Public Health England

Body image in a digital world

In this lesson students explore what body image is, how social media can impact it and identify ways to reduce stress or anxiety caused by online pressure.

PSHE Association Quality Assured Resource

PSHE Association

Curriculum links to the PSHE Association Programme of Study

KS3

Core theme 1: Health and wellbeing

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- how the media portrays young people, body image and health issues
- that identity is affected by a range of factors, including the media and a positive sense of self.

Core theme 2: Relationships

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- the qualities and behaviours they should expect and exhibit in a wide variety of positive relationships (including teams, class, friendships etc.)
- to recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it.

KS4

Core theme 1: Health and wellbeing

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- to evaluate the extent to which their self-confidence and self-esteem are affected by the judgments of others
- to recognise and manage feelings about, and influences on, their body image including the media's portrayal of idealised and artificial body shapes.

Core theme 2: Relationships

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- the characteristics and benefits of positive, strong, supportive, equal relationships
- the role peers can play in supporting one another (including helping vulnerable friends to access reliable, accurate and appropriate support).

>> Learning objectives

We are learning about how social media can influence and affect perceptions about body image and cause stress.

>> Learning outcomes

Pupils can:

- recognise the impact of social media on body image
- know who to ask for advice and where to look for guidance on body image and online stress, including on the Every Mind Matters website
- use techniques for minimising stress that may arise from a negative perception of our body image influenced by social media.

Preparation

Before delivering the lesson:

- the Every Mind Matters website (optional)
- read through the Every Mind Matters top tips.

Climate for learning

Read through Guidance for learning in a safe environment. This includes advice on:

- developing and revisiting effective ground rules drawn up with students
- familiarity with your school's safeguarding policy and procedures, including Child Protection and other relevant policies
- being prepared in case students make a disclosure
- including and protecting vulnerable students
- using distancing techniques so that students can discuss sensitive issues without being encouraged to make a disclosure
- handling sensitive questions
- involving students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Anonymous question box

A question box or envelope should be placed somewhere in the classroom. Students are encouraged to write down any questions that occur to them during the lesson and submit them anonymously. Teachers can address these questions in the next lesson or form time.

>> Resources

- Body image and You! film
- Tobi Shinobi talks body image film
- Access to the Every Mind Matters website
- Blank A4 paper and pens
- Sticky notes

>> Time

60 minutes approximately

>> Key vocabulary

Social media, selfie, body image, healthy, 'likes', body confidence, editing, celebrities, filters, followers, attention, comments

Baseline assessment

These starter activities introduce the topic of body image and online stress in a safe, non-threatening way, enabling you to find out students' prior knowledge, understanding or perceptions about the topic. You can choose to revisit them in the plenary to show evidence of students' progress.

Before you begin, establish or review your ground rules for learning in a safe environment.

Talking about selfies (10-15 minutes)

In small groups, students watch ▶ **Body Image and You!** film either on their phones or a school device, depending on your school's phone policy and facilities available. After sharing their reactions to the film, students discuss how they think the internet, particularly social media, can cause stress and impact on a young person's body image.

As a group, students create a 'concept map' using an A3 piece of paper with 'social media', 'online stress' and 'body image' as key words on the map. A concept map enables students to capture words, ideas and responses to a question or topic. Ask students to organise their responses into branched groups that are linked by the theme, and to indicate relationships and connections on their maps. If required, you can create a template to help students get started or draw an example on the board.

Ask groups to consider the following points when compiling their map:

- What do we mean by 'body image'? How is that different to what a person's actual body looks like? (Body image is the thoughts and feelings a person has about their body, not what it's really like.)

- What makes people think they need to look a certain way?

- How does the media influence this?

- How does gaining likes and followers on social media make people feel? Why is this important to some people?

- Give reasons why you think social media, especially selfies, can lead to stress and anxiety?

Allow time for each group to share their key ideas with the rest of the class, and then to add any further ideas or thoughts to their map in a different-coloured pen to create a master concept map on the board.

How do you feel? (5 minutes)

This is a before and after self-assessment activity. Students reflect individually on how they feel about the topic of body image at the beginning of the lesson and again at the end of the lesson, to see whether their feelings have changed.

Students should answer the question '**How do you feel about the pressure related to selfies and body image?'** by picking an emoji that expresses their feelings. Alternatively, they can place themselves on a 'confidence line' drawn on paper, with 'not at all confident' at one end, and 'completely confident' at the other.

This is a self-reflection activity – students should never be asked to share personal information with their peers.

Core activities

Behind the selfie (15 minutes)

Back in small groups, students choose one of the following scenarios to consider:

1. Mohammed is trying to take the perfect selfie to post online. He feels really pressured to only post a picture in which he looks good.

2. Jack follows Mohammed. He thinks Mohammed's pictures always look much better than his, and Mohammed's large number of followers makes him feel down about himself.

3. Ava is Mohammed's friend and is about to rate Mohammed's selfie 3/10 as a joke. Other people start to say worse things about the photo, so Mohammed deletes his selfie.

Students discuss what Mohammed, Jack or Ava might be thinking and feeling in the scenarios above. Capture ideas using a 'Head, Heart and Hands diagram' to show the thoughts, feelings and actions of the chosen character, then share ideas with the class. Use these differentiated questions as prompts:

Lower	Higher
• What might be going through each character's mind? • What feelings and emotions could they be experiencing? • How might their body image and body confidence be affected by their experiences online? • Being healthy is more important than what makeup or hair styles are trending on social media. Why is that?	• Is someone's online profile an accurate depiction of who they really are? • What lengths do some people go to create the perfect the selfie? Why?

Being ourselves (10–20 minutes)

Show the class the film ▶ **Tobi Shinobi talks body image** to spark off discussion using the questions below.

Students should consider any tips and advice that they think would be useful and write them down on a post-it note. Be on hand to answer students' questions if needed.

Students could consider these points:

Lower	Higher
• How can we reduce the stress and anxiety around body image that social media might cause? • How can we celebrate our differences, rather than wanting to conform and look a certain way? • How can we feel comfortable and confident in who we are? • How can we make sure we are healthy? • How can we change/influence the conversations we have with our friends about body image, to something that's more honest and helpful? • Where can we go for help or guidance if we need to?	• How can we use social media to take pride in looking healthy – and our unique selves? • What advice would you give someone who cares so much about poses/clothes/make-up/filters that it is impacting their day-to-day life?

Ask the class to create a 'wall of ideas' for dealing with body image and online stress using their individual post-it notes. This could be completed at the end of the lesson, or as a homework activity.

Extension activity: What is beauty?

Distribute photos of celebrities or famous people, either from magazines or online sources. In their pairs, students should discuss how they think the media impacts on our body image, for example, when Instagram stars Photoshop their images to make them appear 'perfect'. How does this affect our perception of how we should look?

Plenaries

Use these plenary ideas to summarise learning and identify next steps.

How do you feel? (5 minutes)

Students think back to the emoji or confidence line that they shared at the start of the session in answer to the question **'How do you feel about the pressure related to selfies and body image?'.**

Now they should choose another emoji, or position themselves on the confidence line, to answer the same questions, using the following prompt questions to help them:

- Have your feelings about body image and online stress changed since then?

- Do you feel more confident in handling the stress that posting or viewing selfies can cause?

- Do you know where to get more ideas or help if you need it?

The emojis (or confidence lines) can be shown to the teacher using mini white boards or handed in on cards at the end of the lesson.

Class pledge (5 minutes)

Students come up with pledges, slogans or hashtags to adopt as a class e.g. 'I understand that I don't need to use filters when I post my selfies. I am fine the way I am', 'Difference is good', #BeYourSelfie, #selfieesteem.

Students can create a 'board blast' with all the slogans and hashtags, create a poster to display as a class manifesto or set themselves challenges, e.g.: 'I will only take 15 selfies this week', 'I will step away from my phone for an hour every day', etc.

Before the end of class, remind students about the importance of asking for help if they need it, and encourage them to visit Every Mind Matters in their own time, along with other helpful websites and sources of information.

Extension ideas

Remember that the learning doesn't stop now. Follow up the learning using the extension ideas below:

Vox pops and other video or audio

Students can create video clips of their ideas, interview their friends and create a vox pop compilation, or develop video clips which capture role-played examples of what can happen and how to respond.

Leaflets and artwork

Students can share their ideas by creating leaflets or posters that provide help and advice in their own words, and which draw on what they discovered in the lesson. This can include advice or creative responses like poems, rap lyrics, photos and visual art to convey students' messages.

Displays

Students can draw on their ideas to create displays of written work, images or video clips for your foyer. This is a great way to share students' learning and creative responses with other students and with adult visitors to your school.

Student-led assemblies

Students can develop their ideas into presentations, video clips and role plays that they can build into an assembly for a year group or the whole school. This can stand alone or link to displays and peer-led learning sessions.

Peer-led learning sessions

Students can develop versions of their activities that they can deliver with younger students and which include the media they create to articulate their ideas in their own words. These can take place in tutor time, timetabled lessons, out of lesson time or as a suspended timetable activity.