

3. Words matter!

INTRODUCTION

This module contains professional development material for educators, learning activities for children and parent tip sheets, which can be sent home or displayed in your centre. All materials are linked to the National Quality Standards and to the Early Years Learning Framework.

The module is divided into three Learning Areas:

1. What is body image?
2. Talking about food and health
3. Words matter!

Each Learning Area contains:

- Professional development sheets for educators;
- Case studies for educators to think about or discuss in a group;
- Learning activities for children;
- A list of books and web resources suitable for Early Years Services.

Key messages

- Everyone is special.
- Who we are is more important than how we look.
- All foods can be part of a healthy diet, in moderation and appropriate portions.

These learning activities will help young children to:

- Express their individuality through discussion, craft, singing and dance;
- Recognise that although we are different in some ways, in many ways, we are all the same;



- Talk about their hunger and fullness signals; and □ Experience eating in a mindful manner.

Links to the National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets the national benchmarks for early childhood education and care, and also for outside school hours care in Australia. When implemented in the early childhood education and care setting, this module meets the following requirements of the NQS:

QUALITY AREA	STANDARD	ELEMENT
Quality area 1		
Educational program and practice	1.1 The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.	1.1.1 1.1.2 1.1.3
	1.2 Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.	1.2.1 1.2.2 1.2.3

Quality area 2		
Children's health and safety	2.1 Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.	2.1.1 2.1.2
	2.2 Each child is protected	2.2.1 2.2.2 2.2.3
Quality area 5		
Relationships with children	5.1 Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.	5.1.1 5.1.2
	5.2 Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.	5.2.1 5.2.2
Supportive relationships with families	6.1 Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.	6.1.1 6.1.2
Quality area 6		
Collaborative partnerships	6.2 Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.	6.2.1 6.2.2
Quality area 7		
	7.2 Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.	7.2.1

Links to the Early Years Learning Framework

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) consists of five Outcomes to assist educators to enhance and develop a foundation for successful learning in children from birth to five years of age. The relevance of the *Module 5: Body Image* learning activities to the EYLF can be seen in the matrix below:

Outcome 1 Children have a strong sense of identity	✓
Outcome 2 Children are connected with and contribute to their world	
Outcome 3 Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	✓
Outcome 4 Children are confident and involved learners	✓

Outcome 5	
Children are effective communicators	✓

Resources required

OVERVIEW

Some learning activities require prior preparation, so please refer to the **RESOURCES REQUIRED** list below.

Activity sheets are already included in each separate learning activity (where required).

	RESOURCES REQUIRED
What I like about me	Book: Zobel, N. A., & Sakamoto, M. (2005). <i>What I like about me!</i> . New York: Reader's Digest Children's Books. <input type="checkbox"/> Mirrors for children to use to draw self portraits <input type="checkbox"/> Selection of drawing materials.
All of me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x poem per child • Butcher's paper • Pictures cut from magazines or magazines, and scissors <input type="checkbox"/> Glue
I'm glad I'm me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x poem 'I'm glad I'm me' • Shaving cream (enough for each child to have a portion)
All about me playlist	Device to connect to Spotify and play music—phone or computer with speakers



The skin you live in	Book: Tyler, M., & Csicsko, D. L. (2005). <i>The skin you live in</i> . Chicago, Ill: Chicago Children's Museum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ink pads • Paper • Magnifying glasses
Shapesville	Book: Mills, A., Osborn, B., & Neitz, E. (2003). <i>Shapesville</i> . Carlsbad, Calif. : London: Gurze ; Hi Marketing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction materials • Glue • Sticky tape • Camera or phone to take photographs of the constructions
Full mouse, empty mouse	Book: Zeckhausen, D., & Boyd, B. (2008). <i>Full mouse, empty mouse: A tale of food and feelings</i> . Washington, DC: Magination Press.
Mindfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Sultanas—at least enough for one per child
At home activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture books on body image, teasing, diversity etc. • Bucket or bag to take books home in • Scrap book • Up to date photos of each of the children

Overview

A range of activities designed to encourage children to learn about themselves and one another have been provided. It is designed to foster positive body image by highlighting children's individuality as well as their similarities.

Some activities focus on developing a positive relationship with food that aims to encourage children to connect to their hunger signals and to explore foods textures and tastes mindfully.

The following table outlines the contents of this module:

Learning area	Professional development: tip sheet	Professional development : Case study	Learning activities	Parent tip sheets	At home activities
What is body image?	What is body image Educators role in developing positive body image	Body image Body image Diversity Educators role	Shapesville What I like about me All of me I'm glad I'm me All about me playlist	Body image	I can Book Bucket Guess which baby?
Talking about food and health	Talking about food and health Mindfulness and food Screen time and media	Educators role	Full mouse, empty mouse Eating mindfully	Talking about food and health Facts about diets	
Words matter!	Teasing does matter Avoid fat talk	Fat talk and teasing	The skin you live in	Teasing does matter How to deal with fat talk	

Learning area 3: Talk matters!

This learning area contains the following information :

Learning area	Professional development: Tip sheet	Professional development:	Learning activities	Parent tip sheets
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Words matter!	Teasing does matter Avoid fat talk	Fat talk and teasing	The skin you live in	Teasing does matter How to deal with fat talk
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How to use this material:

Professional development tip sheet: Read

Professional development: case study: Read as individual, or as a group. Think about how you would respond in this situation. If using the material as a group, it can be helpful to role play the scenario.

Learning activities: These activities are to be used with the children. Books, music and poetry are included for this learning area.

Parent tip sheets: May be sent home or displayed in the centre.

At home activities: May be sent home to encourage caregivers to think about their role in the development of body image in young children.



Professional development for educators

Professional development: Educator tip sheet

Teasing does matter

What is teasing?

Teasing is when we make fun of someone in a playful way, and is usually not meant to be hurtful. In contrast bullying is usually meant to hurt the person's feelings, and may be physically intimidating as well.

The person being teased may not be able to tell the difference between teasing and bullying. If the person being teased feels sad, frightened or disrespected then teasing needs to be stopped.

Overweight and obese children often experience weight-based teasing, that may be verbal or physical, and may include social exclusion. Children teased about their weight are likely to have lower self-esteem and inferior body image compared to other children. In fact, weight-based teasing has been demonstrated to have a greater influence on body image than a child's actual weight. Weight-based teasing can have serious long-term consequences, and has been linked with self-harm in adolescents. Some say that discrimination against overweight and obese people is the only form of discrimination that is still socially acceptable. This means, that as a culture, we think its okay to treat someone differently because of their weight. These attitudes are so common that we might not even be aware that we hold them.

For this reason weight-based teasing may be allowed to go unchecked or unnoticed.

Professional development: Educator tip sheet Avoid fat talk

As well as weight-based teasing, fat talk can also be damaging to the development of positive body image. 'Fat talk' describes a style of conversation where the difference between a person's perception of their body and how they believe the ideal body should look is discussed. An example of fat talk conversation might be,

"I look so fat in these jeans!"

'Fat talk' is not always about fat; it can be about any part of the body a person thinks doesn't conform to the beauty standards set up by our culture, or it can be about food or exercise.

'Fat talk' has very little to do with weight - it's all about how we see ourselves, or our perceptions.

People participate in fat talk for lots of different reasons:

- To be part of the crowd. 'Everybody else is doing it so I better join in';
- Because if I'm not 'fat talking' maybe other people will think I love myself!
- To seek comfort about how our body looks, e.g., 'I look really fat in these jeans' 'No you don't you look fantastic';
- Relieving guilt when we eat some foods, e.g., 'I shouldn't....I am so bad- I'm going to have another piece of cake';
- To talk about negative emotions. People might say 'I feel fat', when actually they feel sad, depressed, or out of control.

Both men and women 'fat talk', though women do it more than men.

Fat talk might be used to:

- Share personal information about themselves, e.g., 'I always eat chocolate when I get stressed'; □ To agree with and make each other feel better, e.g., 'Me too. Yesterday I ate a family block!'; and
- To show they are modest and show that they know the appearance of women is really important, e.g., 'I know...Minute on the lips, lifetime on the hips!'

'Fat talk' is so common in our culture, we might not be aware we are even doing it.



This is really important, because we may be ‘fat talking’ in front of children without being aware we’re doing it.

Why shouldn’t we ‘fat talk’?

- Fat talk can make us feel bad about ourselves;
- Women who over hear fat talk have been shown to feel guilt and shame about their own bodies, and maybe it’s the same for children who overhear it; and
- Fat talk continues the idea that there is only one acceptable body size or shape.

Professional development: Educator tip sheet

Screen time and media

While the media is known to be a strong influence on body image in both adults and adolescents the influence of the media on the body image of young children is not clearly understood.

We do know that:

- 30% of Australian preschool children have a TV in their room;
- Preschool children watch 2.5 hours of TV on average, per day;
- Children aged 2-5 years should be watching a maximum of one hour of television per day;
- Reality television such as 'The Biggest Loser', promotes the idea that overweight and obesity are bad, and thinness is good;
- The Biggest Loser is in the top five most watched shows for children under five.
- Television has been named by very young children as their best source of health information. This is concerning, because much of the 'health' information provided by advertising and programs promotes unrealistic health messages; and
- Children's TV and movies generally encourage the 'what is beautiful is good stereotype': where the 'good' characters are physically attractive, and the 'bad' characters are unattractive, for example, Cinderella with her ugly step sisters.

What can we do about screen time and media?

While we recognise it is very difficult and not practical to completely stop children watching TV or movies, it is important to note that there are ways we can encourage children to become more 'critical' viewers of TV and movies. This means that rather than believing that everything on TV is true, we encourage them to question whether:

- TV reflects the real world;
- Somebody is delivering a certain message so they can sell us products and
- The idea of a 'good' body shape changes over time, and is different in different places and cultures.

There are some ways we can encourage children to be more critical media consumers. These include watching programs with children, and asking them questions such as:



1. Do the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' look different? If yes, how? Why do you think that is? Do you think good guys and bad guys look different in real life?
2. Tell me about other people you know who act like this? Why do you think they act like this?
3. Do you think you have to have big muscles to be a hero? Who are some heroes who don't have big muscles? What about police, or fire fighters? What do they do that makes them heroes? Are some of them women as well as men?
4. Is how someone looks the most important thing about them? What other things can you think of that might be important?
5. Which character would you like to be friends with? Why?



Professional development: Case studies for educators

Teasing

A visitor has come to your children's service and she is a larger woman. One of the children points to her as she walks past, and says, "Look at that fat lady". Other children laugh and giggle and repeat the word fat as she walks past.

As a group, discuss what would you do in this situation.

Some examples of how to deal with this situation include:

- *Explain to the children that everybody is different. Some people are bigger and some are smaller, but that makes no difference to the kind of person they are.*
- *Talk to the children about whether it was polite or friendly to call a visitor names. Ask how they would feel if somebody teased them or made them feel unwelcome when they went somewhere new.*
- *Ask the children to think of ways they should behave when someone new comes to daycare. Examples might be to say hello, to introduce themselves, to ask the new person's name, or to show them an important feature of their daycare, such as where the books are kept. You could ask them to think of times that somebody made them feel welcome.*
- *Encourage a sense of community in your group. Make sure children are encouraged to help others, and that focus is placed on the valuable contributions that all members of the group can make.*



Professional development: Case studies for educators

Fat talk and dieting

At your centre, all staff are encouraged to eat lunch at the table with the children, and for healthy modelling, they are expected to eat the same things that the children are served. A new staff member says she won't have the rice dish the children are eating because she has started a diet, and will be having a meal replacement shake instead. She proceeds to prepare her shake at the table, to drink it while the children are eating, and to talk about how many kilos she has to lose, and how great she will look in her bikini by summer time. The children continue to eat, and talk amongst themselves, and appear to not be listening.

As a group, discuss what would you do in this situation.

Some examples of how to deal with this situation include:

- *When interviewing and employing new staff, talk to them about the expectation that staff will eat with the children, no matter what the children are served. In cases where the staff has an allergy or is unable to eat those foods for cultural reasons, they could bring their own food, but it would be valuable for the staff member to discuss that with the children.*
- *It would be valuable for the children to learn about the staff member's culture or to understand allergy.*



Professional development: Case studies for educators

- *When new staff members begin at your children's service, they could be asked to complete an induction manual. The body image materials from SNACPlus could be included as part of their training package.*

Talking to parents

The caregiver of a new child comes into daycare and says to you quietly that they are concerned about the weight of their child. They would like you to monitor how much their child eats, not to offer them extra helpings of lunch, and to make sure their child is moving a lot during play.

As a group, discuss what would you do in this situation.

Some examples of how to deal with this situation include:

- *Mention to the parent that they might be more comfortable talking about this out of the earshot of the children. Ask them to join you in a private space, for example an office or staff area.*
- *Talk to the parent about how all children grow at different rates, but if they are concerned they could speak to a health professional in order to get the best advice. Their family doctor may be able to recommend a dietician or nutritionist who specialises in caring for young children.*



Professional development: Case studies for educators

- *Explain to the parent that the menu at your centre is designed to comply with the food and nutrition policy at your centre to ensure that children are served the best foods possible for their growth and development.*
- *Explain that at your centre children are encouraged to serve themselves snacks, and to listen to their hunger signals in order to make sure they eat as much as they need but not too much.*

Learning activities for children

Learning Activity

The skin you live in: Finger prints

- **Read “The skin you live in” by Michael Tyler.**
- Discuss different skin colours and compare ask children to compare forearms with one another. Discuss how no two people have the same skin colour.
- Ask children to discuss things they like about their skin, or that of others.
- Talk about what you could do if someone makes fun of the colour of your skin.
- Talk about how the way we look is not the most important thing about a person. Encourage children to think about positive personality traits and other abilities here.
- Talk to children about how even when we look the same we are all a little bit different.
- Talk to children about finger prints. There is no one in the whole world with the same finger prints as them.
- Using ink pads, help children to make finger prints on paper.
- Look at finger prints using magnifying glasses, and encourage children to describe what they can see. Use words such as whirls and loops to describe the finger prints.
- Allow children to look at one another’s finger prints using magnifying glasses, and ask them to compare their finger prints with those of others.
- Encourage children to describe similarities and differences in the finger prints.
- Talk to children about how everyone has finger prints, and though they are all a little bit different, It’s the similarities and differences in people that make us all special.
- We all have fingerprints, just like we all have feelings.



Tip sheets for caregivers



Caregiver tip sheet: Teasing does matter

Teasing is when we make fun of someone in a playful way, and is not meant to be hurtful. In contrast, bullying is meant to hurt the person's feelings, and may be physically intimidating as well.

The person being teased may not be able to tell the difference between teasing and bullying. If the person being teased feels sad, frightened or disrespected then teasing needs to be stopped.

Overweight and obese children often experience weight-based teasing. This might be verbal or physical, and may include being left out. Children teased about their weight are likely to have lower self-esteem and worse body image than other children. Weight-based teasing has been shown to have a greater influence on body image than a child's actual weight.

Weight-based teasing can have serious long-term consequences, and has been linked with self-harm in teenagers. Discrimination against overweight and obese people is possibly the only form of discrimination that is still socially acceptable. This means, that as a culture, we think its okay to treat someone differently because of their size. These attitudes are so common that we might not even be aware that we hold them.

For this reason weight-based teasing may be allowed to go unchecked or unnoticed. As a caregiver, you should be alert to weight-based teasing and stop it happening in your home.

The links below offer information on what to do if your you have concerns that your child is being teased.

If you would like information on what to do if your children is being bullied or teased, click [here](#)

If you would like more information about positive strategies in relation to children's weight, click [here](#)

For more information on what body image is, go to: <https://butterfly.org.au/body-image/body-image-explained/>



If you have any concerns about your own body image or eating disorders get help from:

Call: 1800 ED HOPE / 1800 33 4673 Monday–Friday 8am to 9pm

Caregiver tip sheet: Avoid fat talk

As well as weight-based teasing, ‘fat talk’ can also be damaging to the development of positive body image. ‘Fat talk’ describes a style of conversation where the difference between a person’s view of their body and how they believe the ideal body should look is discussed. An example of fat talk conversations include:

“I look so fat in these jeans!”

“I have eaten like a pig today”

“My face looks fat”

‘Fat talk’ is not always about fat. It can be about any part of the body a person thinks doesn’t conform to the beauty standards set up by our culture, or it can be about food or exercise.

‘Fat talk’ has very little to do with weight. It’s all about how we see ourselves, or our perceptions.

People participate in fat talk for lots of different reasons:

- To be part of the crowd. ‘Everybody else is doing it so I better join in’.
- Because if I’m not ‘fat talking’ maybe other people will think I love myself!
- To seek compliments about how our body looks, e.g., ‘I look really fat in these jeans’.... ‘No you don’t you look fantastic’.
- Relieving guilt when we eat some foods, e.g., ‘I shouldn’t....I am so bad- I’m going to have another piece of cake’.
- To talk about negative emotions. People might say ‘I feel fat’, when actually they feel sad, depressed, or out of control.

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Fat talk might be used to:



- Share personal information about themselves, e.g., 'I always eat chocolate when I get stressed'.
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Why shouldn't we 'fat talk'?

- Fat talk can make us feel bad about ourselves;
- Women who over hear fat talk have been shown to feel guilt and shame about their own bodies, and maybe it's the same for children who overhear it;
- Fat talk continues the idea that there is only one acceptable body size or shape; and □ 'Fat talk' by adults teaches children to do it too.

For more information on what body image is, go to: <https://butterfly.org.au/body-image/body-image-explained/>

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- The Biggest Loser is in the top five most-watched shows among children under five years of age.
- Television has been named by very young children as their best source of health information. This is concerning, because much of the 'health' information provided by advertising and programs is unrealistic.
- Children's TV and movies generally encourage the 'what is beautiful is good stereotype'. This is where the 'good' characters are physically attractive, and the 'bad' characters are unattractive. An example is Cinderella is good whilst her ugly step sisters are bad.

What can we do about screen time and media?

While we recognise it is very difficult and not practical to completely stop very young children watching TV or movies, we should limit their viewing time and encourage children to become more 'critical' viewers.

This means that rather than believing that everything on TV is true, we encourage them to question whether:

- TV reflects the real world.
- Somebody is delivering a certain message so they can sell us products.
- The idea of a 'good' body shape changes over time, and is different in different places and cultures.

There are some ways we can encourage children to be more critical media consumers. These include watching programs with children, and asking them questions such as:

1. Do the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' look different? If yes, how? Why do you think that is? Do you
2. Tell me about other people you know who act like this? Why do you think they act like this?



3. Do you think you have to have big muscles to be a hero? What do they do that makes them heroes? Are some of them women as well as men?
4. Is how someone looks the most important thing about them? What other things can you think of that might be important?
5. Which character would you like to be friends with? Why?

Tips for getting children more active can be found [here](#)

For more information on what body image is, go to: <https://butterfly.org.au/body-image/body-image-explained/>

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Other resources

The following pages list body image resources, including books and webpages.

These include:

- Children's books about body image and self-esteem;
- Children's books about diversity;
- Children's books about food and feelings; □ Reference books for educators.
- Links to online materials.

You can access the SNACPlus body image resources Facebook page and Pinterest page.

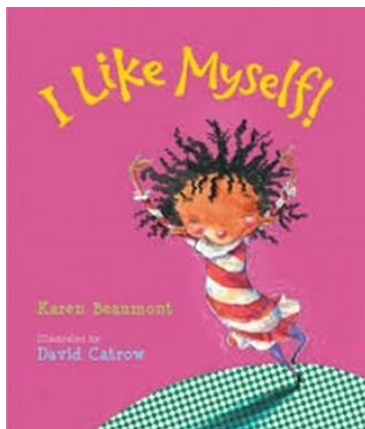


To access the Facebook page click [here](#)

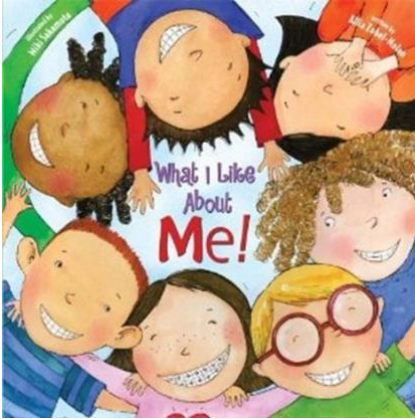


To access the Pinterest page, click [here](#)

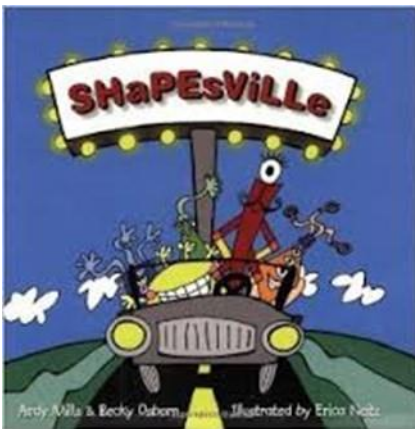
Books about body image and self-esteem



Beaumont, K. , & Catrow, D. (2004). *I like myself!*
Boston Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.



Zobel, N. A., & Sakamoto, M. (2005). *What I like about me!* New York: Reader's Digest Children's Books.

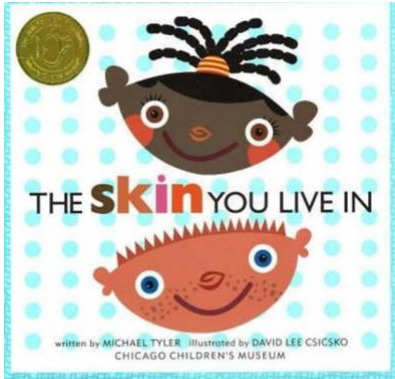


Mills, A., Osborn, B., & Neitz, E. (2003). *Shapesville*. Carlsbad, Calif.: London: Gurze ; Hi Marketing.

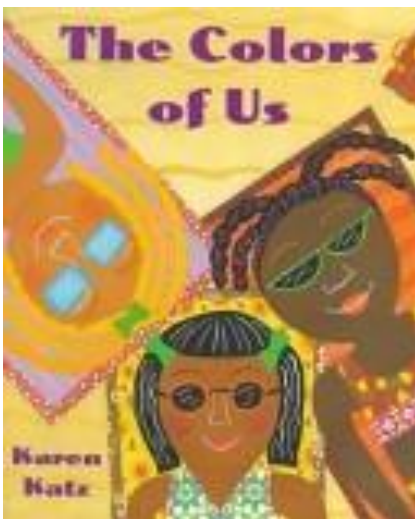
Activities can be found at:

<http://www.edcatalogue.com/preschoollesson-plan/>

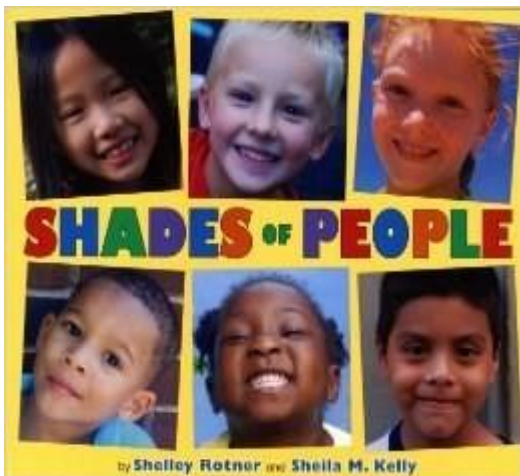
Books about diversity



Tyler, M., & Csicsko, D. L. (2005). *The skin you live in*. Chicago, Ill: Chicago Children's Museum.

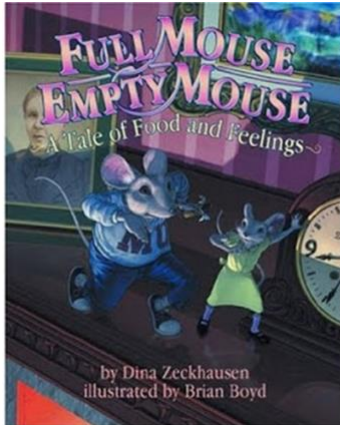


Katz, K. *The colors of us*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

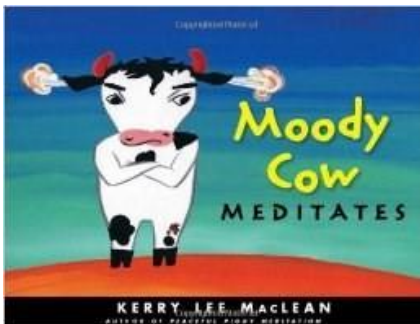


Rotner and Kelly. (2011). *Shades of people*.
New York: Holiday House.

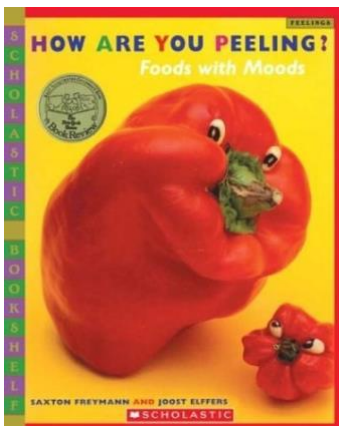
Books about food and feelings



Zeckhausen, D., & Boyd, B. (2008). *Full mouse, empty mouse: A tale of food and feelings*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.

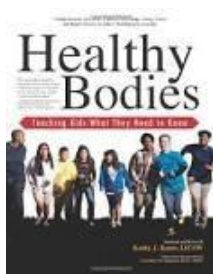


MacLean, k. (2009). *Moody cow meditates*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications.

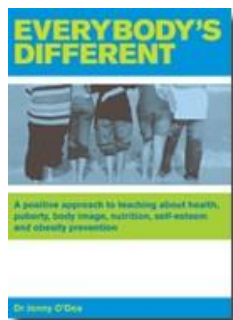


Freymann, S., & Elffers, J. (1999). *How are you peeling? Foods with moods*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books.

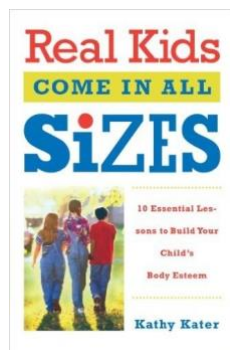
Reference books for educators



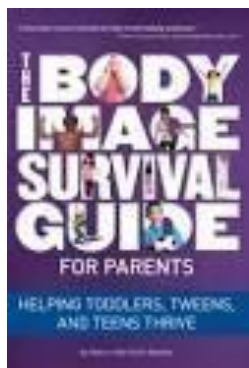
Kater, K. (2012). *Healthy Bodies; Teaching Kids What They Need to Know: A Comprehensive Curriculum to Address Body Image, Eating, Fitness and Weight Concerns in Today's Challenging Environment* (Volume 3). New York: Body Image Health



O'Dea, J.A. (2007). *Everybody's different: A positive approach to teaching about health, puberty, body image, nutrition, self-esteem and obesity prevention*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press.



Kater, K. (2004) *Real kids come in all sizes*. New York: Broadway Books.



Warhaft-Nadler, M. (2013). *The Body Image Survival Guide for Parents: Helping Toddlers, Tweens, and Teens Thrive*.

Germany: Eifrig Publishing.

Links to online materials

BODY IMAGE:

BODY IMAGE:

https://butterfly.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/EDAA-Conversation-Starter_updated-1.pdf

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/body-image>

[kidshealth.org/teen/food fitness/problems/body image.html](https://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/problems/body_image.html)

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