PLAN INTERNATIONAL | Dove Self-esteem project | Women and Gender Equality Canada / Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada

True to Me

A body confidence program for youth groups



Five-Session Program Guide

Created for youth aged 11–17

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Each session will take ~50 mins



Overview

Why True to Me?



True to Me creates a supportive space to explore an issue that really matters: low body confidence and what it means for young people and society.

True to Me will help young people feel more confident about their bodies, enable them to recognize the pressures that can cause anxiety about their appearance and give them a chance to practice dealing with these pressures.



True to Me helps boost young people's self-esteem, enabling them to:

- **Be more confident in their own skin and value their individuality**
- **Be more confident in their relationships and life choices**
- **Focus on what their bodies let them do, rather than what they look like**
- **Put themselves out there, engaging in adventures and challenges**

Who is the program for?

True to Me works best with young people ages 11 – 17.

Disclaimer

All the social media activities with an asterisk(*) in this resource are designed for young people ages 13 and up. Remember to get consent from them and their parents before sharing any media.

What are the outcomes?

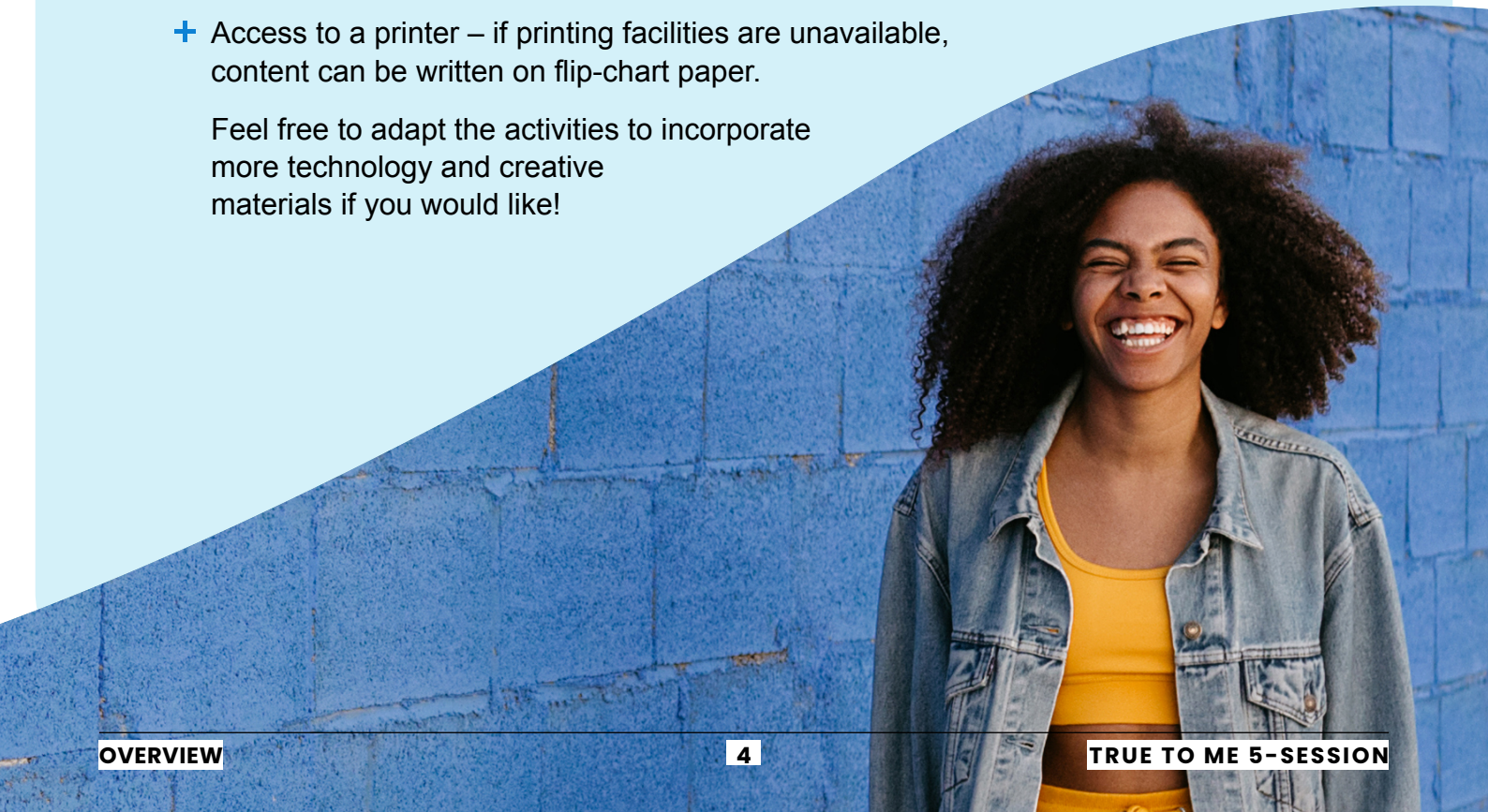
True to Me helps young people learn about appearance ideals. It helps them understand and explore how:

- Focusing too much on how they look can hold them back and make them unhappy.
- Appearance ideals are society's current definition of how people should look. They have very specific characteristics and are impossible to achieve naturally. They don't reflect the amazing diversity of looks we see in everyday life.
- Chasing appearance ideals doesn't make people happy, healthy, or successful. Achieving them doesn't mean people automatically have great relationships.
- To build the skills and confidence to avoid talking about, or reinforcing, appearance ideals in conversations.
- Media can perpetuate appearance ideals. Chasing appearance ideals cost a lot of time, effort and money. It doesn't do young people, or society as a whole, any good.

What materials are needed?

- Pens and paper,
- Access to a computer,
- A wider range of creative materials (if available),
- Access to a printer – if printing facilities are unavailable, content can be written on flip-chart paper.

Feel free to adapt the activities to incorporate more technology and creative materials if you would like!





How to set up

- True to Me works best when participants work through the activities in small groups.
- A ratio of one leader to eight young people is best for the whole program.
- Some activities have participants working in even smaller groups.

How to prepare

- Read this document with all leaders that will be involved in the program, so they understand how True to Me works. This should take about an hour.
- Take note of the alternative delivery methods to help your session run smoothly. For example, if you can't show the video clip on p. 17, share articles about the impact of digitally-altered media that make people look like appearance ideals.
- Each activity contains all the information you need to run it, including support prompts that give examples of what you could say to achieve the key learning outcomes.

The sentences in these pink boxes are examples of what to say at important stages of the activities. Think of them as verbal signposts and feel free to put them into your own words.

- Discuss how to run each session with your group leaders. You can try the tasks yourselves and decide how best to deliver the program to your group.

Session 01

Outcome

Young people define appearance ideals and explore how…

- Focusing too much on how they look can hold them back and make them unhappy.
- Appearance ideals are society's current definition of how people should look. They have very specific characteristics and are often impossible to achieve naturally. Appearance ideals don't reflect the amazing diversity of looks we see in everyday life.
- Even if we do chase appearance ideals, this won't make us happy, healthy or successful. In fact, it can sometimes have the opposite effect.
- Chasing appearance ideals costs a lot of time, effort and money. It doesn't do us, or society as a whole, any good.

You will need

- Pens and large pieces of paper.
- **Handout 1**: What I know now (Activity Sheet)

Distribute one for each participant

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Session Map

50 mins

- **Getting ready for True to Me** | 10 min
- **Activity: Appearance ideals exposed** | 15 min
- **Activity: Watch the costs** | 20 min
- **Personal challenge: What I know now** | 5 min

LET'S GET STARTED!

Getting ready for True to Me

10 mins

Before starting True to Me, take time to prepare your group (and their parents or caregivers, if appropriate) for the program.

Why this matters

Setting group guidelines: True to Me explores issues that young people may feel strongly about. Although they encounter them in their daily lives, they may not have talked about them in this way before. Setting group guidelines puts participants in the lead to create a supportive space where they can speak out confidently.

Setting the scene: Help young people understand what True to Me is all about and what they will be doing. This should help them relax and feel more like a team.

Verbal sign-up: Our research shows that when young people recognize they are taking part in True to Me voluntarily and commit to this in front of the group, the program has a stronger positive impact on their body confidence.

You will need

Large piece of paper and markers.

Setting

Whole group discussion.

Setting group guidelines:

Guide the group to:

- Discuss how participants can behave to ensure their peers feel supported, comfortable and confident so that everyone can get the most out of True to Me.
- Work together to create a short list of points that everyone agrees to respect.
- Write the guidelines simply and clearly so that they can be checked at a glance.
- Ask for a volunteer to make sure the guidelines are displayed in the room at each session.

Example guidelines:

We agree to...

- Respect everyone's opinions.
- Listen and reflect before we talk.
- Be present - leave phones in pockets.
- Consider one another's feelings.
- Speak up if we're uncomfortable.



Setting the Scene:

Explain that for the next 50 minutes, the group is going to have fun trying a new program called True to Me. Bring the energy with an icebreaker; go around the group, asking everyone to say their name and pronouns, then announce something great about themselves that begins with the first letter of their name, along with a matching action. For example, "I'm Ashley and I'm amazing!" (with a star jump) or "I'm Erin and I'm energetic!" (mimes running).

Once everyone has introduced themselves, explain what True to Me is about:

We're going to explore some of the reasons we worry about our bodies and appearance, understand where those worries come from and take action to change them.

Body confidence is a topic that can stir up strong opinions and lead to awkward or even difficult discussions; yet most young people who participated in True to Me say they really enjoyed the program. Remind everyone about your group guidelines and how they can support each other.

Point out a safe space where young people can go if they need time away, and name a leader who can support them if this happens.

Verbal sign-up:

We'll get the most out of True to Me if we speak up during activities, support one another and respect our group guidelines. Are you ready to keep an open mind and take part in the activities?

Invite each young person to tell the group that they are ready to contribute.

Tips:

- There's no need to spend too long on this. Once you have the key points covered, move on.
- If you already have group guidelines, check if the group is happy to use them for True to Me or if they want to make any changes.
- Feel free to use your own community builders/icebreakers to start the session if you have a good one in mind. The important thing is to get the energy up and help everyone feel comfortable. We like the icebreaker we suggested because it prompts young people to think about how they view themselves.
- Reassure participants who have concerns, but explain that most of their questions will be answered later in the session.
- If serious personal concerns are raised, offer support as your organization would for other well-being issues.



Appearance ideals exposed

15 mins



Why this matters

Before young people can start to challenge an appearance ideal, they will need to understand what it is and where it comes from. Young people have been unconsciously affected by its damaging messages for years but might not have been aware of it. It's time to look at appearance ideals consciously and critically.

You will need

- Internet access for each small group or magazine pictures showing models and celebrities.
- One large piece of paper and pens – per group.

Setting

Divide into groups. Aim for four to eight young people per leader if possible.

Either create small groups, each with internet access–so everyone can see a screen–or scatter images from magazines around your meeting place.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

2 minutes:

Young people either:

- Look up media images of “the perfect-looking girl or boy or teen” online as small groups.
- Each participant finds a magazine or social media image that appeals to them and shows it to the group.

5 minutes:

Arrange the group so everyone can see the large piece of paper. Write “The Perfect-Looking Person” at the top.

> What catches your eye about these pictures? What are the features and characteristics that society tells us the perfect person should have? Be as detailed as you can!

Let youth take the lead in calling out ideals relevant to their own lives and communities. Allow participants to identify gender-specific characteristics if they choose to. Young people may also identify culturally-specific or other identity-related (e.g., LGBTQ2SIA+ youth) appearance ideals.

- As participants call out features, write them down under “The Perfect-Looking Person” heading. This list will show how detailed and limiting appearance ideals can be.
- Encourage the group to come up with as many physical features as possible to create a long list. Try to fill the page with appearance features.

Prompt the group to make each feature as specific as possible. For example, if someone says “perfect skin,” ask them to describe what that looks like (e.g., no blemishes, no wrinkles, a glowing quality, no acne.) This shows that “perfect” is just an opinion, not a fact.

3 minutes:

When you’ve filled the page and the group is out of ideas, step back.

> So, society tells us that the perfect-looking person has...

- Cross out “The Perfect-Looking Person” title on the paper and write “Appearance Ideals” instead.
- Make sure that everyone understands what the word “ideal” means.

> An ideal is an idea of something that’s perfect, but it normally only exists in the imagination. Appearance ideals are ideas of the perfect way to look, even if they don’t exist naturally.



Reflect



5 minutes:

Sit down with the group. Facilitate a brief discussion around these questions. Take about one minute per question:

Q: Where do appearance ideals come from? How do we learn about them?
A: Media, family, friends, fashion industry, diet industry, etc.

Q: How does this pressure to match appearance ideals make you feel?
A: Anxious, depressed, not good enough, shy, negative about self in general, etc.

Q: What are we told will happen if we look "ideal?" Is it true?
A: Be more popular, happier, more successful, in a relationship, etc. But no, it's not true.

Q: Are appearance ideals the same for young people from different cultures and backgrounds?
A: No, they vary but still make us feel the same way. With the spread of Western media, they are becoming more similar around the world.

Do it differently

If your group enjoys scenarios and role-play activities, get creative when you set up this activity. For example, challenge the group to create an ad for a "beautiful woman" or "cool skater guy" to appear in a film or TV show. What do they need to look like? Then create a "Perfect-Looking Person" list from these ideas.

Tips:

- Aim for a long list with very specific physical points and details to show how narrow appearance ideals are.
- If running the session with only girls, you could focus on the "perfect-looking girl" to be more specific.

Look for:

- High energy, with everyone calling out lots of specific ideas.
- Young people getting outraged and recognizing how impossible appearance ideals really are.

Watch the costs

20 mins



Why this matters

It's not enough to know that appearance ideals exist. To help young people build their body confidence, we need to encourage them to speak up about the costs of chasing the ideal and how being free from it can make them happier and healthier.

You will need

- Paper and pens.

Setting

Large space, outdoors if possible.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

When young people try to match appearance ideals, it negatively impacts them and society. How much does it cost us to chase appearance ideals?

In this activity, participants come up with a long list of costs (downsides or major negative impacts) associated with chasing appearance ideals. They can think about what it costs an individual in terms of personal health, relationships, finance and achievements, and what it costs society in general.

Play the Frozen Pairs game:

Divide the group so that half are chasers (chasing appearance ideals) and half are runners.

The runners represent appearance ideals. When a chaser manages to catch a runner, the pair shouts “Freeze!” and everyone stops on the spot.

To free themselves, the frozen pair can work together to name a cost associated with appearance ideals.

Ask:

Trying to fit appearance ideals costs a lot for people and society as a whole. Name one cost, or negative impact, it has for an individual or for society.

When the pair calls out a cost, write it down. Each of the frozen pair now become a runner. Start the game again, and repeat for about six minutes.

Examples of individual costs:

Low confidence, avoiding sports, not contributing at school, spending lots of much money on beauty, fitness or diet products, over-exercising, issues with eating, not enjoying food, not having fun with friends, being unhappy, not putting self out there, avoiding physical challenges and adventures, health complications from cosmetic procedures (e.g., surgery and injections)…

Examples of costs to society:

Missed days from work and school, people not achieving potential, encourages and perpetuates unrealistic appearance ideals…



Reflect

Bring the group together and discuss each question below for about one minute:

Q: Given this long list of costs, who benefits from appearance ideals?

A: Fashion and beauty industries, the media industry, etc.

Q: Are we part of the group that benefits?

A: No!

Q: Given all of the costs, is chasing the ideal worth it?

A: No!

The best way to beat appearance ideals is to speak out against them. Have each participant grab a partner and take turns saying why they think trying to achieve appearance ideals is not worth it, given the costs.

Look for:

A wide range of costs that consider physical, emotional and mental impact to individuals and to society. Young people often have a real wake-up call by this point and can start getting angry about appearance ideals. Be supportive if the activity stirs up strong feelings.

Tips:

- If a pair struggles to think of a cost, invite the group to help.
- For small groups, continue the game until you have a long list of costs.
- If the group is comfortable with it, record the activity for them to watch again in the future. Remember to get consent from the participants and their parents before sharing any media.*

Do it differently

If your group doesn't enjoy active games like this one, explore the costs in a different way. For example, young people can work in small groups to come up with a list of costs, then choose to:

Create a two-minute performance using any creative medium (e.g., a song, dance, rap or drama) that communicates as many of the costs as possible. Perform it to another group, which has to spot as many costs in the performance as they can.

Work in pairs to take photographs that represent each cost, and share them with the wider group.

Use the internet or social media to explore news stories and other media that expose the costs of chasing appearance ideals.

Remember

There is no perfect look and no perfect body type. Having a body that enables you to do the things you want to do is important, so we need to appreciate and take care of our bodies. Speaking out against appearance ideals isn't about criticizing anyone's natural body or features, or the choices people make about their appearance. It's about challenging the idea in society that there's one perfect way to look, and the pressure this idea puts on people. Also, bear in mind that it's impossible to naturally achieve the ideal; even models and celebrities need surgery and photo editing to match it. Chasing appearance ideals, and what this does to you, is the problem.

What I know now

5 mins

Why this matters

When young people take time to reflect on appearance ideals, the learning sinks in and they find it easier to challenge these ideals and be more body confident.

You will need

- Large piece of paper and markers.
- **Handout 1:** What I know now

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Setting

In group members' own time after the session.

What happens

Give each participant a copy of the worksheet to complete at home. Tell them:

If you had known when you were younger that appearance ideals are impossible to achieve and following them comes with a lot of downsides, would it have made a difference in your life? Imagine if you could turn back time to last year: What would you say to yourself to show the costs of chasing appearance ideals, and the great ways that being true to yourself and free from their pressure, can affect your life? How would you persuade yourself not to pursue appearance ideals?

Participants could write a letter to their younger selves or explore other creative ways of expressing themselves (e.g., a blog, video, stop-motion animation, comic strip, art piece, song or images with captions.)

Whatever they create should:

- Explain what appearance ideals are.
- Show the costs attached to their pursuit.
- Help to convince their younger self that they are not worth chasing.

Tip:

If completing this Personal Challenge at home will be a struggle for some group members, can you create a quiet space at your meeting place where they can work on it?

Look for

Participants being clear about the task and feeling enthusiastic and confident they can complete it.

Do it differently

If some group members find it difficult to write down their thoughts, suggest they express themselves visually or tell their message directly to you. If group members are younger and find this kind of reflection hard to do, why not prompt them to think of a young person in their life, such as a baby sibling, cousin or friend, and write to them instead?

Wrap up

Take a minute to close the session. Thank everyone for participating and give participants a chance to share their favourite moment of the session. Make sure everyone is clear on when and where the next session will take place and is comfortable with the Personal Challenge.

Session 02

Outcome

Participants practice how to spot and challenge appearance ideals in everyday life.

You will need

- **Handout 2**: In their shoes (scenario cards.) Distribute one per small group.
- **Handout 3**: Mirror talk (activity sheet)

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Session Map

50 mins

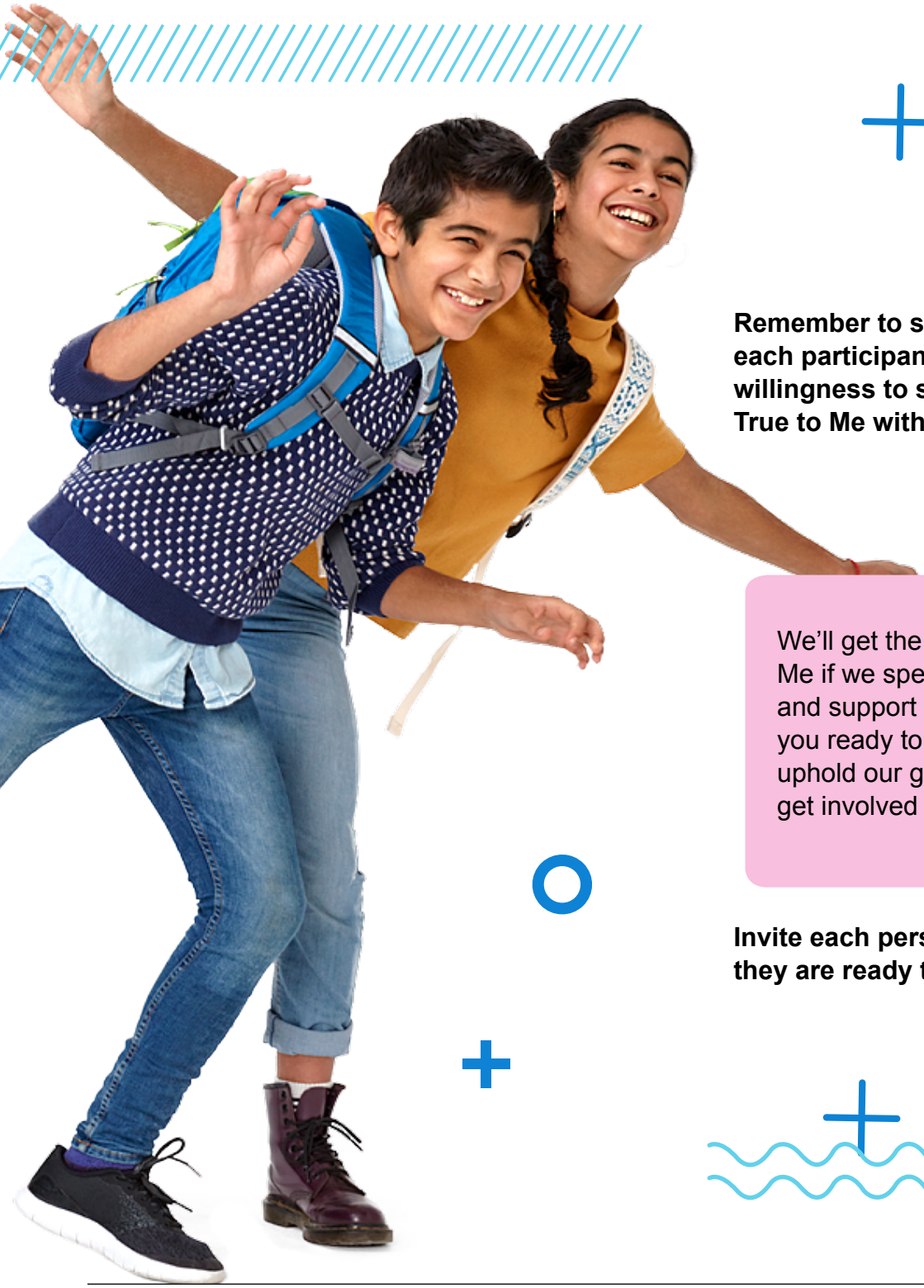
- **Verbal sign-up** | 5 min
- **Feedback: What I know now activity** | 15 min
- **Activity: In their shoes** | 25 min
- **Personal challenge: Mirror time** | 5 min

LET'S GET STARTED!

Verbal sign up

5 mins

LET'S GET STARTED!



Remember to start the session by giving each participant a chance to pledge their willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

> We'll get the most out of True to Me if we speak up during activities and support one another. Are you ready to keep an open mind, uphold our group guidelines and get involved in all the activities?

Invite each person to tell the group that they are ready to participate.

What I know now

15 mins



Why this matters

By sharing messages with their younger selves, young people practice speaking out against appearance ideals in front of their peers. This helps to challenge their own beliefs about appearance ideals and is a step towards building their body confidence.

Setting

Large group sharing.

What happens

Invite group members to take turns sharing the message they created to their younger selves (e.g., reading their letter or blog post out loud, presenting their vlog or artwork, playing aloud their podcast, etc.). Make sure that youth are given the option to “pass” if they do not want to share their message with others.

Use questions to encourage participants to be specific about the costs they are describing.

Did anyone think of new costs attached to chasing appearance ideals?

If participants are happy to share their messages through social media* or by displaying their work in the meeting place, support them to do so if you feel what they created is appropriate (and complies with your internet safety guidelines). Making their messages public makes them more powerful.

Tip:

It’s important that each participant gets the chance to say why it’s not worth chasing the ideal when presenting back to the group. Use questions to help if this isn’t coming naturally, or split into smaller groups.

Do it differently

Why not ask participants if they would like to put on a community exhibition of these messages, and anything else they create during True to Me, to celebrate their completion of the program?

In their shoes

15 mins



Why this matters

Practicing how to challenge appearance ideals in everyday conversation gives young people a way to do it in real life. By giving them the tools to counter appearance ideals, they become less engaged in trying to chase them and their body confidence improves.

You will need

- **Handout 2** In their shoes (scenario cards). Distribute one per small group.
- A shoe, or other container, for each set of scenario cards.

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Setting

Divide into small groups, with each group supported by a leader.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

Each leader takes a shoe and the set of scenarios in **Handout 2**, and finds a quiet space with the group.

Appearance ideals come up all the time in daily life, not just in the media. We see our friends and family facing appearance ideals a lot, too. If you have the confidence to speak up against them, you'll help the people you care about feel more body confident and start to break free from the ideal. This is a chance for each of you to practice how to challenge appearance ideals in real life.

- Participants practice coming up with arguments to convince someone it's not worth chasing appearance ideals.
- Group members use positive challenges to persuade the person in the scenario to think differently and recognize the costs of chasing appearance ideals.

For example:

LEADER: "No way I'm going swimming tonight. I'll say I'm not well. The idea of everyone seeing me in my swimsuit makes me feel sick."

GROUP MEMBER: "But swimming is so much fun – and it makes you feel good. Everyone has a different shape and size – that's normal! There's no such thing as one way to look good."

01 Invite participants to pick a scenario from the shoe and hand it to you without looking at it.

02 Read the card, then act it out in front of the group, pretending you feel the way the character would in the scenario.

For example:

- "What's so wrong with trying to look like a celebrity?"
- "You think I need to diet, right?"
- "Only thin people are popular, don't you think?"

03 If participants are struggling to think of challenges, support them with examples:

- "Looking like appearance ideals doesn't make you happy."
- "Taking care of your body is important; chasing the ideal might actually hurt you."
- "You might miss out on having fun if you are too busy worrying about how your body is perceived by others."

04 When the group has run out of things to say, ask another participant to pick a new scenario card. Complete as many scenarios as you have time for, and try to encourage everyone to contribute.

05 Ask the group the following questions:

How did it feel to argue against appearance ideals?

Can you see yourself using these arguments in real life? Why/why not?

Look for

- Every group member verbally challenging appearance ideals.
- Energetic conversations, with everyone eager to contribute.
- A range of arguments that shows the participants considering the costs of appearance ideals.

Do it differently

If it is helpful to your group, use a structure that allows everyone to contribute in turn. For example, you could put a pair of shoes in front of each leader, and each participant takes a turn stepping up to the shoes to join the conversation.

Use blank cards as an opportunity to have youth come up with scenarios from their own lives. Work together as a group to agree on a scenario and then act it out.

Participants might argue that they follow appearance ideals because being slim is healthier. Taking care of yourself is important, but what you look like and how healthy you are aren't as closely connected as you might think. We all have a healthy ideal, which is how we look when we're doing the right things to take care of our bodies physically, mentally and emotionally, as well as our overall quality of life.

Eating nutritious foods in an amount that's appropriate for us, staying active and exercising, paying attention to our friendships and getting involved in our communities are all things that make us feel good and keep us healthy. What's important to recognize is that "healthy" looks different for different people, and keeping our bodies moving makes more of a difference to our health than being at a certain weight.

Tips:

- The leader should be the only one verbally agreeing with appearance ideals as part of this activity. If participants start supporting appearance ideals at any point in the session, redirect them. Challenging appearance ideals by speaking out against them improves body confidence; saying things that support ideals won't.
- Try to build a character around your scenario. How old do you think the person is? Where are they from? What is their family like? Making it feel real will help participants connect with the scenarios.

Mirror time

5 mins



Why this matters

Thinking positively about their bodies is something young people don't do enough and, even if it's hard at first, it often brings a feel-good body confidence boost.

You will need

+ **Handout 3** Mirror time (worksheet)

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Setting

Whole group briefing, with the activity to be completed in own time after the session.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

Distribute **Handout 3** to each person and take time to talk the group through it:

We spent a lot of time thinking about encouraging others to be more body confident today. So how about you? When you get home, I want you to try something: Spend a few minutes concentrating on the things you like about your body. It might sound silly, but try it and see how it makes you feel. Even realizing you like little things about yourself, such as the way your hair curls or how strong your hands are, is a way of showing that appearance ideals aren't in charge of who you are.

Explain the activity

01 Stand in front of a mirror.

+ We often use mirrors to criticize ourselves. Let's try to see things differently and use the mirror to reflect all the amazing things about us!

02 Using the mirror, think about:

+ Five things you like about yourself that aren't physical, such as personality traits, attitudes and values.

+ Five physical features that you like about your body.

Write these down on the handout and bring it to the next session. Are you all willing to give this a try?

Look for

A willingness to try, with each participant taking the activity seriously.

Tips:

If some participants are worried they can't find a quiet space at home to do this activity, is it possible to offer this at your meeting place? It's important that participants have a quiet, private space to complete the activity on their own.

Mirror Time has the most impact when participants can identify body image characteristics that are very personal or meaningful to them. If they aren't comfortable doing this alone or you're worried they won't be able to identify things they like about themselves, you could suggest:

+ Trying it with a friend they trust. They can encourage each other to identify positive traits and give examples of things they like about each other.

+ Beginning with the personality traits.

+ Start by noticing the smallest of physical traits. Encourage them to build up to more prominent features when they're ready.

+ Thinking about things their bodies enable them to do, not just what they look like.

Wrap up

Take a minute to close the session. Thank everyone for participating and give everyone a chance to share their favourite moment of the session.

Session 03

Outcome

Participants have the skills and confidence to avoid talking about–or reinforcing– appearance ideals in conversations, and can make quick comebacks to challenge comments that support these ideals.

You will need

- Dice and pens.
- **Handout 4** Body talk bingo cards. Distribute one per small group.
- **Handout 5** Quick comeback statement grid. Distribute one per small group.

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Session Map

50 mins

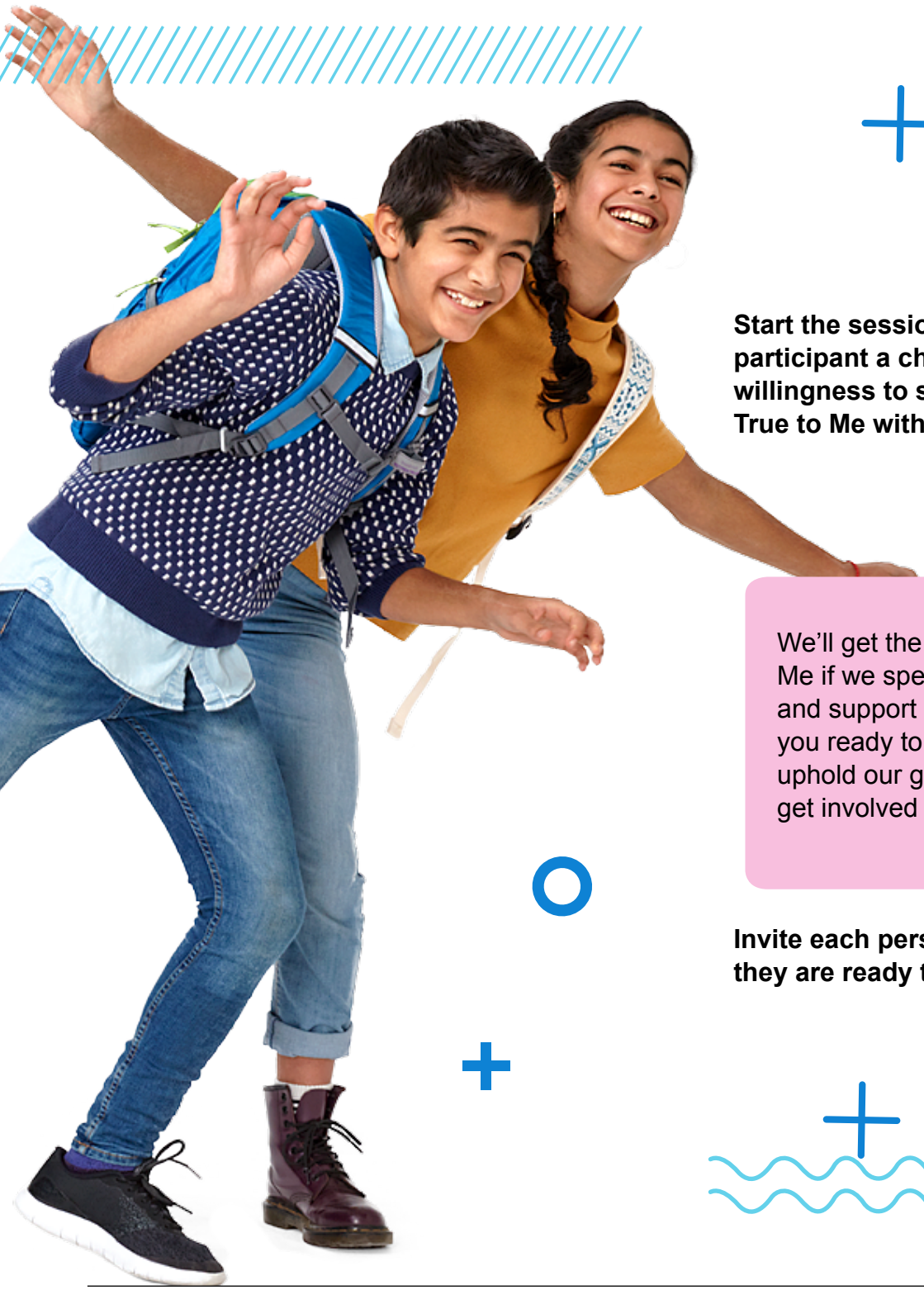
- **Verbal sign-up** | 5 min
- **Feedback: Mirror time** | 5 min
- **Activity: Body talk bingo** | 10 min
- **Activity: Ideas worth sharing** | 30 min

LET'S GET STARTED!

Verbal sign up

5 mins

LET'S GET STARTED!



Start the session by giving each participant a chance to pledge their willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

We'll get the most out of True to Me if we speak up during activities and support one another. Are you ready to keep an open mind, uphold our group guidelines and get involved in all the activities?

Invite each person to tell the group that they are ready to participate.

Mirror time

5 mins

Why this matters

Participants get a body confidence boost when they focus on noticing what they like about themselves.

Being brave enough to share these things with others is even more empowering.

Setting

Whole group sharing (or small groups with one leader in each group).

What happens

Imagine if all the time we spent putting ourselves down was spent being proud of who we are instead. Talking positively about ourselves isn't boasting – it's a healthy thing to do because you're doing it for you, not to show off to others. And if you model this for younger people, they are more likely to be positive about themselves too.

Invite each participant to share:

- At least one thing they like about their body or appearance.
- At least one other non-physical thing they like about themselves.

Reflect

Why do you think it's hard for us to see the positive things about ourselves and share them with others? How does it make you feel to focus on the positive things about yourself?

Tip:

If the group is particularly nervous, shy or vulnerable, break into smaller groups depending on the leader-participant ratio.



Body talk bingo

10 mins



Why this matters

Body talk is one of the main ways appearance ideals are maintained. It is also one of the least obvious, though young people experience it regularly in the media and from family and friends. By understanding how to spot and respond to body talk, participants can protect themselves from it and build their body confidence.

You will need

- Dice, one per group.
- Pens, one per participant.
- **Handout 4** Body Talk Bingo Cards. Distribute one per small group.

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Setting

Small groups of four to six.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

Explain the concept of body talk to the group:

When we compliment others on losing weight (or building muscles), join in when friends complain about their bodies or talk about dramatic weight-loss diets, we're supporting the idea that we should all chase appearance ideals and there is only one way to look good. Body talk may sound like a harmless, positive compliment, but under the surface, it still compares us to appearance ideals and can make us feel bad about ourselves.

Then:

01 Give each small group a dice and set of Body Talk Bingo Cards (**Handout 4**).

02 Each person takes a bingo card and alternates rolling the dice.

03 Each person shows the group which speech box on their page matches the dice roll, and the group reads the speech box in silence (or a leader reads it aloud).

04 The group decides what they would say to show they don't agree with appearance ideals and to challenge the statement in a positive way.

05 They say read the statement out loud, and anyone with the same speech box on their bingo cards can cross it out.

06 If the dice roll matches a box that has already been answered, pass the dice on.

07 When a player has crossed out all six statements on their page, they call bingo. Keep going until time is up or everyone has crossed out all their speech boxes.



Reflect

Stay in your small groups or come back together to have a conversation around these three questions:

Q: How do statements like these bingo cards keep appearance ideals going?

A: They imply that appearance ideals brings success and happiness, and makes us better people, and that there's only one way to look…

Q: What can you do differently?

A: Change the topic of conversation, talk positively about your body, celebrate diversity, tell others about appearance ideals and discuss how chasing one doesn't make life better…

Q: How do you think changing the way you talk about your body might impact how you feel and how others respond to you?

A: You'd feel more body confident and others would notice your confidence; you'd believe being comfortable in your own skin is an attractive quality...

Tip:

Encourage participants to help each other if they are struggling to think of verbal challenges.

Do it differently

Want it to be more active? Create a recycled bowling alley using plastic bottles with different numbers representing points written on each of them. Each participant picks a statement from their bingo card and comes up with a challenge to the statement, saying it out loud and then rolling a ball to see how many points they can score for their team.

If your group doesn't want to play a game, use a bingo card to facilitate a discussion in which participants practice responding to the speech boxes out loud. Use the questions from the Reflect section of the activity to keep the discussion on track.

You could also have the leader read out a speech box, then close their eyes. A participant steps up to the leader and responds to the speech box, showing why they don't agree with appearance ideals. Before opening their eyes, the leader tries to guess the speaker by the sound of their voice. Each participant takes at least one turn to respond to a speech box.

Ideas worth sharing

30 mins



You will need

- **Zone 1: Handout 5** Quick comeback statement grid. You will also need a beanbag, pebble or something similar to throw.
- **Zone 2:** Paper and pens. If participants have cameras on their phones, they can also use them here (optional).
- **Zone 3:** Paper and pens. Coloured paper or cardboard star shapes.
- **Zone 4:** Large pieces of paper, ideally placed on the wall. Paints, coloured pens and other creative materials. Media images, body-confident quotes, etc., as available.

Why this matters

Young people gain confidence from challenging appearance ideals, practicing it in different contexts and reflecting on how it shows up in different parts of their lives.

Setting

Four activity zones with one leader at each. Divide your group into four and rotate around the zones, spending about five minutes at each one.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

In this activity, you'll explore four different ways to challenge appearance ideals and four different environments where you can share what you've learned. Take advantage of each zone to really push yourself and come up with strong, clear messages that may persuade your friends, family and people in your community or even around the world to stop chasing appearance ideals.

Zone 1: Quick comebacks

Challenging appearance ideals when talking to friends and family is hard to do, but if you respond confidently and in a positive way, you may be able to change the opinions of others and make a difference with the people you care about.

01 Lay out the Quick Comeback Statement Grid face up on the ground.

02 Participants take turns throwing the beanbag, and the leader reads out the statement it lands on.

03 The thrower tries to make a quick reply to the statement. Once they have a chance, the rest of the group can pitch extra ideas for quick comebacks.

For example:

- "Don't they look too fat to wear a swimsuit?"
- "It sounds really judgemental when you say things like that."
- "I don't agree with putting others down."
- "Swimming is about having fun and taking care of your body, not the way you look."
- "I think they are great the way they are."

Carry on until everyone has made a quick comeback statement.

Zone 2: Social media activist

If you had the chance to tell people around the world why chasing appearance ideals is a bad idea, what would you say? What could you share to show them how to be more body confident?

01 Come up with a powerful message to convince people around the world that appearance ideals aren't worth chasing. Write down what you'd say, or capture your message through photos or video clips. If you want to, put your message out there!

02 Think of your favourite social media platform. How could you use this to share your message? (Note: This activity is designed for participants ages 13 and up. For ages 12 and under, follow the Do It Differently Zone 2 alternative on page 32.)

Zone 3: Home challenge

How can you make your home a place that promotes body confidence? What could you change or create to remind yourself and your family to love themselves and not to fall for appearance ideals?

Participants come up with a list of ideas. For example: Creating body-confident messages to stick on mirrors, fridges and walls. Mark up magazines with messages that challenge appearance ideals. Changing the magazines and media that you have in the house to ones that boost your body confidence.

Start your transformation by creating a positive message to stick on your mirror as a daily reminder to stand up against appearance ideals.

Participants can write their messages on cardboard stars or on coloured paper that they've cut into inspiring shapes. Encourage the group to take their messages home and stick them on their mirror or bedroom door.

Zone 4: Diversity wall

Speak up for appearance diversity and the amazing things our bodies can do, whatever they look like. Show your community what we'd be missing out on if everyone looked the same!

As a group, create a mural or graffiti wall to share images and messages that challenge appearance ideals and celebrate uniqueness, diversity and what we can do with our bodies. Build on one another's work to create a colourful mural that has something important to say. "Sign" your work with a statement about the downsides of appearance ideals and why they shouldn't be pursued.

Do it differently

Zone 1 is the most important zone in this activity. If you have a small group, or not enough leaders to run all the zones, make sure this one doesn't get skipped.

Take Zone 2 further and encourage the group to think of actions they could take in their school or community, as well as at home. (Note: This is an appropriate alternative if the group is too young for social media.)

Why not exhibit the diversity wall in a public space? Or share it on social media if everyone in the group is comfortable with the idea.

Wrap up

Take a minute to thank everyone for participating and give the group a chance to share their favourite moment of the session. Challenge them to try to use quick comebacks on social media* before the next session. Make sure everyone is clear on when and where the next session will take place.

Tip:

Keep the time balanced among the four zones. Leaders can use questions to encourage participants to reflect on the messages they want to communicate at each zone.

Session 04

Outcome

Participants explore and expose how media can perpetuate appearance ideals, and reflect on how media could change to support more positive body-confident messages.

You will need

- **Handout 6** “Behind the Lens” photos. Distribute one per small group.
- Video “Dove: Selfie”
- **Handout 7** Media detectives (optional)

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Session Map

50 mins

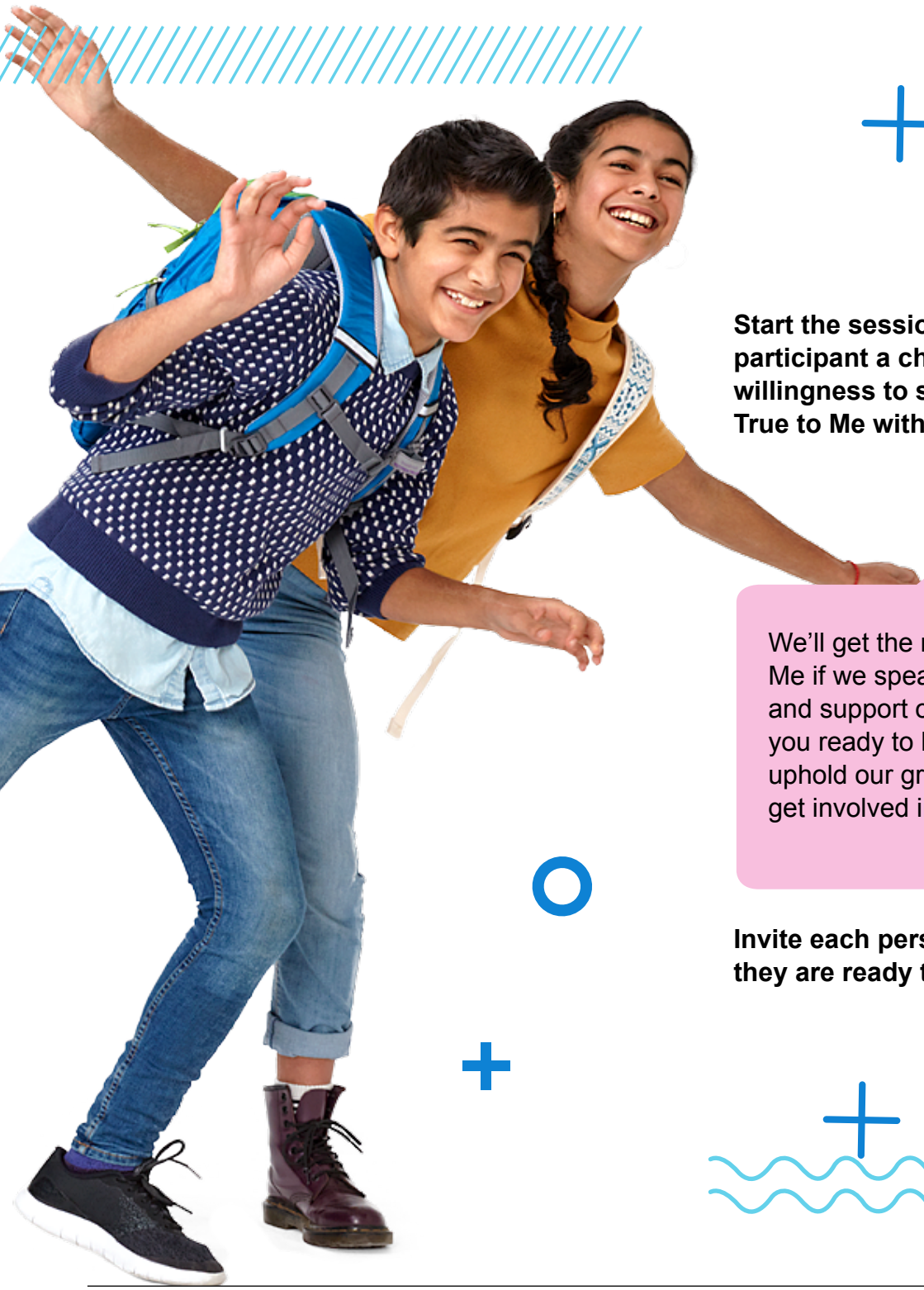
- **Verbal sign-up** | 5 min
- **Activity: Behind the lens** | 10 min
- **Activity: Media takeover** | 30 min
- **Personal challenge: Media detectives (optional)** | 5 min

LET’S GET STARTED!

Verbal sign up

5 mins

LET'S GET STARTED!



Start the session by giving each participant a chance to pledge their willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

We'll get the most out of True to Me if we speak up during activities and support one another. Are you ready to keep an open mind, uphold our group guidelines and get involved in all the activities?

Invite each person to tell the group that they are ready to participate.

Behind the lens

10 mins



Why this matters

By understanding digital editing techniques, such as filters and airbrushing, the group becomes aware how the media perpetuates appearance ideals, and how the appearance of models, influencers and celebrities is altered and edited to match them.

You will need

- **Handout 6** “Behind the Lens” photos
  Distribute one per small group.
- Video **“Dove: Selfie”**

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Setting

Large group for the video, then small groups for looking at the photos. The leader will facilitate feedback and conversation at the end.

LET’S GET STARTED!

What happens

Show the **"Dove: Selfie" video clip** to the group.

Given today's technology, people can dramatically edit photos or videos, but if you don't know it's been done, it can be hard to spot. We are tricked into believing what we see: that the models, celebrities and influencers in photos and videos "naturally" match appearance ideals, when, in fact, they've been digitally altered. Editing software is so easily accessible nowadays that anyone with a smartphone can edit their photos.

Distribute **Handout 6**, one for each small group. In each group, have the members examine the photos and identify how many differences they can find between the two. Let them share the results with the whole group.

Reflect

Start a group discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- How does it make you feel when you realize that even famous people who are known for their looks rely on digital editing because even they aren't considered attractive enough to match appearance ideals?
- How do you think it makes the model, celebrity or influencer feel when their photos are edited?
- Why do you think this social media influencer wanted it to look like she was taking a selfie?
- If you digitally alter your own photos on social media, do you think this supports appearance ideals? How does it feel different from posting unedited photos?

Look for

Group members making connections with their own experiences and recognizing how digitally altered media feeds appearance ideals.

Do it differently

If you can't show the video clip, why not share articles about the impact of digitally altered media that make people look like appearance ideals? There are plenty of these online; choose a couple that are suitable for your group and that complement the messaging of True to Me.

For example, try:

unilever.com/news/news-search/2021/behind-the-selfie-reversing-the-damage-of-digital-distortion/

mediasmarts.ca/body-image/body-image-photo-manipulation

Remind the group that while digital-editing techniques are regularly used in media such as ads, TV, movies and music videos, the "Dove: Selfie" short film shows that they're also used for social media. What might look like a simple selfie required a lot of time and resources to make the social media star look like appearance ideals.

Media takeover

30 mins



Why this matters

It's hard to imagine a world in which the media doesn't keep appearance ideals going. By coming up with an alternative, participants understand that there is a choice: Media need not be dominated by appearance ideals.

You will need

- Pens and paper.
- Art and design materials, as available.

Setting

Small groups of three to five.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

Participants get to create a positive body-confident media landscape.

Some research shows that Canadians spend almost 10 hours a day interacting with media. What would life be like if these media challenged appearance ideals, instead of supporting them? What if they celebrated diversity and spread positive, body-confident messages? Let's find out.

Imagine your youth group has been given funding to transform local media with body-confident messages that empower young people to reject appearance ideals and celebrate what makes them unique. In small groups, design your media takeover!

You can create any type of media you like as long as what you create shares positive body-confident messages.

As participants work in small groups, support the groups to create body-confident media pieces of their choice.

Some ideas could include:

- A new magazine cover
- A podcast or video post
- A billboard
- A news or magazine article
- An advertising campaign for a body-confident clothing line. This should include how they'll recruit their models, where they'll advertise and what they'll use as a slogan
- A social media campaign*
- A music video
- A song or a rap
- A script for a short play. (They could even act it out for the group!)
- A plan for a video game or app

Give everyone 20 minutes to create their media and then share their ideas between groups.

Reflect

Get the group to think about the media piece it has created and why it's effective. Ask them:

What is it about your media piece that offers the greatest challenge to appearance ideals?

What would it feel like to see a message like this everywhere in the media?

Tips:

- This is a great activity that young people really love. If you can, allow them more time to put together their media piece and get creative.
- Encourage older participants to share their media more widely if they are comfortable doing so.
- You can adapt the list of ideas for media pieces to a local context.

Media detectives

5 mins



Why this matters

The group will make connections between examples of media and the key messages about appearance ideals.

You will need

- Pens
- **Handout 7** Media Detectives

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

What happens

Challenge group members to find an example of appearance ideals in the media.

Choose an image that shows appearance ideals from any type of media you see during the week.

Capture the image (photograph it, cut it out or draw it), and bring it to the next True to Me session.

Write two sentences, inspired by the image that you found:

- "This appearance ideal is impossible to achieve because…"
- "It's not worth chasing appearance ideals because…"

Session 05

Outcome

This final session gives the group a chance to see if they've got the tools and ideas they need to challenge appearance ideals once True to Me has ended.

You will need

- Paper and pens
- True to Me Certificates (optional)

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Session Map

50 mins

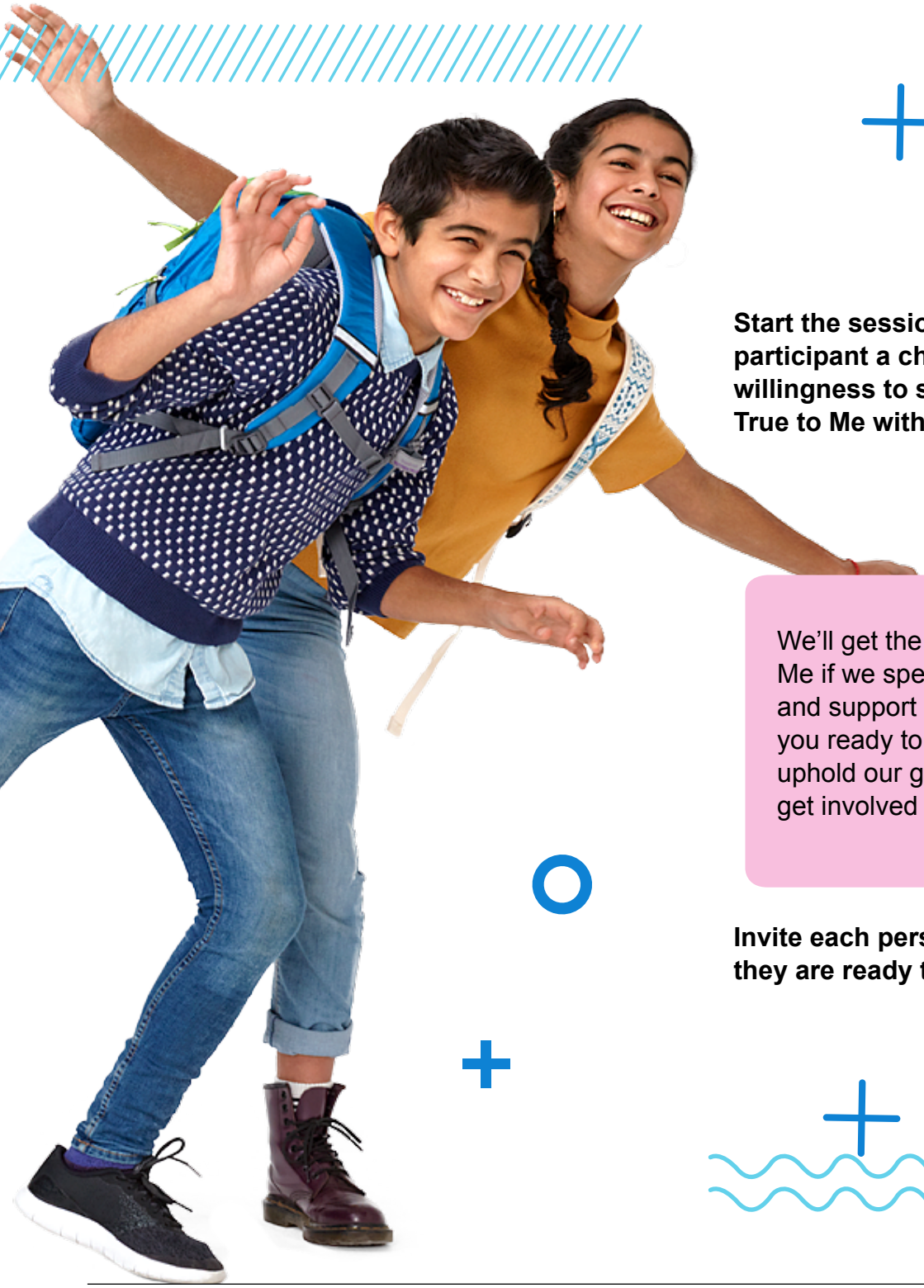
- **Verbal sign-up** | 5 min
- **Activity: Remember the message** | 20 min
- **Activity: Spread the word** | 20 min
- **Reflect and celebrate** | 5 min

LET'S GET STARTED!

Verbal sign up

5 mins

LET'S GET STARTED!



Start the session by giving each participant a chance to pledge their willingness to speak up and take part in True to Me with the group:

> We'll get the most out of True to Me if we speak up during activities and support one another. Are you ready to keep an open mind, uphold our group guidelines and get involved in all the activities?

Invite each person to tell the group that they are ready to participate.

Future pressures

20 mins



Why this matters

Once True to Me has ended, participants need strategies to support themselves in resisting appearance ideals. This activity helps them take what they've learned and apply it to their lives.

You will need

- Small notecards, coloured if possible – approximately 5 per person
- Envelope or small box or bag, one per person
- Coloured pens, paper and other art materials, if available

Setting

Small groups.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

You're all pretty clear now that appearance ideals aren't worth chasing. But what happens once True to Me has ended? What challenges might you face in the future that will make appearance ideals seem more attractive? We're going create a list of useful tips and actions that will help you resist appearance ideals.

01 Encourage each group to brainstorm challenges they might face in the future that will put pressure on them to pursue appearance ideals.

02 Each group then writes a list of actions they could take to overcome those challenge.

03 After the groups have a chance to generate a good list, give everyone approximately 5 notecards.

04 Each participant creates a set of cards that offer suggestions for how to challenge appearance ideals by writing one of their favourite ideas for doing so on each card. They can draw from the list the group came up with, add new ideas of their own or both.

05 Give each person an envelope or small box or bag to collect their set of cards in.

At home, put the envelope, box or bag somewhere you'll see it every day. Whenever you're feeling under pressure because of appearance ideals or just want a confidence boost, pull out a card. If you think of other good ideas in the future, make new cards for your box. If you see your friends struggling, you could lend them one of your cards as well!

Do it differently

Instead of using cards, why not have your group make a series of social media posts or phone wallpapers with positive messages? Or create a vision board or community box with messages for youth in their community to take.

If your group wants to do something more active, try role-playing the same idea. Get the group to brainstorm the challenges they might face, then in pairs they can pull a challenge out of a hat and act out what they would do to overcome it if it happened.

If the group would prefer a more individual-reflective activity, they could also write a postcard to their future selves, telling them what they could do to help them handle appearance pressures.

Tip:

If anyone is struggling to come up with actions, share some examples to get them started.

Spread the word

20 mins



Why this matters

Body confidence is a social issue. By becoming body confidence activists, participants get to practice voicing their rejection of appearance ideals and help others feel less pressured to chase them, creating more body-confident communities.

You will need

+ Paper and coloured pens for each small group.

Setting

Small discussion groups (approximately four to six), with leaders moving between groups.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

Working in small groups, participants choose a simple action that will allow them to share what they've learned in True to Me with others.

What could you do to open the eyes of your friends and family, or even your wider community, to appearance ideals and the importance of body confidence? To complete True to Me, share what you've discovered with others and expose the truth behind appearance ideals.

01 Create two quick group brainstorms:

- With whom would you most want to share the True to Me messages?
- Where in your community do you think these people are most exposed to appearance ideals?

02 Thinking about what you've learned from True to Me, what would you like to say to those people?

- Come up with some simple messages that would challenge appearance ideals and help others feel more body confident. Create a speech bubble for each one.

03 How else could you share your messages or challenge appearance ideals where they appear most in your community? Think of one simple action, such as:

- Putting body-confident notes on the bathroom mirrors at your school
- Sending body-confident postcards to your friends
- Putting up posters challenging appearance ideals
- Writing a blog post
- Conducting a social media campaign
- Creating a photo exhibition or pop-up art gallery

04 Agree as a group to take action in the near future, and start your body activism by taking a group selfie with your speech bubbles. If you're comfortable doing so, post the photo on social media and share it with your friends using the hashtag #TruetoMe.

Make sure everyone gets a speech bubble to take home.

Do it differently

This activity might need extra time outside the session. If finding time is hard, have the participants concentrate on creating their speech bubbles and seeing how far they can share their selfies – both online* and off.

Tip:

If you have time and the group is enthusiastic, taking action in the community is a great way for young people to feel empowered and practice life skills, as well as reinforce body-confident messages.

Reflect and celebrate

5 mins



Why this matters

Reflecting on the session helps the learning to sink in. This is also a chance for you to get feedback and recognize everyone's contributions.

You will need

- True to Me Certificates (optional)

All True to Me program materials are available for download at **plancanada.ca/powerwithin**

Setting

Large group for feedback session.

LET'S GET STARTED!

What happens

Get some feedback. Discuss – or use Post-it Note Wall Pads or other quick evaluation and reflection techniques – these four questions:

- What did you most enjoy about these sessions?
- Is there anything you didn't enjoy?
- What is one thing that you hope to remember into your own life?
- What is one thing you've learned from True to Me that you would like to tell your friends?

Thank each group member for participating and recognize their contribution in a fun and creative way. A great way to end the workshop is with a simple activity to celebrate everyone. For example, every participant makes and decorates a unique paper plant or flower, writing on it five things they love about themselves. Invite everyone to display their plants and flowers together as a diverse and beautiful garden.

Do it differently

Fill out and award the True to Me certificates that are available for download at plancanada.ca/powerwithin. Or turn the end of the session into a community party if you have the time and resources available.

Wrap up

Take a minute to close the session. Thank everyone for participating in True to Me and encourage them to spread the body confidence message far and wide!



Want to connect with other changemakers and learn how to take action on the issues that matter most to you? Scan the QR code to join Plan International Canada's Youth Hub!

Learn more and get involved at **plancanada.ca**

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