

Elementary 6: Sexual Growth and Body Image

Lesson 1: Adopting a Positive Attitude toward Body Image

Aim/Rationale

Students will learn about the physical and emotional changes that often happen during puberty and will be encouraged to adopt a positive attitude toward their own body image and diverse body types.

Learning Content

Learning Content in Sexuality Education

- 1) Adopt a positive attitude toward diverse body types
 - a. Identify physical and emotional changes during puberty
 - b. Understand and appreciate diverse body types

Cross-Curricular Competencies

- 1) To use creativity
- 2) To construct identity
- 3) To cooperate with others

Purpose

Children aged 10 to 12 have often started maturing physically. The first signs of development can appear at this age. Children at this age are often curious about their bodily changes and are becoming aware of simultaneous emotional changes. Therefore, an important task for teachers is to equip students with the appropriate knowledge of these changes, including how their body may change, why it changes, and how to adopt a positive attitude toward diverse body types. Doing so is

an important part of building children’s self-esteem and helping them maintain a positive body image throughout puberty.

Relevant to:

- Promoting a healthy body image

Lesson

Materials

- Projector and laptop or interactive white board
- A large roll of paper (each student needs a piece of paper large enough to trace themselves on) [QR](#) “My Body Image” printouts (1 per student)
- Construction paper or other thick paper (1 per student)
- Markers
- Video Option 1, “The Girl with the World in Her Hair” (3 mins)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EC-v30Ds92E>
- Video Option 2, “Girls Ages 5-18 Talk About What Beauty Means to Them”
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j541ShtTSJU>
- A CD player or computer with speakers
- “Adult-Kid Communicator” handouts (1 per student)

Essential Questions

- What does it mean to go through puberty?
- What are the physical and emotional changes that can happen during puberty?
- Why do we need to adopt a positive attitude toward our own body and how we feel about it?
- How can we respect diverse body types?

Using Gender Inclusive Language

Avoid gendering people with certain anatomy or making assumptions about someone’s body based on their gender. The assumption that all people with penises are boys, for example, can make trans or intersex students feel excluded. Separating anatomy and gender is a way to make sure that all students feel included.

A way to do this is by referring to anatomy rather than someone’s gender. For example, instead of saying, “men grow facial hair”, say, “facial hair grows”. Another way to avoid gendering body parts is using phrases like, “people with penises” and “bodies that menstruate”. Similarly, it’s better to use nouns for body functions rather than verbs, for example, by saying “ejaculation can happen during sleep” instead of “boys can ejaculate during sleep”.

It is understandable that some students might feel shy when talking about sex organs. Students at this age are sometimes uncomfortable talking about the changes that they are experiencing. However, it is important to use accurate names for sex organs rather than euphemisms. When children are taught using inaccurate language, it is possible for them to misunderstand. Using proper terminology is the first step to teaching about sex accurately and accessibly. It can help them talk about these changes or health issues with doctors. It is also beneficial for the development of children’s healthy, positive body image.

Terms

- Puberty
- Body image

Development [60 minutes]

1. Tell students that today they are going to learn about their bodies and discuss how to feel good about them. Start by showing students the movie “The Girl with the World in Her Hair” or “Girls Ages 5-18 Talk About What Beauty Means to Them”.
 - a. “The Girl with the World in Her Hair”: Encourage students to discuss what they think about Jasmine and her attitude toward her hair. Ask questions to stimulate a discussion, for example, why does Jasmine feel she’s got the world in her hair? Is it good that she can laugh about it? Do you have similar experiences or feelings about a part of your own body that you feel comfortable sharing? Invite students to share and talk.
Conclude by saying that Jasmine’s curly hair is just one of her unique characteristics, and it is part of what makes her who she is. Though taking care of her hair can sometimes be a nuisance and other people may have their opinions about it, it’s important that Jasmine feels like she can appreciate and celebrate her curly hair as part of her unique identity. We will also change and become different as we grow up. Tell the students that when someone starts puberty, their body and body image (i.e. how they see and feel about their body) can change a lot. During this time, it is especially important to do things that can help you feel positive and confident about your body.
 - b. “Girls Ages 5-18 Talk About What Beauty Means to Them”: Encourage students to list some well-known people they think are beautiful and discuss how they define beauty. Ask questions to inspire them, for example, does everyone on the list look the same or make you feel the same? Does everyone have the same definition of beauty? Is it good that there are different ideas about beauty? How can we accept and appreciate people’s differences? In the video, Joelle says becoming beautiful is “learning all the lessons of life, and you go from here to there, and you start to blossom.” Do you agree with her?
Conclude that everyone has different types of beauty because everyone is unique. Tell the students that we all have our own specific characteristics, and we are all different. There is nothing wrong with our uniqueness. We will change and become different as we grow up. Tell the students that when someone starts puberty, their body and body image (i.e. how they see and feel about their body) can change a lot. Just as Joelle said, it is also a kind of beauty because you are growing from a kid to an adult, and you are blossoming. During this time, it is especially important to do things that can help you feel positive and confident about your body.
2. Review the changes that can happen during puberty. Ask students to list some of the physical and emotional changes that can happen during puberty and write them on the board. Some examples include:
 - Pubic hair grows.
 - Menstruation begins.
 - People get taller.
 - Body hair grows.
 - Testicles get bigger and start making sperm.

- The voice can change and facial hair begins to grow.
 - People can start developing romantic or sexual feelings for others.
 - People’s moods can change. Sometimes people feel emotions more strongly or feel self-conscious or confused.
3. Tell students that the physical and emotional changes that may happen during puberty can make it harder to feel good about your body. Thinking about things that you like about your body, what you can do with your body or things that you like about yourself in general can make you feel better about going through puberty.
 4. Divide students into pairs and give each student a large piece of paper. Have students work in pairs and trace their partner’s silhouette on the paper with a marker. If this isn’t feasible, use the “My Body Image” printouts instead.
 5. Ask students to use markers to draw or write down positive characteristics they have. Tell them these can be both physical and emotional characteristics that they are proud of or that make them feel good. Students can also include things they can do with their bodies that they’re proud of. Encourage students to include characteristics related to puberty and growing up that they might be looking forward to, but be sure to let them know that they don’t have to include anything that they’re uncomfortable with or that feels private.
 6. Put up the drawings in a “My Body Image” gallery. Invite students to briefly present why they are special and what they are proud of.
 7. Conclude that bodily and emotional changes are a natural part of puberty. These changes are representations of our growth toward becoming adults. Feeling proud about these changes can help us appreciate our bodies, feel confident, and celebrate our uniqueness. It’s important to respect and appreciate all body types.

Culmination [20 minutes]

1. Tape a piece of construction paper onto each student’s back and give them a marker.
2. Turn music on. Have students mingle and walk around the room until the music stops.
3. When the music stops, have each student write something positive about other another student onto their piece of paper (ex. You have a nice smile; you are in great shape; you are funny).
4. Repeat step 2 until students’ papers are full.
5. Allow them to take off their paper, read, and enjoy! Encourage them to keep it somewhere they’ll remember and take it out if they’re feeling low or insecure about their bodies or themselves.

Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Become aware of the physical and mental changes that occur during their puberty

- Gain knowledge and accept changes that are or potentially will be taking place in their bodies
- Adopt a positive attitude toward their changing body and diverse body types
- Identify things they like about their bodies and themselves

Assessment Ideas

1. Give each student the “Adult-Kid Communicator” handout as a take-home assignment. Encourage students to complete it as an interview with an adult they feel comfortable talking with. Afterwards, have students share their thoughts and discuss what they could do to teach kids to adopt a positive attitude toward their body when they become adults.



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