



ACTIVITY 1: ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

What you will need to complete this activity:

- Handout 1 (i) and (ii): one copy per group
- Handout 2: one copy per group, photocopied onto cardboard and cut up into cards

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

 **Healthy, wealthy and wise**
Ask the students to draw a mind map of words and phrases they associate with the concept of a *healthy person*.


 When they have completed this, ask them to combine their efforts with 2 or 3 other students. Get them to add to their mind map.

Repeat the activity, but this time write the word *eating disorders* on the board.

Record class answers.

Discuss the following questions:

- What is a healthy person?
- How would you recognise a healthy person?
- Does the class agree?
- How much control do people have over their own health?
- Are you a healthy person?
- Why?

 Draw a line across the board. On one end of the continuum write the word *healthy person*, on the other end of the continuum write the word *eating disorder*.

Ask the students to draw this in their books and place themselves somewhere on the line.

 Discuss the following questions.

- Why did you choose that position?
- Is a person's physical appearance a reliable indicator of health?
- Why?
- Why do we associate some words and appearances with being healthy?
- What does this mean for you?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Why start with this?

The reasons why some people develop eating disorders is a very complex issue.

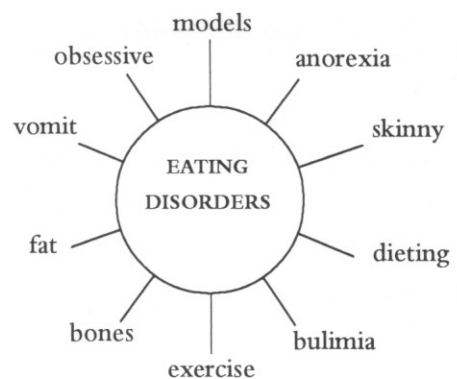
It has been found that eating disorders start with individuals simply been dissatisfied with their bodies and themselves.

The fact that they cannot fit into the culturally defined body image or shape is a major factor.

TEACHER NOTES

This activity reveals the values and attitudes students have about being healthy. Students often think that to be healthy means to be slim. This concept is constantly reinforced in all areas of society. Highlight this when discussing the answers given by the students.

Example of a mind map:



You will find students tend to highlight extreme manifestations such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa. You need to broaden their view of disordered eating to include any health-damaging practice, such as excessive dieting and exercise. It is also important that you help them make the link to the many social reasons underpinning these practices.

Doesn't this only affect girls?

The perception that eating disorders only “happen to girls” needs to be challenged. Boys and men in increasing numbers are experiencing eating disorders. The explanation for this is equally complex, but the reasons are similar to those of girls.

What is an eating disorder?

The term eating disorders is a medical label used to describe clinically defined disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa.

There are, however, many other patterns of disordered eating that prevent many students from leading healthy lives.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



Shaping up

Distribute Handout 1(i) and 1(ii) to each group.

Photocopy Handout 2 onto cardboard and cut up copies for each group.

Ask the students to place each of the cards on either the “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” sheet according to what they think of the body shape.

Each of the group members must reach a consensus on the placement of the card.

Each group reports its findings back to the whole class and gives reasons for its placements.



Analyse the group responses.

- Are there any common characteristics or groupings?
- Are there any common reasons and justifications?
- Is there any consensus between groups?
- Are there any reasons why some groups varied in their placement of cards?

TEACHER NOTES

This activity demonstrates the attitudes students have toward particular body shapes. Although there may be some debate between the groups, the final placement of cards is fairly predictable.

Let the students interpret what “Thumbs up” and “Thumbs down” mean. If they need some guidance, offer the following suggestions:

“Thumbs up”: Positive responses, what is preferred, desirable, healthy, OK.

“Thumbs down”: Negative responses, what is undesirable, unhealthy.

Explore the group’s interpretation of what “thumbs up” and “thumbs down” mean. There may be some interesting variations to discuss between groups.

Students tend to put the larger body shapes in the “thumbs down” category (particularly for female body shape). There may also be more acceptance of variation in body shape for males as compared to females.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

What does the research say about body shape?

The majority of students feel that the ideal female body shape is slim but not anorexic.

Most girls realise that this is a stereotype, but are still drawn to this cultural ideal.

Students also feel that the ideal body shape for males is tall, muscular and well-built.

Boys tend to reinforce female slimness more than girls. This may be obvious in their card placement in this activity.