



# BODY IMAGE

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Body image is a topic that many people are confused about, and are often unfamiliar with the impact it has on their life. We want to encourage college freshman to improve their body image with a 30-minute educational program. Our specific target audience is college freshman between the ages of 18-19, both men and women. These individuals are at a critical stage in their lives where they are dealing with an enormous amount of pressure and change and could use some guidance on this topic to help stay positive and healthy.

In the United States, we put an extremely large emphasis on beauty. Current ideals of beauty are mostly driven by advertising and media and create a standard that is both unhealthy and unrealistic. The pressure to attain the elusive ideal body can cause individuals to create a negative body image (2). It has been found that as much as 60% of adolescent girls are dissatisfied with the size of their body (1).

## **Step 1: Analyze Needs and Behaviors**

The target audience for our educational presentation is college freshman. The topic we are presenting is body image because we are concerned that many college freshmen have a negative body image. The focus of our intervention is to improve body image in college freshman.

## **Step 2: Identify Relevant Mediators**

Data was collected from our target audience through a two-page survey asking a total of 10 open ended questions. We gave the survey to freshman at the Chico State WREC by the pool and in the lobby and also in front of the freshman dormitories on campus. One question

we asked our target audience was, "What are the biggest influences on your perception of body image? Does this influence have a positive or negative effect on your body image?" Another question we asked was, "On a scale from one to five, rate your self-esteem as it relates to your body image." From our survey, we found that most college freshman believed they had a positive body image. However, most of them also responded that they wanted to change something about their current body, like be skinnier or have a smaller stomach. Everyone agreed that the media had a negative impact on their body image, while family and friends had a more positive impact on body image.

The biggest limitation to our survey was that participants were confused about the meaning of body image. After asking them our first question, "What does body image mean to you?" we should have included a short definition or explanation about the meaning of body image. Another limitation to our survey was that participants felt it was a little time consuming and they wanted to rush through it. Another limitation we encountered was that we didn't include different pictures of men for male participants to pick which one they resembled so we had to make a different survey for guys. Also, some questions were repetitive so the participants were confused as to whether we were looking for different responses, so we ended up crossing some questions out.

Through our needs assessment we found that both male and female college freshman have a poor body image and are also are confused about what body image means. Therefore, we wanted to define and explain the meaning of body image in our educational program. The survey also helped us to find our goal for our educational presentation; to increase participant's body image. Since most survey participants described media as being a negative influence on body image, we wanted to address this problem and help participants to understand how external influences affect their personal beliefs about body image.

### **Step 3: Select Theory, Philosophy, and Components**

The theory we choose to guide our program is the social cognitive theory. We choose this theory because it explains how behaviors are a result of personal factors and environmental cues. The first construct we selected from the social cognitive theory was expectations. This is the anticipatory outcomes of a behavior, meaning the outcomes of having a positive body image. We choose this construct to help participants understand the possible benefits of having a positive body image. Our second construct relates to the

individuals confidence in performing a particular behavior, known as self-efficacy. We choose this construct because we want program participants to feel confident in their own ability to create a positive body image. One important factor of having a positive body image is focusing on positive self-talk, or intrapersonal communication. In order to do this, we are having participants write down one negative self-talk comment that they commonly say to themselves and turn it into a positive self-talk. The last construct we choose for our program was reciprocal determinism. This relates to the dynamic interaction of the person, the behavior, and the environment. We choose this construct because we want the participants to understand the drastic impact of the environment. A person's individual view of their own body image is largely a reflection of the external influences on that individual, whether it is family, friends, media, etc.

<b><u>Social Cognitive Theory</u></b>		
<b>Construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Expectations	Anticipatory outcomes of a behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss possible benefits of having a better body image.</li> </ul>
Self-efficacy	The person's confidence in performing a particular behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have participants write down a negative self-talk that they commonly say to themselves. Then, have participants turn the paper over and create a positive self-talk from the negative self-talk they wrote down.</li> </ul>
Reciprocal Determinism	The dynamic interaction of the person, the behavior, and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss common external influences.</li> <li>• Pass out advertising images and ask participants to discuss if the image represents a negative or positive body image.</li> </ul>

#### **Step 4: Educational Objectives**

For our nutrition education presentation, our goal is to improve participants' body image. To reach our goal we choose three general objectives and a specific learning objective that corresponds with each general objective. Our first general objective is to increase awareness in participants of outcome expectations of having a better body image. To accomplish this, our specific learning objective is that participants will be able to list three benefits of having a better body image. Another general objective is to demonstrate

increased self-efficacy in replacing negative self-talk with positive self-talk. The specific objective is that participants will be able to turn three negative self-talk phrases into positive self-talk phrases. Our third general objective is that participants will increase their knowledge of external factors that affect their body image. To achieve this objective, participants will be able to list at least five external influences on body image.

### **Step 5: Theory-based Educational Strategies**

Our main goal in designing our educational program is that it is fun and interactive for the participants. Since body image is a visual topic and our target audience is college freshmen we decided to use PowerPoint to present our information with a lot of images and a couple short video clips. To start off our presentation, we want to brainstorm with the participants what they thought the meaning of body image is. The reason being, we want the participants to immediately feel involved in the presentation. Also, from our needs assessment we found out that most college freshmen don't understand the full meaning of body image. For our first general objective, we are going to be presenting the benefits of having a positive body image and the barriers to a negative body image using PowerPoint. To meet our second general objective, we will be introducing the topic of self-talk and how it can be either negative or positive. We want the participants to be able to feel confident in their ability to turn a common negative self-talk into a positive self-talk so we have included a hands-on activity for the participants. Each participant will write down a negative self-talk phrase that they commonly say to themselves. Then we will ask the participants to turn the paper over and create a positive self-talk phrase from the negative one they first wrote down. We also have a letter to read to the audience that turns negative self-talk into positive self-talk; it's called Dear Knees to Neck. Another way we are using this general objective is by having a "celebration party". We want participants to be thankful and positive for what they have. We will be passing out cookies in the shape of bodies that have positive self-talk words written on them in icing with big smiley faces. This represents that individuals shouldn't be focused on counting calories, but rather to enjoy the body they have. It might not fit into the cookie cutter ideal body that our culture sees as beautiful, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't deserve the same amount of respect and love. We should enjoy our differences and strive to be healthy, not a size 0. Our culture should focus on health a lot more and put beauty on the backburner. The educational material that we will be giving each student is magnets that they can put around the house that have positive body image phrases on them. We also created bookmarks, so that students can open up their textbooks to positive body image words and

phrases and tips to gain a positive body image. Our last general objective will be presented on PowerPoint when we talk about common external influences on body image. We also will have a facilitated discussion for the participants relating to external influences. To do this, we are going to be passing out advertising images and asking the students to discuss if they felt the advertisement represents a positive or negative body image. We also will be showing a video clip created by Dove that shows how our perception of beauty has been destroyed by the media.

## Step 6: Evaluation

### Body Image Survey

1. What is **not** a possible benefit of having a positive body image?
  - a. You will feel confident about your body
  - b. Appreciate your natural body shape
  - c. More likely to develop an eating disorder
  - d. None of the above
  
2. True/False  
Body image is how you see yourself when you look in a mirror or when you picture yourself in your mind.
  
3. Someone with a negative body image may...
  - a. Have a disordered perception of their body
  - b. Feel proud and accepting of their unique body
  - c. Feel ashamed, self-conscious, and or uncomfortable
  - d. Both a and c
  
4. True/False  
A good way to improve your body image is to lose the scale.
  
5. True/False  
A good way to improve your body image is to say bad things to yourself to motivate you to lose weight.
  
6. What are some common external influences on a person's body image?
  - a. Culture
  - c. Family and Friends
  - d. The media
  - e. All of the above
  
7. How confident do you feel in your ability to turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk?  
(circle one)  

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly disagree

## References

1. Peregrin, Tony. "Tips on Improving Patients' Body Image." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 107.10 (2007): 1712-14. Web. 4 Oct 2010.
2. Neighbors, Lori A., and Jeffery Sobal. "Prevalence and magnitude of body weight and shape dissatisfaction among university students." *ScienceDirect* 8. (2007): 429-39. Web. 4 Oct 2010.