

# Let's Talk... Challenging Appearance Based Talk



**AUDIENCE**  
Age 13 - 16



**SESSION LENGTH**  
30 minutes

## BEING BODY *Kind* INCLUDES SPEAKING KINDLY ABOUT OUR OWN BODY AND OTHERS.

One important step to a more positive body image is to challenge the language we use; language which body shames or bullies or suggests there is a 'right and wrong' way to look.

The language we speak, share, write and read can impact our self-worth, body image, values and beliefs around beauty and weight as well as our relationships with eating and exercise.

Appearance talk is widely used. It reinforces societal appearance ideals and doesn't encourage appearance differences or respect for body diversity.

Appearance talk is often used to normalise body image concerns i.e. making disparaging remarks about our own appearance to make others feel 'better'. The more we talk about appearance, the more important we make it! Let's talk about our strengths, achievements, and personality instead.

### TO CLOSE :

Our words have power, when we talk to ourselves and others; face to face and online. Be aware of how often appearance talk happens and try changing the conversation for yourself and your peers.

### ACTIVITY AIM :

This activity explores the role our language, dialogue and words have on our own and others' body image.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

Digital Clip – 'Appearance Based Talk' (available to download from the Body *Kind* Schools resource [portal](#)) or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-DWpIlyWjM>

### HOW TO:

➤ After explaining the aim of the session use the following questions:

Q: Ask students to share what they know about body image? - *Body image is how we feel about the way we look.*

Q: What things influence the way we feel about our bodies? - *Many things influence us including media/social media, families, friends, partners, coaches etc. Our language and the way we talk to and about our body and other people's appearance can build us up or tear us down. It can impact our self-worth and confidence and our behaviours with food and exercise.*

➤ Screen the digital clip 'Appearance Based Talk' (1 min) and use the following questions to guide a class discussion.

Q: Have you heard people using appearance talk? *Refer to ground rules and try to keep discussions generalised.*

Q: Do all genders talk about appearance? *Yes, but the focus is usually different e.g. men are more likely to talk about muscularity.*

Q: Does appearance talk help people to feel good about their own appearance? *Research suggests those who use more appearance talk are more dissatisfied. Compliments about personality and achievements have a more lasting effect than appearance focused ones.*

Q: Why do you think people comment on appearance so often? *We are visual beings, it's easy, and people think it will make others feel good. However, it reinforces our worth is tied to our looks and the overall effect is usually negative.*

Q: Is it easy to challenge or shut down appearance talk? *No. It can be hard as it's very normalised in society, so awareness is key. Notice when it is happening and try: stopping it all together, changing the conversation, promoting positive body-related talk or even just walking away.*

### SUGGESTED POST ACTIVITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS :

- What positive strategies could you implement for yourself and your peers to reduce appearance talk, face to face and online?
- How easy would it be to go 1 day without appearance talk? Encourage students to take the challenge!

### To find out more, contact:

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[www.butterfly.org.au](http://www.butterfly.org.au)

## Extension Activity – *Be the Change*

You can extend this activity looking at the negative impact of appearance based talk by encouraging students to *Be the Change* and develop ONE positive strategy that could be implemented at school, in their community or online to reduce appearance based talk.

- Divide students into pairs or small groups and ask them to brainstorm ideas.
- Students can use the key messages included in the activity or shared through the digital clip. If they need additional prompts, strategies might include: taking a challenge to stop appearance based talk; finding positive statements for every negative you might say about your own or other's appearance; creating a catchphrase to use for redirecting conversations; focusing on body acceptance and respect; or practicing giving and receiving non-appearance based compliments (*Butterfly's Ribbon Activity in Free to Be can be used as stimulus material for a compliments activity*).
- Ask students to create a poster, graphic or their own digital clip to encourage their peers to adopt the strategy for reducing or challenging appearance based talk. *Encourage students not to use images of bodies when doing this.*
- If your students feel comfortable they can share their work on social media #BodyKindSchools.

Group Members:			
<b>Appearance Based Talk Strategy</b> Be specific about the issue and the positive action you want people to take.			
How are we going to share our strategy? (e.g. Poster, PowerPoint, movie creator program)			
What equipment, stationary, props do we need?			
Who is our target audience?			
How, when and who will present our created content?			