and what it means for girls and women, and society as a whole.

*True to Me* will help you feel more confident about your body, enable you to recognise the pressures that can make you anxious about your appearance and give you a chance to practise dealing with these pressures.



When we feel confident in our own skin, it helps us value our individuality – both inside and outside. We can also have more fun, enjoying what our bodies let us do, instead of focusing on what they look like. When we aren't worrying about how we look, we're more confident in our friendships, relationships and life choices. We put ourselves forward rather than holding back, and feel more ready for adventures and challenges. Caring for your body and seeing it as it *really* is – and not comparing it to unrealistic media images – is a big step towards living a life that's *really* true to you.

## Adaption for use with boys

The activities in this resource can be used with girls or boys. We recommend holding the sessions in single gender breakout groups. Therefore, in mixed gender youth clubs, we suggest these activities take place in separate rooms in order to support the single gender breakout groups.

# Getting ready for True to Me

Before starting *True to Me*, take time to prepare your group (and their parents or caregivers if appropriate) for the programme.

## 1) With your team of leaders:

- Spend at least two hours reading through the *True to Me* Leader Guide (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)) and all the sessions, so you have explored all the key messages and understand how *True to Me* works. Work together to agree how you will run the session with your group.
- You could complete one task out of every session as a group of adults to experience *True to Me* for yourselves, this will help you understand how best to deliver the programme to your group.

## 2) With your group:

- Start, especially if your group doesn't know each other very well, with some fun icebreakers and team-building activities. Check that members know each other's name and take time to create a relaxed, inclusive atmosphere before you start.
- Talk through what *True to Me* is about. Use the *True to Me* Leader Guide (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)) to help you; you can also share this information with parents or caregivers.
- Set guidelines before you start, so everyone feels comfortable working together and speaking up during *True to Me* (see page 3).

# Group guidelines

## Why this matters

*True to Me* explores issues that girls may feel strongly about. Although they encounter them in their daily lives, they may not have talked about them in this way before. Setting group guidelines puts girls in the lead to create a supportive space where they can speak out confidently.

## You need

Large piece of paper, marker pens.

## Setting

Whole group discussion.

## What happens

### Support the group to:

- Discuss how they can behave to support their peers to feel comfortable and confident, so they can get the most out of *True to Me*.
- Work together to create a short list of points that everyone agrees to respect.
- Write the guidelines simply and clearly, so they can be checked at a glance.
- Ask for a volunteer to check the guidelines are displayed at each session.

## Look for

Listening, respect, everyone contributing.

10  
mins

## We agree to...

Respect everyone's opinions

Listen and reflect before we talk

Be present – leave phones in pockets

Consider each other's feelings

Speak up if we're uncomfortable



## Tips

- When girls lead this activity, they feel more ownership of the list. Use questions to raise any areas they don't think of and support them to find the words they want to use.
- There's no need to spend too long on this. Once you have the key points covered, move on to the next activity.
- If you already have group guidelines, check if the group is happy to use them for *True to Me* or if they want to make any changes.

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Reflect and  
celebrate50  
mins

## Session one

### Aims

#### Girls define the appearance ideal and explore how...

- Focusing too much on how they look can hold girls back and make them unhappy.
- The appearance ideal is society's current definition of how people should look. It has a lot of very specific characteristics and is impossible to achieve naturally. It also doesn't reflect the amazing diversity of looks we see in everyday life.
- Even if girls do chase the appearance ideal, this won't make them happy, healthy, successful, or mean they have great relationships.
- Chasing the ideal costs a lot of time, effort and money. It doesn't do girls, or society as a whole, any good.

### You will need

- Felt-tip pens and large pieces of paper.
- Handout 1 - What I Know Now from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)) for each girl.

### Session map



Set the scene	5 mins
Verbal sign up	5 mins
Activity: Appearance Ideal Exposed	15 mins
Activity: Watch the Costs	20 mins
Personal Challenge: What I Know Now	5 mins





5  
mins

# Set the scene

## Why this matters

Help girls understand what *True to Me* is all about and what they will be doing. This should help them feel more like a team and able to relax.

## You need

Just to be familiar with *True to Me* and its aims yourself. Use the True to Me Leader Guide (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)) to support you.

## Setting

Whole group briefing.

## What happens

Welcome everyone and explain that for the next 90 minutes, you're going to have fun trying a new programme called *True to Me*.

Start with an icebreaker; go around the group, asking everyone to say their name and then something great about themselves that begins with the first letter of their name, along with a matching action. For example, "I am Ashley and I'm amazing" (with a star jump); "I am Erin and I'm energetic" (mimes running).



## Once everyone has introduced themselves:

→ Explain what True to Me is about:

*We're going to explore some of the reasons we worry about our bodies and appearance, understand where those worries come from and take action to change them.*

→ Body confidence is a topic that girls often feel strongly about, but most girls really enjoy taking part in True to Me. Remind everyone about your group guidelines and how they can support each other.

→ Point out a safe space girls can go to if they need time out, and name a leader who can support them if this happens.

## Look for

Willingness to try new things.

## Tips

- If you don't already have group guidelines there is advice on how to lead a short activity to create these on page 3.
- You might want to talk to parents or caregivers about True to Me in advance too. Use the Leader Guide to help you.
- Use your own icebreaker to start the session if you have a good one, the important thing is to get the energy up and help everyone feel comfortable. We like the one we've suggested because it starts girls thinking about how they think about themselves.
- Reassure participants with concerns but explain that most of their questions will be answered later in the session.
- If serious personal concerns are raised, offer support as your organisation would for other wellbeing issues.

5  
mins

# Verbal sign up

## Why this matters

Our research shows that when girls recognise they are taking part in True to Me voluntarily, and commit to this in front of the group, True to Me has a stronger positive impact on their body confidence.

## You need

Nothing.

## Setting

Whole group in a circle.

## What happens

Welcome everyone and introduce the session:

*We'll get the most out of True to Me if we speak up during activities, support each other and respect our group guidelines. Are you ready to keep an open mind and take part in the activities?*

Invite each girl to tell the group that she is ready to contribute.

## Look for

The group feeling like a team, each girl making a personal commitment.

## Tips

- This happens at the beginning of every session. Keep it quick, but don't forget to do it!





## Activity

15  
mins

## Appearance Ideal Exposed

## Why this matters

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

## You need

- Internet access for each small group or pictures from magazines showing girls and women.
- Large piece of paper and marker pens, per group.

## Setting

- Divide into groups by number of leaders (4-8 girls per leader works well).
- Either create small groups, each with internet access (so all girls can see a screen) or scatter images from magazines around your meeting place.

## What happens

**2 MINS:** Girls either:

- Look up magazine and media images of "the perfect looking girl" online as small groups.
- Each girl finds a magazine image that appeals to them and shows to their group.

**5 MINS:** Settle group so everyone can see the large piece of paper. Write "the Perfect Looking Girl" at the top.

What catches your eye about these pictures? What features and characteristics does society tell us the "perfect girl" should have? Be as detailed as you can!

As girls call out features, write them down under "the Perfect Looking Girl" heading. This list will show how detailed and limiting the appearance ideal is.

- Encourage the group to come up with as many physical features as possible, to create a really long list. Try to fill the page appearance features!
- Prompt the group to make each feature as specific as possible. For example, if a girl says "perfect skin", ask them to describe what "perfect skin" looks like (e.g. no blemishes, no wrinkles, glowing). This shows that "perfect" is just another opinion, not a fact.

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

So, society tells us that the perfect looking girl has....

Cross out "the perfect looking girl" title on the paper, and write "appearance ideal" instead.

Check that everyone understands what the word 'ideal' means.

An ideal is an idea of something that's perfect, but it normally only exists in the imagination. So the appearance ideal is the idea of the perfect way to look, even if it doesn't naturally exist.

appearance ideal  
~~the perfect looking girl~~

continued →

## Reflect

**5 MINS:** Sit down with the group. Facilitate a brief discussion around these questions:

Q: Where does the appearance ideal come from? How do we learn about it?

A: Media, family, friends, fashion industry, diet industry, etc.

Q: How does pressure to match the appearance ideal make you feel?

A: Anxious, depressed, not good enough, shy, low self-esteem, etc.

Q: What do we get told will happen if we look like the ideal? Is it true?

A: Be more popular, happier, more successful, find relationships, etc... But no, it's not true.

Q: Is the appearance ideal the same for girls from different cultures and backgrounds?

A: No, it varies, but still makes us feel the same way. And with the spread of westernised media, it is becoming more similar around the world.

## Look for

High energy, everyone calling out lots of specific ideas. Girls getting outraged and recognising how ridiculous and impossible the appearance ideal really is.

## Tips

- Aim for a really long list with very specific physical points and lots of detail to show how narrow the appearance ideal is.
- If working with older girls, substitute "woman" for girl. If working with younger girls, you can use images of fairy-tale princesses and they can draw their "perfect looking girl" and write the features around her.
- See page 3 for how to deal with any challenges that come up during this activity. Encourage the group to move onto the next activity, as it will probably answer many of the questions that come up.
- If your group is mixed, split boys and girls into separate groups to do this activity (and call the list "The Perfect Looking Boy" for boys!).

## Do it differently

If your group enjoys scenarios and role-play activities, get creative when you set up this activity. For example, challenge the group to create an advert for a "beautiful woman" to appear in a film or TV show. What does she need to look like? Then create your "Perfect Looking Girl" list from these ideas.





# Watch the Costs

## Why this matters

It's not enough to just know that the appearance ideal exists. To help girls build their body confidence we need to encourage them to speak up about the costs of chasing the ideal, and how being free from the ideal can make them happier and healthier.

## You need

Paper and pen to note costs.

## Setting

Large space, outdoors if possible.

## What happens

*When girls try to match the appearance ideal, it has a really negative impact for them and for society. How much does it cost us to chase the appearance ideal?*

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

Play a game of "frozen pairs":

- Half the group are catchers and half are runners.
- The catchers represent the appearance ideal. When a catcher manages to catch a runner, the pair shout "freeze" and everyone stops on the spot.
- To free themselves, the frozen pair comes up with a cost associated with the appearance ideal. Ask:

*Trying to look like the appearance ideal costs people, and society as a whole, a lot. Name one cost, or negative impact, it has for an individual or for society.*

- When the pair calls out a cost, write it down. Both of the frozen pair are now runners. Start the game again, and repeat until all of the catchers have become runners.

### INDIVIDUAL:

low confidence, avoiding sports, not contributing at school, spending too much money on beauty products or diet pills, over-exercising, eating disorders, not enjoying food, not having fun with friends, being unhappy, not putting self forward, avoiding physical challenges and adventures, health problems from surgery...

### SOCIETY:

missed days from work and school, people not achieving potential, health service costs...

continued →

## Reflect

Bring the group together and remind them of the list of costs they created during the game. Ask them...

Q: Given this long list of costs, who benefits from the ideal?

A: Fashion and beauty industries, media industry, etc.

Q: Are we part of the group that benefits?

A: No!

Q: Given all of the costs, is chasing the ideal worth it?

A: No!

The best way to beat the appearance ideal is to speak out against it. Grab a friend and take it in turns to say why you think trying to achieve the appearance ideal is not worth it, given all of the costs.

## Look for

Girls suggesting a wide range of costs that consider physical, emotional and mental impact on individuals and on society. Girls often have a real wake-up moment about now, and can start to get angry about the ideal. Be supportive if this stirs up strong feelings.

## Tips

- If a pair struggles to think of a cost, invite the group to help them.
- If your group is small, repeat the game until you have a long list of costs.

## Do it differently

If your group doesn't enjoy active games like this one, explore the costs in a different way. For example, girls can work in small groups to come up with a list of costs, then choose to:

- Create a two-minute performance using any creative medium (e.g. a song, dance, rap or drama) that communicates as many of the costs as possible. Perform to another group, who have to see how many costs they can spot in the performance.
- Work in pairs to take photographs representing each cost, and share them with the wider group.
- Use the internet to explore news stories and other media that expose the costs of chasing the appearance ideal.

*If your group wants to and everyone feels comfortable doing so, why not record their performance? Remember to get the consent of girls and their parents before sharing any media.*

## Remember

there is no perfect look and no perfect body type. Having a body that enables you to do the things you want to do is important, so we need to appreciate and take care of our bodies. Speaking out against the appearance ideal isn't about criticising anyone's natural body or features or the choices people make about their appearance. It's about challenging the idea in society that there's one perfect way to look, and the pressure this idea puts on people. Also, bear in mind that it's impossible to naturally achieve the ideal; even models and celebrities would need surgery and Photoshop to match it. It's chasing the ideal, and what this does to you, that's the problem.



# What I Know Now

## Why this matters

When girls take time to reflect on the appearance ideal, the learning sinks in and they find it easier to challenge the ideal and to be more body confident.

## You need

Handout 1 - What I Know Now from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)) for each girl.

## Setting

In own time after session.

## What happens

Give each girl a copy of the handout:

*If you had known when you were younger that the appearance ideal is impossible to achieve and comes with a lot of downsides if you try to follow it, would it have made a difference to your life? Imagine you could turn back time: what would you say to yourself two or three years ago to show the costs of chasing the appearance ideal; and the great ways that being true to yourself and feeling free of the appearance ideal can affect your life? How would you convince yourself not to pursue the ideal?*

Girls can simply write a letter to their younger self, or you could encourage them to use a more creative way of expressing themselves – blogs or vlogs, a video, animation, comic strip, podcast, piece of art, images with captions, a song or music.

Whatever they create should:

- Explain what the appearance ideal is.
- Show the costs attached to pursuing it.
- Help to convince their younger self that it's not worth chasing it.

## Personal Challenge

5 mins

Please try to share your experience with a friend or adult you trust.

## Look for

Girls are clear about the task and feel enthusiastic and confident they can complete it.

## Tips

- If group members are going to struggle to complete this at home, can you create a quiet space at your meeting place where they can work on it?

## Do it differently

- If members of your group find writing or creating media like this challenging, support them to express these messages visually or to tell their messages straight to you.

If your group members are younger and find reflecting like this hard, why not suggest they think of a young girl in their life, such as a younger sister, cousin or friend, and write to them instead?

**Wrap up:** Take a minute to close the session. Thank everyone for participating and give girls a chance to share their favourite moment of the session. Check everyone is clear on when and where the next session will take place, and is comfortable with the personal challenge.

# Session two

## Outcome

Girls practise how to spot and challenge the appearance ideal in everyday life.

## You need

Handout 2 - In Her/His Shoes scenario cards and Handout 3 - Mirror Time from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

## Session map



Verbal sign up	5 mins
Feedback: What I Know Now	15 mins
Activity: In Her/His Shoes	25 mins
Personal Challenge: Mirror Time	5 mins





5  
mins

# Verbal sign up

Remember to start the session by giving each girl a chance to pledge her willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

*We'll get the most out of True to Me if we speak up during activities and support each other. Are you ready to keep an open mind, remember our group guidelines and get involved in all the activities?*

Invite each girl to tell the group that she is ready to contribute.

15  
mins

## Feedback

# What I Know Now

## Why this matters

By sharing messages to their younger self, girls practise speaking out against the appearance ideal in front of their peers. This helps to challenge their own belief in the ideal and builds their body confidence.

## You need

Nothing.

## Setting

Whole group sharing.

## What happens

Group members take it in turns to share the message they created to their younger self (e.g. reading their letters or blog posts out loud, showing and talking about a vlog/podcast/art work, etc.).

Use questions to encourage girls to be specific about the costs they are describing.

Congratulate each member for completing the task and sharing the work.

*Did anyone think of new costs attached to chasing the appearance ideal?*

If girls are happy to share their messages through social media or by displaying them in the meeting place, support them to do so if you feel what they created is appropriate for this (and complies with your internet safety guidelines). Making their messages public makes them more powerful.

## Look for

The group feeling like a team, each girl making a personal commitment.

## Tips

- It's important that each girl gets the chance to say why it's not worth chasing the ideal when presenting back to the group. Use questions to help if this isn't coming naturally, or split into smaller groups.

## Do it differently

Why not also ask the group if they would like to put on a community exhibition of these messages, and anything else they create during True to Me, to celebrate completing the programme?





## Activity

25  
mins

## In Her/His Shoes

## Why this matters

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

## You need

- Handout 1 - set of In Her/His Shoes scenario cards from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).
- A shoe, or other container, for each set of scenario cards.

## Setting

Divide into small groups, with each group supported by a leader.

## What happens

Each leader takes a shoe containing the set of scenarios and finds a quiet space with their group.

*The appearance ideal comes up all the time in daily life, not just in the media. We see our friends and family facing the appearance ideal a lot too. If you have the confidence to speak up against it, you'll help the people you care about feel more body confident and start to break free from the ideal. This is a chance for each of you to practise how to challenge the appearance ideal in real life.*

Girls practice coming up with arguments to convince someone not to chase the appearance ideal:

- The leader, using the scenarios, pretends to be a girl who is struggling to deal with the appearance ideal.
- Girls use positive challenges to persuade the girl in the scenario to think differently and recognise the costs of chasing the appearance ideal.

## For example:

**LEADER:** "No way I'm going swimming tonight. I'll say I'm not well. The idea of everyone seeing me in my swimming costume makes me feel sick."

**GIRL:** "But swimming is so much fun and it makes you feel good. Everyone is a different shape and size and that's normal! There's no such thing as one way to look good."

- Invite girls to pick a scenario from the shoe and hand it to you without looking at it.
- Read the scenario, then act it out with the group, pretending you feel like the character in the scenario.
- Use prompts to encourage girls to contribute and try to get as many challenges as possible for each scenario, for example:

"What's so wrong with trying to look like a model?"

"You agree I need to diet, right?"

"Only thin people are popular, don't you think?"

"What do you mean by costs?"

- If girls are struggling to think of challenges, support them with examples such as:

"Looking like the appearance ideal doesn't make you happy"

"Taking care of your body is important; chasing the ideal might actually hurt you"

"Worrying about your body means you're missing out on having fun"

"Being confident in yourself is a much better way to make friends"

continued →

## Tips

- When the group has run out of things to say, ask another girl to pick a new scenario.
- Complete as many scenarios as you have time for, and try to encourage each girl to contribute at least twice.

## Reflect

*Can you think of times in your life when you could challenge the appearance ideal in this way?*

## Look for

- Every group member verbally challenging the appearance ideal.
- Energetic conversations with girls eager to contribute.
- A range of arguments that shows girls are considering the costs of the appearance ideal.



## Do it differently

If it helps your group, use a structure that allows each girl to contribute in turn. You could put a pair of shoes in front of each leader, and each girl takes it in turns to step up to the shoes to join the conversation.

Girls might argue that they follow the appearance ideal because being slim is healthier. Taking care of yourself is really important, but what you look like and how healthy you are aren't as closely connected as you might think. We all have a healthy ideal, which is how we look when we're doing the right things to take care of our bodies: physically, mentally, emotionally and caring about our overall quality of life. Things like eating nutritious foods in an amount that's appropriate for us, getting active and moving our bodies, paying attention to our friendships and getting involved in our communities are all things that make us feel good and keep us healthy. What's important to recognise is that healthy looks different for different people and keeping your body moving makes more of a difference to your health levels than being a certain weight.



Personal  
Challenge 25  
mins

## Mirror Time

## Why this matters

Thinking positively about their bodies is something girls don't do often enough and, even if it's hard at first, it often brings a feel-good body confidence boost.

## You need

Handout 3 - Mirror Time from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

## Setting

Whole group briefing, activity to be completed in own time after session.

## What happens

Give each girl a Mirror Time handout and take time to talk them through it:

*We spent a lot of time thinking about encouraging others to be more body confident today. So how about you? When you get home, I want you to try something – spend a few minutes concentrating on the things you like about your body. It might sound silly, but give it a go and see how it makes you feel. Even realising you like little things about yourself, like the way your hair curls or how strong your hands are, is a way of showing that the appearance ideal isn't in charge of who you are.*

## Explain the activity:

- Put on close-fitting clothes so that you can see your body shape.
- Find a quiet space with a mirror in it.

*We often use mirrors to criticise ourselves. Let's try to see things differently, and use the mirror to reflect all the amazing things about us!*

Using the mirror, think about...

- Five things you like about yourself that aren't physical, such as personality traits, attitudes and values.

- Five physical features that you like about your body.

*Write these down on the handout and bring it to the next session. Are you all happy to have a go at this?*

## Look for

Willingness to try, taking activity seriously.

## Tips

If some girls are worried they can't find a quiet space at home to do this activity, can you offer this at your meeting place? It's important that this is a quiet and private space for girls to complete the activity on their own if possible.

Mirror Time makes the biggest difference when girls identify bigger and more body confident characteristics. But if girls aren't comfortable doing this alone or you're worried they won't be able to identify things they like about themselves, suggest they:

- Try it with a friend they trust. They can encourage each other to identify positive traits and give examples of things they like about each other.
- Start with the personality traits.
- Start small with the physical traits, and encourage them to build up to bigger characteristics when they're ready.
- Think about things their bodies enable them to do, not just what they look like.

**Wrap up:** Take a minute to close the session. Thank everyone for participating and give girls a chance to share their favourite moment of the session. Check everyone is clear on when and where the next session will take place, and is comfortable with the Personal Challenge.

50  
mins

## Session three

## Outcome

Girls have the skills and confidence to avoid talking about, or reinforcing, the appearance ideal in conversations, and can make quick comebacks to challenge comments that support the ideal.

## You need

- Dice, pens.
- Handout 4 - Body Bingo Cards and Handout 5 - Quick Comeback statement grid from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

## Session map



Verbal sign up	5 mins
Feedback: Mirror Time	5 mins
Activity: Body Talk Bingo	10 mins
Activity: Speak Out	30 mins





5  
mins

# Verbal sign up

Remember to start the session by giving each girl a chance to share her willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

Before we start, let's remind ourselves of how to have the best time during True to Me; by speaking up during activities, respecting our group guidelines and supporting each other. Are you ready to take part fully?

Invite each girl to tell the group that she is ready to contribute.

5  
mins

# Mirror Time

Feedback

## Why this matters

Girls get a body confidence boost when they focus on what they like about themselves. Being brave enough to share these things with others is even more empowering.

## You need

Nothing.

## Setting

Whole group sharing (or small groups with one leader in each group).

## What happens

Imagine if all the time we spend putting ourselves down was spent appreciating ourselves and being proud of who we are. Talking positively about ourselves isn't boasting — it's a healthy thing to do because you're doing it for you, not to show off to others. If you role model this for younger girls, they are more likely to be positive about themselves.

## Invite each girl to share...

- At least one physical thing they like about their body and appearance.
- At least one other, non-physical thing they like about themselves.

## Reflect

- Why do you think it's hard to look at ourselves positively, and share this with others?
- How does it make you feel to focus on positive things about yourself?

## Look for

Everyone sharing, a supportive and caring atmosphere.



## Tips

- If girls are particularly nervous/shy/vulnerable, break into smaller friendship groups for them to share their likes, depending on leader: participant ratio.



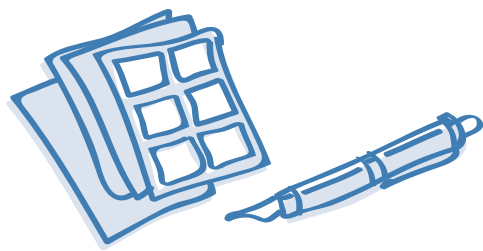
# Body Talk Bingo

## Why this matters

Body talk is one of the least obvious but most important ways the appearance ideal is kept going, and girls experience it regularly in the media and when talking to friends and family. By understanding how to spot and respond to body talk, girls can protect themselves from it and build their body confidence.

## You need

- 1 dice per group.
- 1 pen per girl.
- Handout 4 - 1 set of Body Bingo Cards per small group from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).



## Setting

Small groups of 4-6.

## Activity

10  
mins

## What happens

Explain the concept of 'body talk' to the group:

*When people are supportive of the appearance ideal in conversation, sometimes without even knowing it, we call it 'body talk'. When we compliment others on losing weight, join in when friends complain about their bodies or talk about dramatic weight loss diets, we're supporting the idea that we should all chase the appearance ideal and there's only one way to look good. Body talk can even sound like a positive compliment, but under the surface it's actually comparing us to the appearance ideal and can make us feel bad about ourselves.*

### Then:

- Give each small group a dice and a set of bingo cards.
- Each girl takes a bingo card and takes it in turn to roll the dice.
- She shows the group which speech bubble on her page matches the dice roll, and the group reads the speech bubble in silence (or a leader reads it out).
- The group decides what they would say to show they don't agree with the appearance ideal, and to positively challenge the statement.
- They make this statement out loud, and girls with that speech bubble on their bingo page can cross it out.
- If the dice roll matches a bubble that has already been answered, pass the dice on.
- When a girl has crossed out all six statements on her page, she calls bingo. Keep going until time is up or everyone has crossed out all their speech bubbles.

continued →

## Reflect

Stay in your small groups or come back together to have a conversation around these three questions:

Q: How do statements like these keep the appearance ideal going?

A: They imply that the appearance ideal brings success and happiness, and makes us better people, that there's only one way to look...

Q: What can you do differently?

A: Change the topic of conversation, talk positively about your body, celebrate diversity, tell others about the appearance ideal and discuss how chasing the ideal doesn't make life better...

Q: How do you think changing the way you talk about your body might impact how you feel and how others respond to you?

A: Feel more body confident, others notice your confidence, being comfortable in your own skin is attractive...

## Look for

- Confident responses that would stop body talk in real life.
- Girls eager to contribute.

## Tips

- Encourage girls to help each other if they are struggling to think of verbal challenges.

## Do it differently

- Want it to be more active? Create a recycled bowling alley using plastic bottles with different scores written on them. Each girl picks a statement from the bingo card and comes up with her challenge to the statement, saying it out loud and then rolling a ball to see how many bottles she can knock down.
- If your group doesn't want to play a game, use a bingo card to facilitate a discussion where girls practise responding to the speech bubbles out loud, and use the questions from the end of the activity to keep the discussion on track.
- You could also have leaders reading out a speech bubble then closing their eyes. A girl steps up to the leader and responds to the speech bubble showing why she doesn't agree with the appearance ideal. Before opening her eyes, the leader tries to guess the speaker by the sound of her voice. Each girl takes at least one turn to respond to a speech bubble.





## Activity

30  
mins

## Ideas worth sharing

## Why this matters

Girls gain confidence in challenging the appearance ideal by practising it in different contexts and reflecting on how it shows up in different parts of their lives.

## You need

- Zone 1: Handout 5 - Quick Comeback statement grid (from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)), beanbag/pebble or similar to throw.
- Zones 2: Paper and pens. Optional: If girls have phones or cameras they can use these in zone 2.
- Zone 3: Paper and pens. Coloured paper or cardboard star shapes.
- Zone 4: Large pieces of paper, ideally on a wall. Paints, coloured pens, other creative materials, media images, body confident quotes, etc., as available.

## Setting

Four activity zones with one leader at each. Divide your group into four and rotate around the zones, spending about five minutes at each one.

## What happens

In this activity you'll explore four different ways to challenge the appearance ideal and four different environments where you can share what you've learned. Take advantage of each zone to really push yourself and come up with strong and clear messages that would convince your friends and family, girls in your community or even around the world, to break away from trying to look like the appearance ideal.

## Zone 1: Quick comebacks

Challenging the appearance ideal when talking to friends and family is really hard to do, but once you get the hang of it you can make a big difference. If you are confident to respond positively but clearly, on the spot to the appearance ideal, you'll open some eyes and make a difference to the people you care about.

1. Lay out the statements face down on the ground.
2. Girls take it in turns to throw the beanbag and leader reads out the statement it lands on.
3. Thrower tries to make a quick reply to the statement.
4. Once she has tried, the rest of the group can help out with extra ideas of quick comebacks.

For example:

"Doesn't she look too fat to wear a swimsuit?"

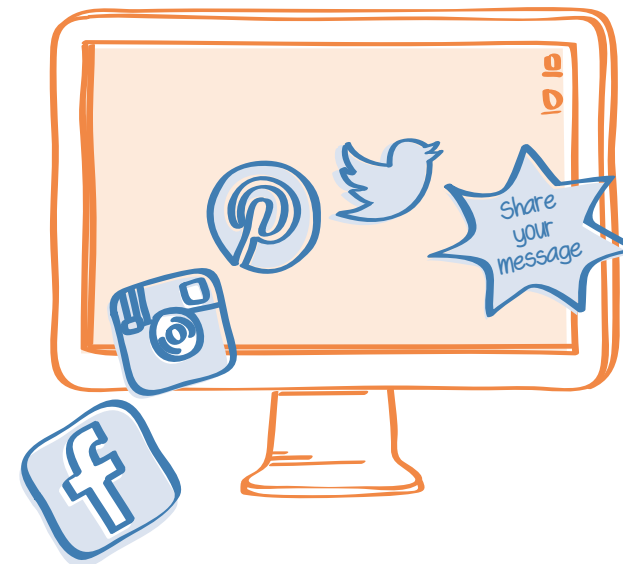
"It sounds really judgemental when you say things like that";  
 "I don't agree with putting others down";  
 "Swimming is about having fun and taking care of your body, not the way you look";  
 "I think she's great the way she is"

Carry on until everyone has made a quick comeback statement.

continued →

## Zone 2: Social media activist

If you had the chance to tell girls around the world why chasing the appearance ideal is a bad idea what would you say? What could you share to show them how to be more body confident?



Come up with a powerful message to persuade girls around the world that the appearance ideal isn't worth chasing and costs too much.

Think of your favourite social media platform. How could you use this to share your message?

Write down what you'd say or capture your message through photos or video clips. If you want to, put your message out there!

## Zone 3: Home challenge

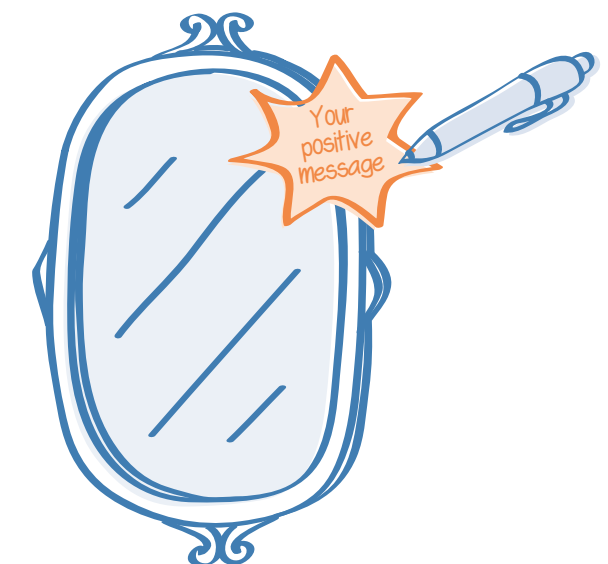
How could you make your home a more body confident place? What would you change or create to remind yourself, and your family, not to fall for the appearance ideal?

Girls come up with a list of ideas for, for example:

- Creating body confident messages to stick on mirrors, fridges and walls.
- Putting messages into magazines that challenge the appearance ideal.
- Changing the magazines and media that you have in the house to things that boost your body confidence.

Start your transformation by creating a positive message to stick on your mirror, so that day you are reminded that you've got another chance to stand up against the appearance ideal.

Girls can write their messages on cardboard stars or on coloured paper and cut it into an inspiring shape. Encourage girls to take their message home and stick it on their mirror or bedroom door.



continued →



## Zone 4: Diversity wall

*Speak up for appearance diversity and for the amazing things our bodies can do, whatever they look like. Show your community what we'd be missing out on if everyone looked like the appearance ideal!*

As a group, create a mural or graffiti wall to share images and messages that challenge the appearance ideal and celebrate uniqueness, diversity and what we can do with our bodies. Build on each other's work to create a colourful group mural that has something important to say. "Sign" your work with a statement about the downsides of the appearance ideal and why not to pursue it.

## Look for

- Girls using the framework of these activities to form challenges to the appearance ideal.
- Motivation to share the ideas from zones 1 and 2 beyond the meeting.

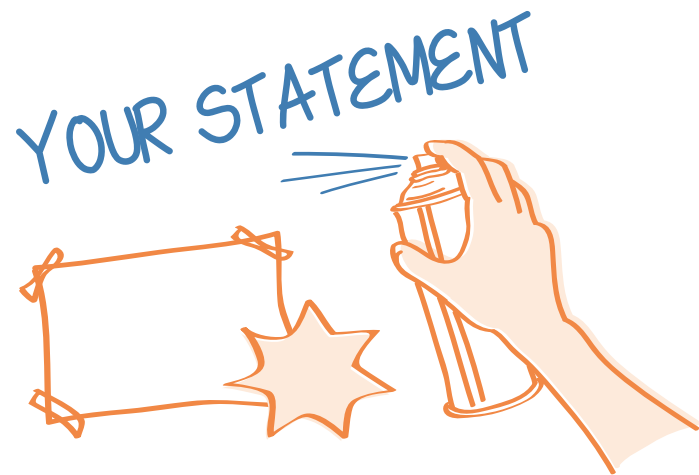
## Tips

- Keep the time balanced between the four zones.
- Leaders can use questions to encourage girls to reflect on the messages they want to communicate at each zone.

## Do it differently

- Zone 1 is the most important zone in this activity. If you have a small group, or not enough leaders to run all the zones, check this one doesn't get skipped.
- Take zone 2 further and encourage groups to think of actions they could take in their school or community, as well as at home.
- Why not exhibit the diversity wall in a public space? Or share it on social media if your group is happy to.

**Wrap up:** Take a minute to close the session. Thank everyone for participating and give girls a chance to share their favourite moment of the session. Why not challenge girls to try to use quick comebacks on social media before the next session? Check everyone is clear on when and where the next session will take place.



## Reflect

*How could you make your home a more body confident place? What would you change or create to remind yourself.*

50 mins

## Session four

## Outcome

Girls explore and expose how media can perpetuate the appearance ideal, and reflect on how media could change to support more positive, body confident messages.

## You need

Handout 6 - Eyes Don't Lie? Photos and Handout 7 - Media Detectives from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

## Session map



Verbal sign up	5 mins
Activity: Eyes Don't Lie?	10 mins
Activity: Media Takeover	30 mins
Personal Challenge (optional): Media Detectives	5 mins





5  
mins

# Verbal sign up

Remember to start the session by giving each girl a chance to share her willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

*Getting the most out of True to Me takes an open mind, supporting each other with respect and taking part in all the activities. Are you ready?*

Invite each girl to tell the group that she is ready to contribute. Follow up by asking the group if they succeeded in using quick comebacks on social media and invite them to share their experiences with the group.

10  
mins

## Activity

# Eyes Don't Lie?

## Why this matters

By understanding the power of airbrushing, girls understand the lengths the media goes to in order to present the appearance ideal, and that models and celebrities can't naturally match it.

## You need

Handout 6 - Eyes Don't Lie? Photos from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

## Setting

Whole group for the video then small groups for looking at the photos. Leader ready to facilitate feedback and conversation at the end.

## What happens

Show Dove Evolution video clip to the group.

*Airbrushing techniques can dramatically change a photo or video, but if you don't know it's been done it can be hard to spot it. Without even thinking about it, we are tricked into thinking the models and celebrities we see can naturally match the appearance ideal, when in fact they've been digitally altered.*

Share out the Eyes Don't Lie? photos  
In small groups, girls see how many differences they can find between the two photos and share it with the whole group.

## Reflect

Start a group discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- How does it make you feel to realise that even models and celebrities are airbrushed, because they aren't considered beautiful enough to match the appearance ideal?
- How do you think it makes the model feel to be airbrushed in this way?
- How do you think digitally altering media images affects you and your friends?
- If you digitally alter your own photos on social media, do you think this supports the appearance ideal? How does it feel different to posting unedited photos?

## Look for

Girls making connections with their own experiences and recognising how digitally altering media feeds the appearance ideal.

## Do it differently

- If you can't show the video clip, why not share articles about the impact of digitally altering media to make people look like the appearance ideal. There are plenty of these online; choose a couple that are suitable for your group and that complement the messages of True to Me.
- You could also connect this activity with social media images and apps that digitally alter selfies or social media campaigns to post natural photos, etc.



## Activity

30  
mins

## Media Takeover

## Why this matters

It's hard to imagine a world where the media didn't keep the appearance ideal going. By imagining an alternative, girls understand that there is a choice – media doesn't have to be dominated by the appearance ideal.

## You need

- Pens and paper.
- Art and design materials, as available.

## Setting

Small groups of 3-5.

## What happens

Girls get to create a positive, body confident media landscape.

Apparently we are exposed to at least 250 pieces of media each day. What would life be like if this media – instead of supporting the appearance ideal and getting us to compare ourselves to it – challenged it? What if it celebrated diversity and spread a positive, body confident message? Let's find out.

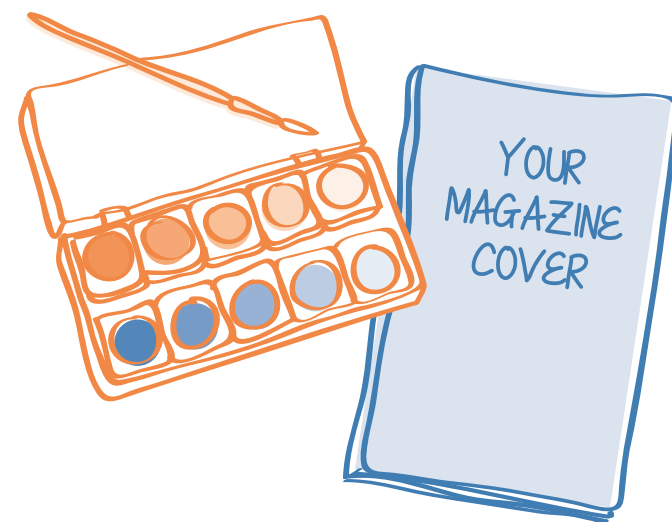
Imagine your youth group has been given funding to transform local media with body confident messages that empower girls to reject the appearance ideal and celebrate what makes them unique. In small groups, design your Media Takeover!

You can create any type of media you like, as long as what you create shares positive, body confident messages and spreads the word that the appearance ideal is impossible to achieve and costs too much, so it's not worth pursuing.

Working in small groups, support girls to create a body confident media piece of their choice. Some ideas could be:

- A new magazine cover.
- A podcast, vlog or Tumblr post.
- A billboard.
- A news or magazine article.
- An advertising campaign for a body confident clothes line, including how you'll recruit your models, where you'll advertise and what the headlines on your posters will be.
- An Instagram campaign.
- A music video.
- A song or a rap.
- A script for a short play (you could even act it out for the group!).
- A stop-motion animation.
- A TV news segment (you could act this out).
- A new toy/doll for younger girls.

Give everyone 20 minutes to create their media, and then share it between groups.



continued →

## Reflect

Ask your group to think about the media they have created and why they think it's effective. Ask them:

- What is it about your media piece that is the greatest challenge to the appearance ideal?
- What would it feel like to see messages like these everywhere in the media?

## Tips

- This is a great activity that girls really love. If you can, allow them more time to actually create the media piece and get really creative.
- Encourage girls to share their media more widely if they are comfortable doing so.
- You can adapt the list of ideas above to your local context.





# Media Detectives

## Why this matters

Girls will make connections between examples of media and the key messages about the appearance ideal.

## You need

- Pens.
- Handout 7 - Media Detectives from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

## Personal Challenge

(optional)

5 mins

## What happens

Challenge group members to find an example of the appearance ideal in the media before the next session.

- Choose an image that shows the appearance ideal from any type of media you see during the week.
- Capture the image (photograph it/cut it out/draw it) and bring it to the next True to Me session.
- Write two sentences on the Media Detectives handout, inspired by the image:  
"The appearance ideal is fake because..."  
"It's not worth chasing the appearance ideal because..."



# Session five

50 mins

## Outcome

This final session gives girls a chance to think ahead, and check they've got the tools and ideas they need to carry on challenging the appearance ideal once True to Me is over.

## You need

- Paper and pens.
- Handout 1 - What I Know Now and Handout 3 - Mirror Time from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

## Session map



Verbal sign up	5 mins
Future pressures	20 mins
Body activism	20 mins
Reflect and celebrate	5 mins



5  
mins

# Verbal sign up

Remember to start the session by giving each girl a chance to share her willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

It's time for the last True to Me session, and to make the most of the time we have left, let's speak up during activities, support each other and respect our group guidelines. Are you ready to take part?

Invite each girl to tell the group that she is ready to contribute.

20  
mins

# Future pressures?

## Why this matters

Once True to Me is finished, girls need strategies to support themselves to resist the appearance ideal. This activity helps them to prepare how to take what they've learnt forward into their lives.

## You need

- Small pieces of card, coloured if possible – approximately 10 per girl.
- Envelope or small box/bag per girl.
- Coloured pens, paper and other art materials if available.

## Setting

Small groups.

## What happens

You're all pretty clear now that the appearance ideal isn't worth chasing. But what happens once True to Me is finished? What challenges might you face in the future that will make the appearance ideal seem more attractive? We're going to come up with a list of useful tips and actions you can take to help you resist future pressures to look like the appearance ideal.

Encourage each group to brainstorm challenges they might face in the future that will put pressure on them to pursue the appearance ideal.

Each group then writes a list of actions they could take to overcome those challenges by reminding them the ideal isn't worth chasing, and boosting their body confidence.

For example...



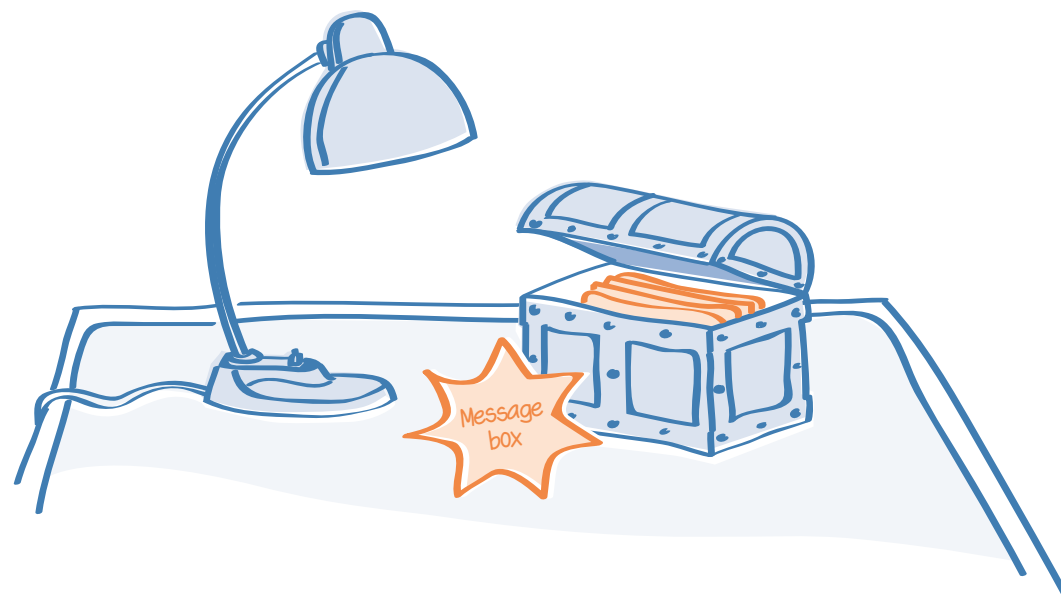
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Once each group has a good list, give each girl approx. 10 pieces of card.

- Each girl creates a “set” of idea cards by writing one of her favourite ideas for how to challenge the ideal on each piece of card. She can use the list the group came up with and add new ideas if she wishes.
- Give each girl an envelope or small box/bag to collect her set of cards in.

At home, put the envelope/box/bag somewhere you'll see it every day. Whenever you're feeling under pressure because of the appearance ideal or just want a confidence boost, pull out a card and do what it tells you. If you think of other good ideas in the future, make new cards for your box. If you see your friends struggling in the future, why not lend them one of your cards to remind them of how they can reject the appearance ideal?



## Tips

- If anyone is struggling to come up with actions, share some examples to get them started.

## Do it differently

- If your group wants to do something more active, try role-playing the same idea. Get the group to brainstorm the challenges they might face, then in pairs they can pull a challenge out of a hat and act out what they would do to overcome it if it happened in the future.
- If they would prefer a more individual-reflective activity, they could also write a postcard to their future selves telling them what they could do to help them handle future pressures.

20  
mins

# Body activism

## Why this matters

Body confidence is a social issue. By becoming body confidence activists, girls get to practise voicing their own rejection of the ideal and can help others feel less pressured to chase it, creating more body confident communities.

## You need

Paper and coloured pens for each small group.

## Setting

Small group discussions (approx. 4-6) with leaders moving between groups.

## What happens

Working in small groups, girls choose a simple action to take that will allow them to share what they learned in True to Me with more people.

What could you do to open the eyes of your friends and family, even your wider community, to the appearance ideal and the importance of body confidence? To complete True to Me, share what you've discovered with others and expose the truth behind the appearance ideal.

1) Create two quick group brainstorm:

- Who would you most want to share True to Me messages with?
- Where in your community do you think they are most exposed to the appearance ideal?

continued →



2) Thinking about what you learned from True to Me, what would you like to say to those people? Come up with some simple messages that challenge the appearance ideal and would help others feel more body confident. Create a speech bubble for each one.

3) How could you share your messages with the people you thought of earlier, or challenge the appearance ideal in those places in your community? Think of one simple action, such as:

...Putting body confident notes on mirrors at your school – flashmob in a shopping centre – sending body confident postcards to your friends – putting up posters challenging the appearance ideal – writing a blog article – a social media campaign – creating a photo exhibition or pop-up art gallery...

4) Agree as a group to make your action happen in the future, and start your body activism by taking a group selfie with your speech bubbles. If you're happy to, post the photo on social media and share with your friends. Use the hashtag #TrueToMe to post it to your social networks.

5) Check everyone gets a speech bubble to take home.

### Look for

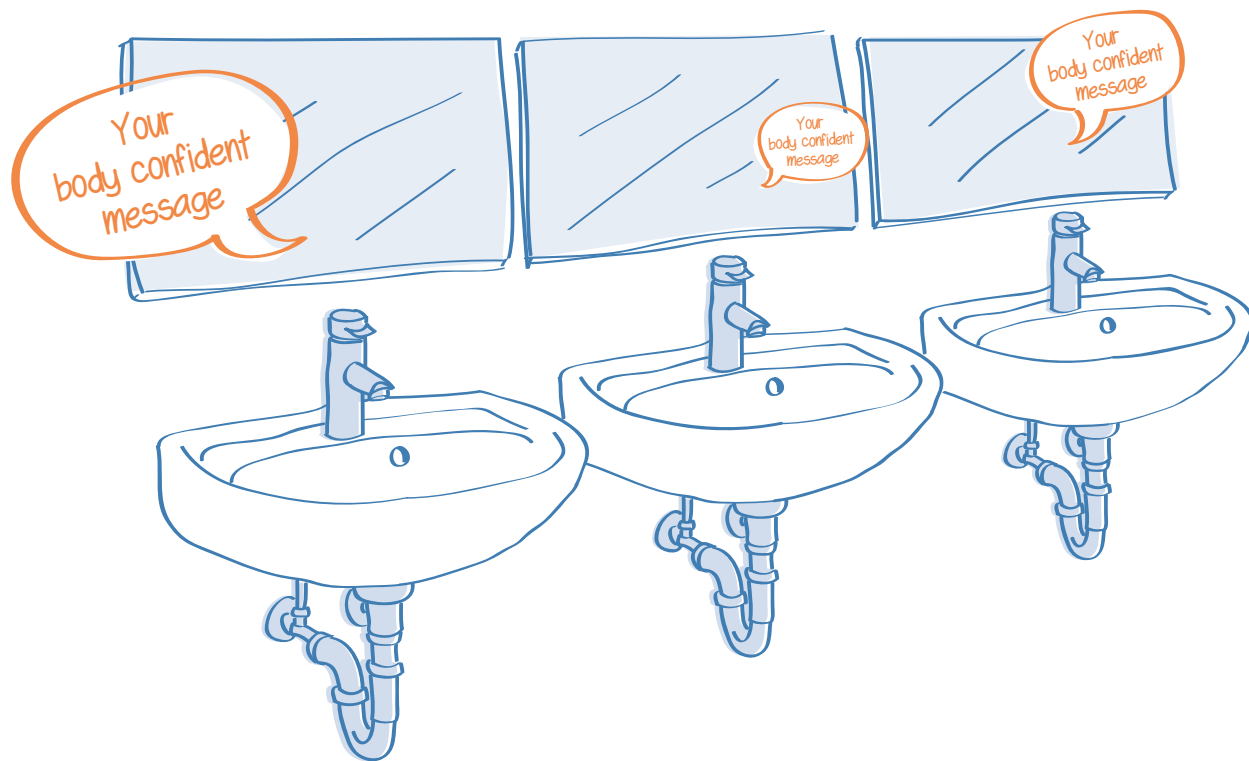
- Teamwork, enthusiasm and motivation to take action.
- High energy and lots of discussion.

### Do it differently

This activity might need extra time outside of the session for girls to take action. If finding time is hard, concentrate on creating the speech bubbles and seeing how far they can share their selfie – both on and offline.

### Tips

- If you have time and the group is enthusiastic, taking action in the community is a great way for girls to feel empowered and practise life skills as well as reinforce body confident messages. Try to keep the project girl-led for maximum impact.



5  
mins

# Reflect and celebrate

### Why this matters

Reflecting on the session helps the learning to sink in. This is also a chance for you to get feedback and to recognise everyone's contributions.

### You need

Handout 1 - What I Know Now and Handout 3 - Mirror Time from the True to Me handouts (available to download at [selfesteem.dove.com](http://selfesteem.dove.com)).

### What happens

Give out the handouts and explain the What I Know Now and the Mirror Time Personal Challenge activities.

Get some feedback. Discuss – or use post it note walls / other quick evaluation and reflection techniques for these four questions:

- What did you most enjoy about the workshop?
- Is there anything you didn't enjoy?
- What one thing will you take forward from the workshop into your own life?
- What is one thing you've learned from True to Me you'd like to tell your friends?

Thank each group member for participating and recognise their contribution in a fun and creative way.

If you have time, it's great to end the workshop with a simple activity to celebrate everyone's individuality and good qualities. For example, every girl makes and decorates a unique paper flower, writing on it five things they love about themselves. Invite girls to display their flowers together as a diverse and beautiful garden.

### Look for

- Sense of achievement in group members.
- Clarity about the programme.
- Motivation to share it more widely.

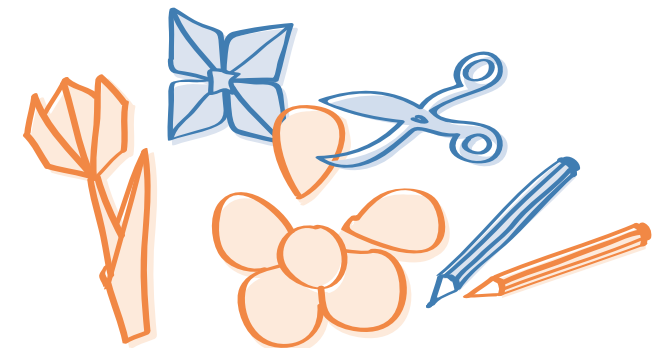
### Do it differently

You can create a certificate, or turn this into a community party if you have time and resources.

### Tips

- As your group won't meet again, be very clear about the benefits of completing the Personal Challenge activities and encourage participants to share what they learn from these with someone they trust.

**Wrap up:** Take a minute to close the session. Thank everyone for participating in True to Me and encourage them to spread the body confidence message far and wide!





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