

BE REAL™

CHANGING A CULTURE THAT ISN'T
WORKING FOR **ANY** BODY.



BE REAL'S LESSON PLAN FOR
THE STUDENT BODY
TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

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Be Real's lesson plan accompanying *The Student Body* movie is a lesson created for high school students. The movie follows a student, Bailey, determined to eliminate BMI screening in schools. Through a series of interviews, Bailey shows why the BMI measurement is flawed and exposes its detrimental impact on students. The lesson plan and questions explore themes in the movie in greater detail including the flaws of BMI, achieving health and self-care, and taking action in your environment.



WHAT PROBLEM DOES THE STUDENT BODY LESSON ADDRESS?

Millions of US children have been weighed in schools over the years due to School BMI Screening policies. Decades after these weigh-ins began, research has shown the screenings have yielded no positive child health outcomes on a population level or on an individual level. Instead, these screenings have actually proven to be harmful to students' mental health.

- In 2011, the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics gave examples of children who engaged in disordered eating behaviors and excessive exercise after getting results from their BMI screenings (Portilla).
- A 2021 study of 28,000 students in California Public Schools over 3 years found that School BMI Screenings "did not improve students' weight status or physical health." The screenings did, however, "decrease students' satisfaction with their weight." Body dissatisfaction can trigger a host of other mental health problems (Madsen et al.)

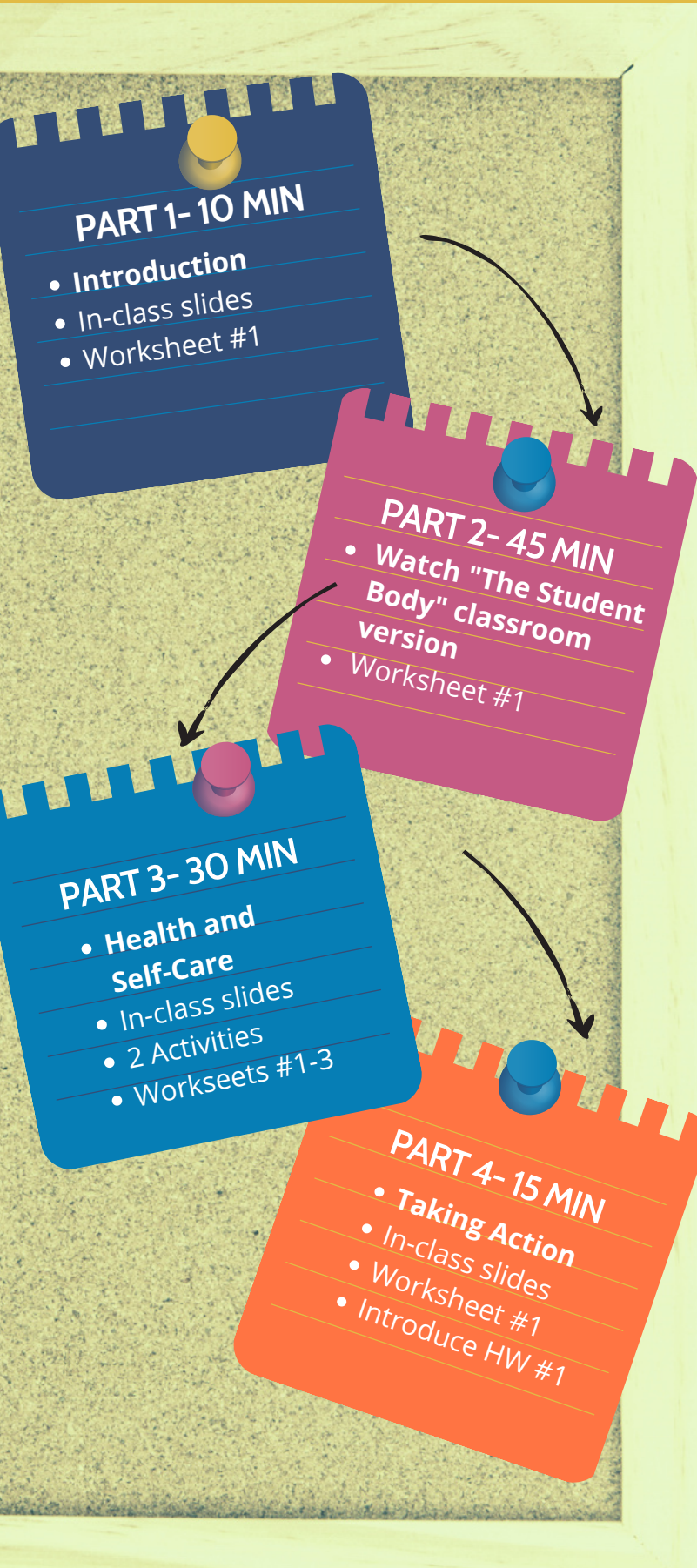
The Student Body movie and this accompanying lesson both teach students to explore health beyond BMI and stand up for what they believe in. If students are encouraged to be kind to their bodies, they will be more likely to take care of themselves. Students will have less of a focus on weight and more of a focus on self-care behaviors, specifically self-compassion, and mindful eating.

BE REAL MISSION

BE REAL is a nonprofit organization linking caring people in local communities with education and advocacy opportunities to change a culture that isn't working for **any body's** body image in today's world.

OUR MISSION is to spread body confidence resources to schools and homes across the country, so every child can grow up with a healthy relationship to food and their body.

TIMING AND MATERIALS



BODY IMAGE TEACHING TIPS

DON'T...

- * label foods as "good" or "bad"
- * comment about a person's body size, weight, or BMI
- * focus on body measurements like clothing size, weight, or BMI
- * count calories or carbs or points
- * talk about diets or dieting and avoid "thinner is better" thinking
- * share personal stories
- * use guest speakers who have recovered from an eating disorder
- * have students research body image or eating disorders

DO...

- * reflect on your own attitudes about food, body and eating
- * try to model the behavior you are teaching
- * focus on self-care behaviors rather than body measurements (weight, BMI, size)
- * emphasize that healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes
- * focus on what bodies do rather than what they look like
- * be grateful for all that your body does allowing you to live your life
- * have a plan in place for students who may become distressed due to the subject matter

LESSON PLANS



Font Key and
Acknowledgements



Lesson Plans
Slide by Slide



Commitment
& Safe Space Guidelines



6 Things That
Will Happen

THE STUDENT BODY LESSON WAS CREATED BY A TEAM OF INTERNATIONAL BODY IMAGE EXPERTS



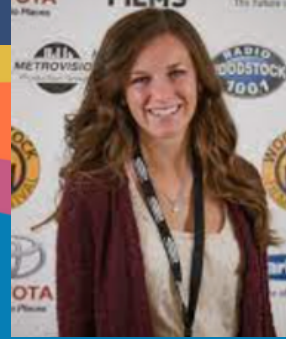
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FONT KEY FOR LESSON PLANS

- **Bold font:** Specific questions to ask the class, important points to highlight in class, slide headings
- Regular font: Points to make in class at the teacher's discretion for individual lesson plan content and timing. Teachers have choice to take the discussion in different directions.
- *Italics:* Teacher instructions and information for optimal student learning.
- *Light blue italics:* Expected answers for student learning. Teachers should weave these points into class discussion, **especially if the light blue italics are bolded**. If there are no suggested answers given, any on-point student discussion is acceptable.

COMMITMENT & SAFE SPACE GUIDELINES

Students will get the most out of this curriculum if they contribute to the conversation and complete all of the in-class exercises and homework. Participation should be voluntary.

Ideally, each classroom should be a respectful and comfortable space where students can speak freely and share perspectives, prioritizing being empathetic and real. In order to create a space where everyone feels comfortable speaking up, the class can create its own safe space guidelines.

Many teachers have already created this space in their classrooms. If teachers would like more resources about creating safe spaces, you might want to visit [Ropes.com](https://ropes.com). Here are some ideas for creating a safe space in your classroom:

- Teachers can ask, "Are each of you willing to keep an open mind and give this program a try? Let's all go around the room and make a verbal agreement – I'll start... I am willing to keep an open mind and give this a try."
- Write down suggested guidelines--such as the ones below--on the board.
- Reinforce class expectations throughout the lessons.
- Ask students to add to this list with other appropriate guidelines.
- Once you have a complete set of guiding principles, seek general agreement from the group. Ask "Does everyone agree to this list?"



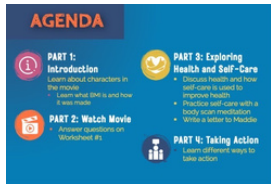
SOME SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

- * We are in a **safe space**
- * Only share what you are **comfortable** with, it is okay to pass on certain questions
- * **Respect** personal boundaries
- * **Validate** others' contributions
- * **Don't** use names when telling a story
- * **Don't** share stories outside of class
- * **Be** respectful
- * **Be** open to learn



INTRODUCTION/FILM VIEWING

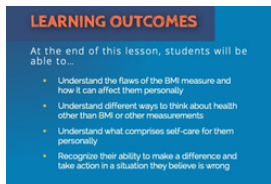
SLIDES & WORKSHEETS TEACHER MOVES



Agenda

There are 4 parts to the lesson today plus a homework assignment

- Introduction to characters and concepts in *The Student Body* movie
- The movie and questions
- Discussion about self-care with two activities
- Discussion about how to take action in your environment



Learning Outcomes. At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- 1) Understand the flaws of the BMI measurement and how it can affect them personally
- 2) Understand different ways to think about health other than BMI or other measurements
- 3) Understand what comprises self-care for them personally
- 4) Recognize their ability to make a difference and take action in a situation that they believe is wrong



Key Cast Members

Here are some people to be familiar with before starting the movie. *Introduce characters listed on the slide.*

- Bailey Webber is a high school student, co-director, and writer of the movie with the help of her father, Michael Webber
- Maddie Karimi is a high school student and shares her experience with a school BMI screening with Bailey in an interview. Together, they raise awareness about the harms of BMI screenings.
- Claire Mysko, Sayantani DasGupta, Stefan Czerwinski, and Eric Kearney are interviewed by Maddie, each bringing a different perspective to the discussion

Pass out Worksheet #1 before moving on to the next slide so students can fill in their answers to the next questions



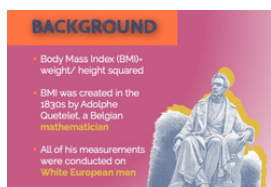
What is BMI?

- **Do you know what BMI is, which stands for Body Mass Index?**
 - Have students give their ideas.
 - *BMI is an inexpensive and easy screening method for weight category, but it does not diagnose health of an individual. It is intended to show increased risk of disease or health condition based on the amount of fat a person is carrying.*

These questions get students thinking about their personal experiences with BMI. You can opt to have them write these answers on Worksheet #1 or discuss this in class.

1) Has your BMI been taken in school? Where in school was it taken? Who was with you? Were there other people around or was it done privately?

2) Were other students around you reacting to getting weighed? Can you say something about how you or other students felt about having their BMI taken?



BMI: Background

BMI is a number calculated by dividing someone's weight by their height squared.

It was created in the 1800s by Adolphe Quetelet in order to find the measurements of the "average man." The calculations were later used to study the health of populations. Keep in mind that the creator of BMI was a mathematician, not a doctor. Also, all measurements he used for BMI were conducted on White European men, making it not an accurate measure of what is "average" for women and people with different builds.

INTRODUCTION/FILM VIEWING

SLIDES & WORKSHEETS

TEACHER MOVES

PROBLEMS WITH BMI

BMI was never intended to measure individual health.
BMI doesn't differentiate between muscle, bone, and fat.
An elite athlete may be considered out of average BMI range and at risk for disease.

According to data from schools the used BMI Screenings, after the screenings:
Size-based bullying increased
Dieting increased
Weight satisfaction decreased



In the movie, Bailey is trying to eliminate School BMI Screenings. Here are some of the reasons BMI is a flawed measure of health.

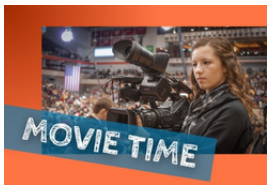
- BMI was never intended to measure individual health, but that is how it has been used to determine health risks.
- It doesn't differentiate between muscles, bones, and fat. So, an athlete with more muscle could be considered out of average BMI range and at risk for disease
- A recent, large study in California schools--that used BMI screening--found that over 3 years, BMI screening made students less kind to others and themselves:
 - size-based bullying increased
 - dieting increased
 - weight satisfaction decreased

QUESTIONS DURING THE MOVIE

Bailey protests early in the movie and it inspires the rest of her actions. What was Bailey's first protest about and what did she learn from the experience?
The school sends a letter home for Maddie. Why is Maddie upset about her letter?
Why is state government advocating for School BMI Screenings?
According to Claire Mysko, why is BMI a flawed measure of health?
According to Dr. Dasgupta, why is BMI used despite its flaws?
Based on the movie and what we've covered already, what are some reasons not to do BMI Screenings?
Bailey asked everyone she interviewed to be weighed and most said no. If Bailey gave you the chance to be weighed, how would you respond? Why would you respond that way?

While watching the film, you will be answering these questions on Worksheet #1.

- 1) Bailey protests early in the movie and it inspires the rest of her actions. What was Bailey's first protest about and what did she learn from the experience?
- 2) The school sends a letter home for Maddie. Why is Maddie upset about her letter?
- 3) Why is the state government advocating for School BMI Screenings?
- 4) According to Claire Mysko, why is BMI a flawed measure of health?
- 5) According to Dr. Dasgupta, why is BMI used despite its flaws?
- 6) Based on the movie and what we've covered already, what are some reasons not to do BMI screenings?
- 7) Bailey asked everyone she interviewed to be weighed and most said no. If Bailey gave you the chance to be weighed, how would you respond? Why would you respond that way?



Present the 45-minute classroom version of *The Student Body*.

After the film, go over answers to the questions. Ask students for their answers first, then read the answer provided if not given. You can also find these answers in a **Worksheet #1 Answer Key** on Page 19 of this Toolkit.

Worksheet #1



- 1) Bailey's first protest was about keeping their school principal. She learned that "even kids" can have a voice.
- 2) Maddie was upset because she didn't feel accepted at school after being labeled as "overweight." She felt like a disappointment. She is active and healthy, but the report card tried to tell her otherwise. She also wasn't given a choice in being weighed.
- 3) State government is advocating for School BMI Screening because they want to see if changes made in school, such as more nutritious school lunches, are working to improve students' health.
- 4) BMI is a flawed measure of health because it can cause students to obsess over their weight and develop poor body image. BMI is also inaccurate for different people and doesn't account for students developing at different rates.
- 5) According to Dr. Dasgupta, BMI is used because it is an easy and quick measurement.
- 6) There are many reasons not to do BMI screenings. According to Claire Mysko, people could develop eating disorders. According to the slides, BMI screening increases dieting in students and makes them less satisfied with their weight. BMI is also not a good representation of health.

The next part of the lesson will shift away from BMI to better ways of viewing health.

SLIDES & WORKSHEETS TEACHER MOVES



You should be starting to understand that School BMI Screenings have not worked in the way legislators hoped they would for school children. We know that a person's weight is not a good representation of their health. However, you may be wondering, without focusing on weight, how can we support better health? The next part of the lesson will be exploring different ways to support our health.



What does it mean to be healthy?

Listen to student answers. Students are not expected to know this yet, but this will be a good assessment of their current attitudes toward health.

Being healthy is a combination of physical, mental, and social well-being that is unique to each person. Health can vary with circumstance and is impacted by a variety of factors beyond our control. However, self-care activities can be used to support health. The size of a person does not indicate their health status.



3 Cultural Shifts

The current culture views health in a way that can cause us to dislike our bodies. Often this culture equates being healthy with being thin, but we are all born with unique bodies. Here are three shifts to thinking about health in a more approachable, size-inclusive way.

1) Instead of thinking Thinner is Better → Focus on Your Unique Healthy Self

- Your unique healthy self is how your body *feels* when you take care of your health, not how it looks. You want to think about what your body *does* rather than how it looks.

2) Instead of Focusing on Measurements (like BMI) → Focus on Self-Care Behaviors

- This shift is about avoiding measurements like weight or BMI. Instead, we want to focus on the *process* of taking care of ourselves. *We'll be going into more detail on this shift in the next few slides.*

3) Instead of Judging People by Their Appearance → work towards Recognizing People Come in All Shapes and Sizes

- It's common in our culture to judge others based on how they look, but instead we could try and recognize other, more important pieces of who people are. You would be surprised at how often we comment on each other's bodies. By not judging other people, you teach yourself be kinder to you as well.



Focusing on the second shift,

What is self-care?

- Have students share their ideas.
- Self-care is taking care of your body, emotions, and relationships in ways you enjoy and that serve you well.*
- We're going to talk about specific behaviors you can *do*--rather than measurements to take--like BMI.

Self-Care Behaviors for Health

Physical, mental, and social health are all important for wellbeing. Under each type of health are some broad examples of self-care.

Give students a minute to look at this graphic. It is showing that health is a combination of many different behaviors.

What is Physical Health? *Listen to student answers, then incorporate the following into discussion:*

- Physical health is how most people traditionally view health. It involve maintaining body wellness by sleeping enough, moving your body, and drinking enough water. Mindful eating is also included in physical health and we will learn about it in more detail in a few minutes.*

(continued on next page)

What is Mental Health? Listen to student answers, then incorporate the following into discussion:

- While physical health is often prioritized in health, **mental health** is just as important.
- *Mental health is taking care of the mind so that we can cope with stressors, learn new things, make decisions, and connect with others.* One way to take care of your mental health is to **practice stress management**. This could look like deep breathing or petting a dog.
- **Emotional awareness** involves noticing what you are feeling and why you might be feeling that way. There are many ways to become more aware of your emotions, such as writing in a journal or meditating.
- **Self-compassion** is treating yourself with forgiveness and kindness. We'll be discussing that later.

What is Social Health? Listen to student answers, then incorporate the following into discussion:

- *Social health is the ability to form **good relationships**.*
- It is also important to balance alone time with social time. Everyone has different social needs.

Some of these behaviors can overlap as well. For example, going on a long walk can improve both physical and mental health! **Remember we are focusing on the process of self-care, not the results.**



Self-care will be different for everyone based on who you are and what you like to do! **We all achieve physical, mental, and social health in different ways.** Some people may go on a walk for their physical health, while others would rather play a team sport. Think about how you personally can practice self-care.

Ask the class:

1) What is a self-care activity you do to feel good? Is this activity for mental, physical, or social health?

2) What is a new self-care activity you want to try?

These should be specific actions they can do that aligns with the behaviors on the previous slide.

Example responses:

- *"I play basketball for my physical health. I want to try taking a social media break for my mental health."*
- *"I eat dinner on weeknights with my family for my social health. I want to start going to bed an hour earlier for my physical health."*



Mindful Eating (we will be practicing this in tonight's homework)

What is mindful eating? If you've never heard of this before, do you have a guess? Listen to student answers then go through the points below. We want to give students awareness of how to eat for the best chance of avoiding body image issues. We want students to know how to "fuel their body well" for their lives.

Eating mindfully is an important part of self-care. We could do a whole class on this topic, but here are the basics.

- 1) Eat when you are hungry**--You can use the hunger and fullness meter on the Post-it. You CAN eat when you are not hungry (this is not the Hunger/Fullness diet); this is about noticing your body cues.
- 2) Choose your food intentionally**--How do you want to eat? Notice what you are choosing and why. You may be craving a food that is nutrient-dense or you might just want a "fun or energy dense" food because you like the taste of it. All food serves a purpose which could be for pleasure or energy. No foods are off limits. You want to fuel your body for your days, taking good care of your body and yourself.
- 3) Enjoy your food**--Eating is supposed to be pleasurable experience.
- 4) Stop eating when you are satisfied**, which means "comfortably full" on the hunger and fullness meter, but also that you ate what you wanted to eat without feeling deprived.
- 5) Notice how the food makes your body feel**- Are you feeling energized or sleepy? Does your stomach feel comfortably full or stuffed? Learn lessons about "food and you" for the next time you eat.



Inner Critic

What is your inner critic? Listen to student answers, then incorporate the following into discussion:

- **The inner critic is the voice in our thoughts that finds fault with us.**
- Do any of the quotes on this slide quotes look familiar?
- **It is important to remember, these are just thoughts, not the truth.**

SELF-CARE SELF-COMPASSION

- Self-compassion is talking to ourselves in a more kind and less judgmental way.
- You can choose to listen to a compassionate voice rather than a critical one.

Self-Compassion

What is self-compassion? Listen to student answers, then incorporate the following into discussion:

- **Self-compassion is a way to talk to ourselves in a more kind way than the inner critic talks to us.**
- **We aim to talk to ourselves in the same way we would speak to a good friend.**
- **Who would you rather listen to, a kind coach or a mean coach?**

GUIDED MEDITATION: BODY SCAN

Activity: Guided Meditation

We are going to do a short meditation to practice self-compassion. The meditation will be focused on appreciating our bodies. We have less control over our appearance than our culture tells us we have. We will all be happier if we accept ourselves as we are.

- You may recognize negative feelings you have about your body, but then you can realize that these are only thoughts, not the truth.

Worksheet #2



Read from the meditation script on Worksheet #2 (5 minutes). Go slowly and pause after each bullet point.

ACTIVITY: LETTER TO MADDIE

We Maddie's good friend wants to write a letter to Maddie after seeing how upset she was from getting the "BMI report card." Maddie says in the film that she felt "unaccepted for who she was." Pretend you are Maddie's friend. Use a compassionate voice to help Maddie realize the BMI test is flawed; she is not flawed. Empathize with what she is feeling, have you ever felt that way? Maybe suggest something that a friend you could do together to "take action" so no other students need to go through what Maddie went through.

- Write an "I" made in a friend of your.
- Use what we learned in class about the BMI tests, compassion, and taking action.

Activity: Letter to Maddie

Hand out Worksheet #3 and read directions for students. The worksheet has a template for them to write a letter.

Maddie's good friend wants to write a letter to Maddie after seeing how upset she was from the "BMI report card." Maddie says in the film that she felt "unaccepted for who she was." Pretend you are Maddie's friend. Use a compassionate voice to help Maddie realize the BMI test is flawed; she is not flawed. Empathize with what she is feeling, have you ever felt that way? Maybe suggest something the 2 of you could do together to "take action" so no other students need to go through what Maddie went through. If you have other ideas to encourage Maddie, beyond these suggestions, please include them.

Worksheet #3



TAKING ACTION



Taking Action

The next few slides are going to show how you can take action, like Bailey did in the movie, on a topic that you care about.

WHAT ISSUE INSPIRES YOU TO TAKE ACTION?

I want to address any issue, so that desired outcome(s) want to happen in my any school community myself, other.

Can you think of an issue inspires you to take action? Look at the sentence stem on Worksheet #1. Take a few minutes to write down your answer and then share with the class.

Examples:

- *I want to address gun violence, so that people will be safer in my school.*
- *I want to address disability accessibility, so that people with disabilities can use the same resources in the community that able-bodied people can.*



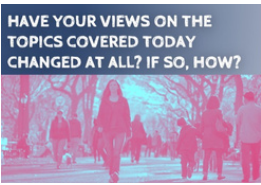
Taking Action

You saw Bailey stand up for what she believes in in the movie. You may want to do that as well, but might be unsure where to start. Here is a list of 7 different ways you can take action.

- 1) Share Knowledge with Others-** You can educate others through school presentations, zoom meetings, or social media
- 2) Advocate for Legislative Change-** Think about who in government has the power to make the change you want to see. Set up a meeting with them or write a letter.
- 3) Run for Office-** By running for office at school, you can learn about issues at school that impact others. You can actively make a change and learn more about how government works.
- 4) Create a Public Awareness Campaign-** You can use social media or an approved public space to raise awareness.
- 5) Raise Money-** Research organizations doing work for your issue and help them by raising money for their efforts.
- 6) Community Service-** Volunteer with an organization doing work for your issue. You can connect with like-minded people and expand your knowledge.
- 7) Protest-** By protesting, you can raise public awareness on the issue at hand and connect with other people that feel strongly.

Ask the class: **Using the options from the list, how did Bailey take action?**

Examples: Bailey advocated for legislative change by interviewing Senator Kearney. Bailey also created a public awareness campaign and shared knowledge with others by making the movie.



Have your views on the topics covered today changed at all?

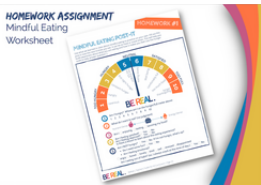
If so, how?

These could be views on BMI screening, self-care, taking action, etc.

Do you feel inspired to do anything different?

HOMEWORK

Homework #1



Mindful Eating Post-It

For the next day's worth of eating-- this could be 2 meals and 3 snacks--answer the questions on the post-it each time you eat. This activity will help you get in the habit of eating mindfully. You can better assess what your body needs, how your body feels, and become aware of eating patterns.

Homework #2 (optional)



Self-Compassionate Social Media Use

This homework is optional, and a good resource for students.

Homework #2 has some tips to help you use social media in a more positive way. "Tips" are ideas you may find useful. Remember the concept of **self-compassion** as you are filling out the worksheet. Reflect on the lines below each tip about how doing it made you feel. You can choose one of these options to try for 3 days while you use social media.

LESSON OUTLINE

IN-CLASS TEACHER GUIDE

THE STUDENT BODY

Outcomes/Objectives: At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the flaws of the BMI measurement and how it can affect them personally
2. Understand different ways to think about health other than BMI or other measurements
3. Understand what comprises self-care for them personally
4. Recognize their ability to make a difference and take action in a situation that they believe is wrong

	ACTIVITY	QUESTIONS
10 MINUTES	Presentation and Discussion: Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cast members • History and Problems with BMI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know what BMI is, which stands for Body Mass Index? • Has your BMI has been taken in school? Where in school was it taken? Who was with you? Were there other people around or was it done privately? • Were other students around you reacting to having their weight measured? Can you say something about how you or other students felt about having their BMI taken?
45 MINUTES	Watch the Student Body. Worksheet #1. Toolkit p17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 questions to answer on worksheet
15 MINUTES	Presentation and Discussion: Health and Self-Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Shifts • Mindful Eating • Self-Compassion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be healthy? • What is self-care? • What is physical health? mental health? social health? • What is a self-care activity you do to feel good? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Is this activity for your mental, physical, or social health? ◦ What is a new self-care activity you want to try? • What is your inner critic? • What is self-compassion?
5 MINUTES	In-Class Activity: Worksheet #2. Body Scan Meditation. Toolkit p20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class meditation for body appreciation • Read from script in Worksheet #2
10 MINUTES	In-Class Activity: Worksheet #3. Letter to Maddie. Toolkit p21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will write a letter to Maddie as if they are her best friend using what they've learned from the lesson and movie
15 MINUTES	Presentation and Discussion: Taking Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you think of an issue that inspires you to take action? (use template) • Using the list of methods, in what ways did Bailey take action in the movie? • Have your views on the topics covered today changed at all? If so, how? Do you feel inspired to do anything different?
	Introduce Homework: Mindful Eating Post-It. Toolkit p22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful Eating Tutorial for Teachers, Toolkit p23 	With a day's worth of meals and snacks (4-5 times), students will answer the questions to practice mindful eating.

SIX THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN IN CLASS

AND HOW YOU CAN HELP ...




1. Student responses WILL look like the "current culture."

Some students don't yet understand how appearance bias--judging someone based on how they look--affects the people they judge. These are the assumptions people make when seeing someone's body size about their health and personal habits. The good news is that this lesson may be *how* they learn to challenge the current culture's assumptions. These are the type of comments you could hear from your students:

- "Isn't it unhealthy to be 'overweight'?"
- "Everyone could be thin, if not, it is their fault."
- "If these people would just lose some weight, they wouldn't have a problem."

While these comments are insensitive, they can be the teachable moments for the whole class. We are all exposed to our culture's beliefs. **These comments are actually a gift giving you an opportunity to address these ideas for the class.** We want students to see that treating someone badly due to body size is discrimination. We want students to empathize with the person who has suffered discrimination. We want students to locate this discussion within other forms of discrimination for appearance bias such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism.



2. Students WILL see a person's weight/size as a health concern. "I know you say that being thin doesn't equal being healthy, but being fat puts you at risk for covid, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Why is it wrong to want people to avoid those health problems?"

- Body size is actually not a significant factor in mortality rates when controlled for socioeconomic status and other risk factors
- Within the US population, more premature deaths have been associated with a BMI of less than 25 than with a BMI above it
- Most epidemiological studies find that people who are categorized as "overweight" or "moderately obese" live at least as long as "normal weight" people, and often longer
- Many of these studies saying higher BMIs are unhealthy are being refuted with other studies saying that higher BMIs are not the issue with the diseases in the study



3. Students and other teachers MIGHT think accepting all shapes and sizes is "promoting obesity."

- This is a common belief, but the results are in. No one wants to be fat in our fatphobic culture. We are trying to allow people who have suffered discrimination around their body size experience human respect and dignity.
- Our current culture's method of "promoting health"--such as taking students' BMIs in school--has resulted in shaming people for their body size. Shaming people for their size has not made people's bodies smaller. It has not made people healthier. It has made people's mental health suffer.
- We want all people--including people in larger bodies--to feel comfortable in their skin. Feeling good about themselves has been difficult for people in larger bodies in our culture.
- We know from research that when you like yourself it leads to better self-care behaviors, which in turn can lead to better health outcomes. We endorse that virtuous cycle.

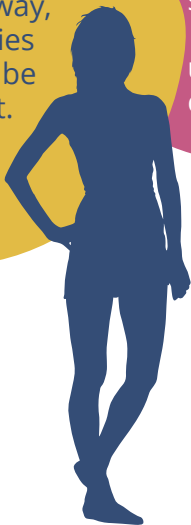


4. Students WILL think that the size of a person's body is that person's FAULT. They will think, "I eat healthy and exercise, and I can maintain my weight. It is not that hard. Why can't everyone do that?" This is a common diet culture myth that we have complete control over our body size. However, it is not true. All bodies are different.

It is hard for some people to see another person's experience when it differs from their own experience.

- Many health/gym teachers have an athletic background and spend a lot of their time exercising and restricting their food.

If everyone in your family ate the same thing and exercised the same way, your bodies would all be different.



Thin privilege: Some people are "born on 3rd base and thought they hit a triple." They think their body size and shape is all their doing. Our diet culture teaches us "we have complete control over our bodies."

There are marathon runners in larger bodies.



If your father is built like a line-backer--we all know--you have a good chance of being built like a line-backer.



70% of your body size is determined by genetics

- That leaves 30% of your body size influenced by habits. (Our culture believes 100% of body size is influenced by habits.)
- Diets fail 95% of the time. All diets "work" initially because of our starvation response. But the weight comes back on for 95% of people-- usually plus more-- because our metabolism is slowed with the starvation response. And, each of our bodies has its own genetic setpoint pre-set.



5. Students MIGHT disrespect other students' comments or stories.

Start with the safe space rules on page 6 of the Toolkit.



6. Students MIGHT be triggered by content or overhearing comments and stories.
This topic is emotional.

- Students at-risk for eating disorders might be triggered by this content. Their inner critic could be talking to them internally 24/7. Talking about that inner critic voice might make the voice louder for that at-risk student. Watch for that student who is triggered; statistically 2 of 25 students in your class today will be diagnosed with an eating disorder at some point in their life.
 - Seventy percent of eating disorders go undiagnosed, this could be an opportunity to get that student necessary help.
- Students in larger bodies might be feel uncomfortable. Many of these young people have been the subject of comments and judgments about the size of their body for as long as they can remember.
- Give emotional students time to disengage with material and emotionally regulate.
- If the feelings are too difficult, have a plan in place for them to talk to you or a school counselor.

WORKSHEETS & HOMEWORK



Worksheets 1-3



Homework 1 & 2

QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions that go along with *The Student Body* movie.

BEFORE MOVIE

1. Can you remember anything about having your BMI measured in school? Where were you? Who was there? How were you or other students reacting?

2. Can you say something about how you or other students felt about having their BMI measured?

DURING MOVIE

1. Bailey protests early in the movie and it inspires some of her other actions. What was Bailey's first protest about and what did she learn from the experience?

2. The school sends a letter home for Maddie. Why is Maddie upset about her letter?

3. Why is state government advocating for School BMI Screening?

4. According to Claire Mysko, why is BMI a flawed measure of health?

5. According to Dr. Dasgupta, why is BMI used despite its flaws?



6. Based on the movie and what we've covered already, what are some reasons not to do BMI screenings?

7. Bailey asked everyone she interviewed to be weighed and everyone said no. If Bailey gave you the chance to be weighed, how would you respond and why?

CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to be healthy?

2. What is a self-care activity you already do to feel good? Is this activity for your mental, physical, or social health? Could you think of a new self-care activity you would like to do that would be good for you to try?

3. Bailey was passionate about eliminating BMI screening in schools. What is an issue you want to advocate for? (fill in the following sentence)

I want to address _____ so that
(my issue)

_____ can impact
(desired outcome--what I want to happen)

_____ .
(my school, community, myself, other)

4. Have your views on the topics covered today changed at all? If so, how? (on BMI screening, health, self-care, taking action, or anything else!)



DURING MOVIE

1. Bailey protests early in the movie and it inspires some of her other actions. What was Bailey's first protest about and what did she learn from this experience?

(4:57) Bailey's first protest was about keeping their school principal. She learned that "even kids" can have a voice.

2. The school sends a letter home for Maddie. Why is Maddie upset about her letter?

(5:32-6:40) Maddie was upset because she didn't feel accepted at school after being labeled as "overweight." She felt like a disappointment. She is active and healthy, but the report card tried to tell her otherwise. She also wasn't given a choice in being weighed .

3. Why is state government advocating for school BMI screening?

State government is advocating for school BMI screening because they want to see if changes made in school, such as more nutritious school lunches, are working to improve students' health.

4. According to Claire Mysko, why is BMI a flawed measure of health?

(15:45) BMI is a flawed measure of health because it can cause students to obsess over their weight and develop poor body image. BMI is also inaccurate and doesn't account for students developing at different rates.

5. According to Dr. Dasgupta, why is BMI used despite its flaws?

(20:30) According to Dr. Dasgupta, BMI is used because it is an easy and quick measurement.

6. Based on the movie and what we've covered already. what are some reasons not to do BMI screenings?

(24:55) There are many reasons not to do BMI screenings. According to Claire Mysko, people could develop eating disorders. According to the slides, BMI screening increases dieting in students and makes them less satisfied with their weight. BMI is also not an accurate representation of health. We have other accurate measurements of health available to use such as blood panels that actually detect disease.

7. Bailey asked everyone she interviewed to be weighed and most said no. If Bailey gave you the choice to be weighed in front of her, how would you respond?

(The students' responses will vary.)

MEDITATION SCRIPT:

SELF COMPASSIONATE BODY SCAN

- Close your eyes if you feel comfortable. Settle into a comfortable position and allow yourself to relax. Take a deep breath and release. For a few moments, just focus on your breath and clear your mind of worries. Notice when you are breathing in and breathing out. Be aware of the sensations of your breathing.
- Now, shift your attention all the way down through your body to the soles of your **feet**. Can you feel the point where your heels touch the surface of the floor? Your feet have such a small surface area, yet they hold up your entire body. Think about all the steps your feet have taken for you today. Take a moment, for the next few breaths, to appreciate your **feet**.
- Shift your attention from your feet up into your **legs**. Here are your **ankles, calves, knees, thighs, and hips**. These are strong bones and muscles that help you walk, jump, and even sit as you are right now. Thank your legs for getting you here today and notice any sensations that you might be feeling.
- Bringing your attention now to your **belly**, be aware of it moving- expanding and contracting with each breath. This is the core of your whole body. The organs here allow you to eat, digest, and stay alive! Notice any feeling that may arise. Are there feelings of dislike? If so, see if you can turn toward these feelings. You might want to say a few kind words to yourself and appreciate your belly for the nourishing functions it does for you every day.
- Shifting attention to your **chest**, notice your **lungs** expanding with each breath, and your chest rising and falling. Maybe you notice the beating of your **heart**. Its only reason is to keep you alive. See if you can take a moment to feel some appreciation for your **lungs** and **heart** for all the work they do.
- Now move your attention to your **neck**. Be aware of the strength of your **neck** that supports your head and holds it up all day long. Allow yourself to feel grateful for it.
- Move your attention to your **head** and **skull** that keep your brain safe, your **eyes** that see, your **nose** that breathes, your **mouth** that eats, your **ears** that hear, and your **lips** that speak. Take a moment to silently say words of gratitude for all these parts of your body, and how they function to keep you alive and engaged in this world.
- When you are ready, gently open your eyes. Take a moment to wiggle your fingers and toes.

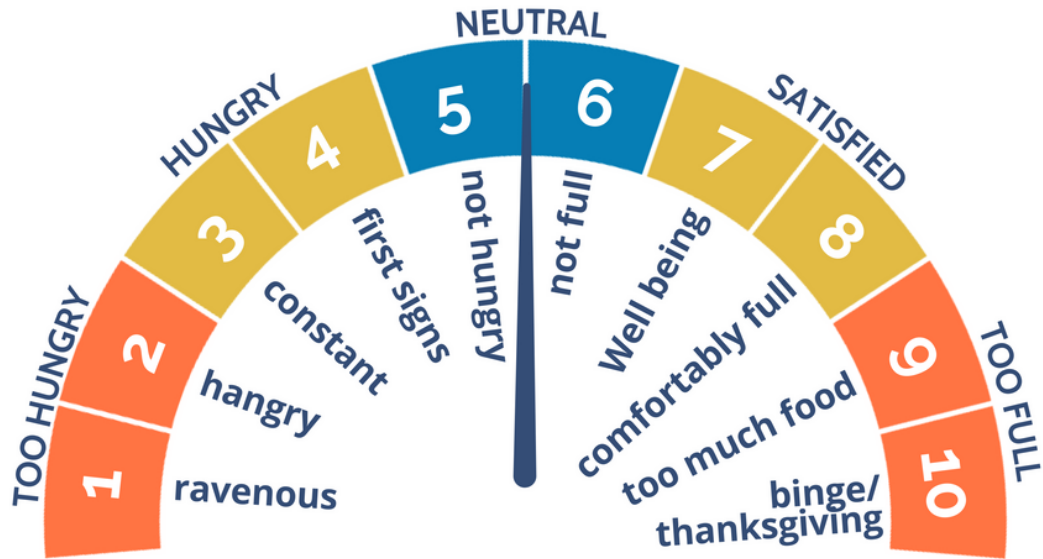





Adapted from *The Self-Compassionate Teen*, Karen Bluth (2020).

MINDFUL EATING POST-IT

Use what we learned in class about mindful eating to practice on your own. Fill out this post-it note for the next day at meal or snack times. This will help you build awareness about what you are eating and how it makes you feel! Use the hunger scale to help answer questions 1 and 4.

BE REAL.



- 1 Am I hungry? Where am I on the hunger/full meter above:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- 2 What do I want to eat? (no judgment)
Nutrient-Dense  ←  →  Energy-Dense
- 3 Am I enjoying, tasting, savoring my food?
- 4 Am I feeling satisfied? Yes No
Am I feeling deprived? Yes No
Is there a lesson to learn about this eating experience?
- 5 Am I NOT hungry? Yes No If I'm not hungry, what's up?
 - Do I need some fun? Yes No
 - Am I feeling emotional? angry bored lonely tired
 sad stressed disappointed
 - Am I eating out of habit? Yes No
(ex. I always snack at this time)

MINDFUL EATING TUTORIAL

FOR TEACHERS

Mindful eating may seem simple at first glance, but it can take some effort to apply it to our daily lives. Teachers and students alike may have trouble unlearning the ideas of diet culture. Here is more information on the homework directions to understand mindful eating better.

1

Am I hungry? Where am I on the hunger/fullness meter above:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Before eating, we want to assess how hungry we are. We want to be in touch with our **internal hunger cues**. You can explain that these cues are just like the body cues that tell us when to use the bathroom. It's okay if we aren't hungry and want to eat. It's just important for us to recognize patterns of eating when we're not hungry. We're aiming for a 3-4 on the hunger/fullness meter as a guideline.

2

What do I want to eat? (no judgment)

Nutrient-Dense  ←.....→ →  Energy-Dense

We make about 200 food choices a day. This question helps us learn how to make those choices in a **mindful way**. No foods are off-limits, but we want to make choices that make us feel **physically well**. There are **nutrient-dense foods** that fuel our body well and allow us to have the energy to work our muscles and our brains. There are also **energy-dense foods**, that are fun and give us pleasure. They give us energy, but don't necessarily give us nutrients to help our bodies run well. We want students to recognize that a balance of both types of food is important to feel their best. We are **severing the tie between eating and appearance results**. Instead, it's about fueling your body well for your days. So, for example, if you have a test at 2pm and a race at 4pm, what would be the best way to eat for optimal test taking and race running? Energy dense foods like cookies for lunch, will spike and crash and leave you without energy by 2pm.

3

Am I enjoying, tasting, savoring my food?

Often times we are rushing through our meals and snacks and preoccupied with other things. It's common in our culture to eat with distractions, like watching TV. Mindful eating helps us to **slow down and notice the sensations** we are feeling while eating. This makes eating more enjoyable. It prevents us from eating beyond fullness because our body registers our fullness when it is aware and present for the experience.

4

Am I feeling satisfied? Yes No
Am I feeling deprived? Yes No
Is there a lesson to learn about this eating experience?

After a meal, feeling satisfied has two parts. The first is if we are feeling **physically full**. That is where we can use the fullness half of the hunger/fullness meter. We are aiming to stop eating at feeling well at 7 or comfortably full at 8. The second is **if our meal "hit the spot"**. To notice if there is a lesson to learn from eating, we need to notice how we feel an hour or more after the meal. Are you craving something else? Do you have enough energy? Thinking through these questions can help determine the best meals to eat for our unique needs.

5

Am I NOT hungry? Yes No If I'm not hungry, what's up?

It is fine to eat something because we are experiencing a negative emotion or we're bored. However, we do not want food to be our only tool to cope with our emotions. This question helps students recognize their existing eating habits and assess if they should be adjusted to serve them better.

SELF-COMPASSIONATE

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

HOMework #2

(OPTIONAL)

Know what works and doesn't work for YOU! What could you do in your own best interest to make social media have fewer negative mental health effects. **Exercise:** Create a plan for trying these tips when you use social media. **Challenge:** Take one tip below to do for the next 3 days, checking in with how doing that tip made you feel.

Take control of your feed: unfollow unhelpful people or accounts

Don't give other peoples' lives or interests so much space in your head. Who or what goes?

Focus on the positive

Remove negative or depressing content. Add the feeds that gives you good vibes! What could you add? Remove?

Turn off "Likes"

Who needs em? Really! What will you do with that time you used to spend checking the likes?

Avoid the "Explore" page

Avoid going down "rabbit holes" and explore how that feels!

Try living in the moment vs documenting the moment for friends to see.

How does that feel? Any different "experiencing" vs "recording" your life?

Limit your own time or take a short break

Only 30 minutes today? Or I'll be back on next Monday? How does it feel? Less pressure or anxiety?

Use social media as a tool to connect with others, not a place to compete

What are you interested in: the environment, sports, music, art, shopping, hiking? Let's talk about that.

Why not connect with an issue or cause BIGGER than yourself?

Where could you make a difference? What issues speak to you? The environment, politics, immigration, poverty?

Any other tips?

Has anything else been a benefit to your mental health when using social media?

RESOURCES



Definitions &
Keywords



Additional
Resources

DEFINITIONS/KEYWORDS

Appearance Bias

When a person is treated differently based on how they look, rather than who they are or how they behave. These biases are often based on stereotypes about people with certain physical features.

Appearance Ideals

What our society or culture tells us is the most attractive way to look right now.

Appearance Pressure

Appearance Pressure is the demand people feel from their environment to look like Appearance Ideals.

Body Confidence

A realistic perception of one's body, seeing and accepting the body as it is. With body confidence, one becomes aware that physical appearance doesn't determine a person's value. Body confidence is the motivation to care for one's body.

Body Talk

Any conversation or comment that reinforces and keeps Appearance Ideals and Appearance Pressures going. Body Talk can include compliments--where the intention was kind--such as when someone says, "You look great! Did you lose weight?"

Compassion

The feeling of concern for another's emotional state that arises when one is confronted with another's suffering. One cares enough to want to relieve the other's pain. **Self-compassion** is treating yourself with the same care and concern as you would treat a good friend.

Eating Disorders

Disturbances of eating and/or eating-related behaviors that impact food, body and eating. Eating Disorders significantly impair physical health and psychosocial functioning. They are diagnosed and treated by mental health professionals.

Health

A state of adapting to one's unique needs to achieve physical, mental, and social well being. Health can vary according to time and circumstance.

Inner Critic

The negative voice in one's head that tells that person they are "not good enough." It is the voice that tells a person what is wrong with their appearance and their body in comparison to other people they see in the media or real life.

Mindful Eating

An approach to nutrition and eating that prioritizes awareness of hunger, fullness, cravings, and feelings surrounding food. There are no good or bad foods, so there is reduced guilt and shame around food and eating. No foods are off limits, so there are fewer feelings of deprivation.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For students, reflecting on body experiences and feelings about bodies, identity, stereotyping, and discrimination can be uncomfortable topics to discuss. The content and nature of the curriculum and discussions are a valuable and important part of students' social-emotional learning.

If students feel upset by the lessons, they can always opt-out to care for themselves. If they find themselves in distress, students should be encouraged to reach out to school guidance counselors or mental health professionals. These are some resources for school mental health professionals:

- **National Alliance for Eating Disorders** is the leading nonprofit in the U.S. dedicated to the outreach, education, early intervention, support, and advocacy for all eating disorders. Some of their services include educational presentations, free therapist-led support groups, and low-cost treatment for uninsured and under-insured adults. The Alliance's eating disorders helpline is available to provide referrals. 1-866-662-1235 or info@allianceforeatingdisorders.com. Monday-Friday, 9am-5:30pm EST.
- **The National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA)** is dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders. NEDA offers free and low-cost support that includes a helpline for support and treatment options, To chat online visit nationaleatingdisorders.org or call/text 1-800-931-2237. Monday-Friday, 9am-9pm EST.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**, 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) provides free, 24/7 support and crisis resources for those in distress.
- **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) Family Support Groups** are peer-led support groups for any adult with a loved one who has experienced symptoms of a mental health condition. You can find your nearest support group by visiting www.nami.org/local.
- **Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective (BEAM)** is a national training, movement building, and grant-making organization dedicated to healing, wellness, and liberation of Black and marginalized communities through their online platform. Visit www.beam.community for access to their therapist directory, Mobile crisis unit service, and other resources.
- **The Trevor Project** is a nonprofit organization that focuses on crisis and suicide prevention efforts among the LGBTQ+ community. To access their peer support group, counselors, and other resources, visit thetrevorproject.org.

