

Athletes As Leaders



Session 5: Unpacking Beauty Standards

Prep Before Session

Make Sure You Have:

- Group agreements to refer to during “Warm Up” (if needed)
- Ball to throw during “Cool Down”

Review Key Messages:

- There’s no right or wrong way to have a body.
- No one should feel pressured to look or present in a certain way.
- Avoid making comments about people’s bodies.

Warm Up

Introduce Topic: (2 min)

Welcome! Last session we talked about addressing misinformation and bias. Today we are going to talk about unpacking beauty standards. From a very young age, people receive messages about beauty standards from products, peers, the media, and their communities. Of course, we know these messages differ for certain communities, such as women and girls, people of color, people with larger bodies, the LGBTQ+ community, disabled folks, and so on. Many of these beauty standards are unrealistic and impossible to achieve. Oftentimes, people feel pressured to change their body or appearance to fit this image. There is so much judgment about how people look, and that can take focus away from all the other amazing things that they are doing in their lives.

Beauty standards make people feel bad about themselves. Negative comments on people’s appearance and bodies are so common that we often may not notice the damage they cause. Social media encourages us to compare ourselves to other people. It’s important to remember that people’s photos are often staged,

perfectly posed, filtered, and airbrushed. There are people, influencers, and companies who profit from making people feel bad about their appearance.

Work Out

Discussion Questions: (8 min) [You can break into small groups for the “work out” discussion if you have a large group.]

- ❓ **What messages about beauty standards have you heard or seen?**
- ❓ **How do you think messages about beauty standards differ for certain communities, like women/girls, people of color, and so on?**

Talking Points: (2 min) [You may choose to share all talking points, or only those that have not been discussed already by the athletes.]

- » There is no right or wrong way to have a body. Someone’s body is not a measurement of their worth.
- » Avoid commenting on other people’s bodies. Except maybe if you are trying to help a friend avoid embarrassment with an easy fix, like picking something out of their teeth or wiping something off their face.
- » Social media, especially filters, contribute to unrealistic beauty standards, racism, negative body image, and lack of confidence. Remember, you can choose who you follow. Unfollowing or blocking people who make you feel bad about yourself is a form of self-care.
- » It’s never OK to fat shame others. People with larger bodies deserve love and respect just like everyone else. They are often mistreated in the medical field, the fashion industry, and in everyday life. Do your part to ensure that all bodies are respected.
- » Clothes, hair styles, and makeup are all forms of self-expression. They can be representative of people’s cultures or communities. People should feel free to present themselves however they’re comfortable with, and we should celebrate that!
- » When we go against society’s beauty standards and maintain that there is no right or wrong way to look or present, then we are also fighting against harmful gender and racial stereotypes.
- » There are many things that we as a society need to unlearn. We need to unlearn that we need to have wrinkle and scar free skin, that we’re not allowed to gain weight, that we need to tan or lighten our skin, and that our body image defines our worth.

- » **So here is a challenge for you:** When you see a new person at school, catch yourself before judging their body, hair, skin, and clothes. Instead, get to know them. When you compliment a friend, see if it can be first about their personality, something they are good at, or something great that they did.
- » **As student leaders and athletes,** it is important for you to challenge harmful beauty standards, and to look at people more deeply for who they really are.

Cool Down

Team Talk: (8 min) [You may choose to have specific athletes/leaders to facilitate the Team Talk.]

Now it is time for the Team Talk! Let's get in a circle and get ready to pass the ball. We are going to think of things that you can all do as student leaders & athletes. Hopefully these will be things everyone in the group can agree to do, when you are interacting with people on your team, at school, on social media, or in the community. We are hoping they will become the new team norms that will help you take action as leaders in the community.

This week we are going to brainstorm ways that we can challenge society's messages about beauty and promote a positive self-image.

❓ What beauty standards would you like to unlearn? How can you unlearn them?

❓ What are some positive things to notice or comment on about someone, other than their appearance?

❓ How can we use social media to promote the different ways we present ourselves? For example, when sharing or commenting on a picture or video?

[Possible answers: uplifting people who go against society's beauty standards; celebrating people's stretch marks, scars, and acne; sharing content about people's achievements; adding disclaimers to images that are digitally altered].

Thank you for all your participation and great ideas today. You all have awesome ideas on how to push back against beauty standards and judgments on appearance. It's time to break for the day (or get to practice).

Close the Circle with a Team Cheer.

