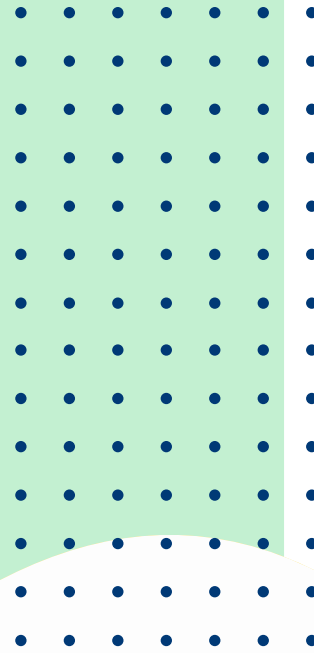


Confident Me

School Lesson for
Body Confidence



Lesson Guide
for educators

Extension Lesson



Learning outcomes



In this lesson students will:

- + **Describe** how appearance ideals contribute to discrimination;
- + **Define** forms of discrimination that exist in society and describe the impact of them on mental health, primarily body confidence;
- + As upstanders, **explore** ways to address discrimination based on physical characteristics; and
- + **Advocate** for solutions that create a more inclusive community where everyone feels belongingness, supported, celebrated, and encouraged to contribute.



United States National Health Education Standards alignment

- + Students will **comprehend concepts** related to health promotion and disease prevention
- + Students will **analyze the influence** of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors
- + Students will **demonstrate** the ability to use **goal-setting** skills to enhance health



Educator Preparation

From Your School



A/V Equipment
Internet Access

Lesson Materials



- + Student Slides
- + Case Studies with questions
- + Types of Discrimination student handout

- + Space for whole group instruction as well as small group work.



Case Study #1: Veronica **01**

66 Here it is, the week I have been waiting for. I'm so excited yet feeling uneasy. I don't know what it is about running for student council that feels so daunting. I've been told by my friends that this would be a perfect position for me. I think I can change things to make it better for students. Unfortunately, that has gotten me in trouble a few times. It sometimes seems that being assertive or fighting for what is important isn't a trait that is appreciated for females, as it is seen as being bossy and aggressive. How is it that the same decisions made by the males in student council are looked at differently? Maybe that's why they are viewed as the better candidate? I have to keep reminding myself of the things I have accomplished that would make me a strong candidate, even if they have gone unnoticed or even ignored. The students in our school deserve to have someone that supports and acknowledges everyone, regardless of gender. 99

NAME: DATE: APPROPRIATE DISCUSSION:

Case Study #8: Taylor **08**

81 What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!

82 How could this type of discrimination affect the person's body confidence and/or make them feel different?

83 How can a middle school support a person experiencing this discrimination?

84 What's wrong with the system that's creating this problem?

NAME: DATE: APPROPRIATE DISCUSSION:

Lesson Overview

 50 mins



Page 7 **Introducing Appearance Discrimination** | 3 mins

- + Introduction and group agreements
- + What are we learning today?
- + What are appearance ideals?

Page 9 **Exploring Appearance Discrimination** | 25 mins

- + What is appearance discrimination?
- + What forms of discrimination do you know of?

Page 11 **Combatting Appearance Discrimination** | 15 mins

- + What can our school do to combat appearance discrimination?
- + How can a more inclusive community be created in our school?
- + What can YOU do if you witness appearance discrimination?
- + How SHOULD middle schoolers respond when they see appearance discrimination?
- + If you're experiencing discrimination, what can you do?

Page 12 **Closure** | 7 mins

- + What have we learned today?
- + Congratulations!

Cautionary Time Warning:
Some teachers are able to implement the learning activities within the timeframe suggested, while others discuss that due to high student engagement the lesson can span longer (i.e. 90 minutes, extra class period).

Notes to Educator



Partnering with School Support Staff:

Considering the topic and content, it is recommended that before this lesson, educators connect with school counseling staff (counselors, social workers, psychologists) to inform them of the upcoming lesson so that they can be prepared for any student support that may be necessary. Educators might consider inviting counseling staff members to be present for and/or co-facilitate the lesson to ensure that students are explicitly aware of supportive staff members.

Additionally, it is strongly suggested that educators discuss the content of the lesson with administration prior to implementation to ensure support and to develop a plan for handling any students who may demonstrate disrespect during the lesson / learning activities.

Trauma-Informed Health Education:

The content of this lesson may cause discomfort and may trigger strong feelings for students and educators. Educators are reminded that emotional reactions to sensitive topics may manifest behaviorally during the lesson. Educators are encouraged to be prepared to effectively handle emotional responses by students, through de-escalation strategies and/or support from appropriate personnel. Additionally, trauma-informed means antiracist and against all types of oppression. Educators must be sure that their behaviors in leading this lesson are all-inclusive (meaning all children in the same classroom; it means providing learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded, including ELLs, students with differing abilities, and students of all races/ethnicities. Inclusive education values the unique contributions that students from all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all. UNICEF) and that students are held to this standard as well.¹

In an effort to reduce occurrences of “otherness” (the quality or state of being other or different), educators should be mindful of the makeup of the student population. If lesson is facilitated in a predetermined class/group of students, making adjustments for commonality may not be feasible; however if lesson is not facilitated in a predetermined group of students, educators should aim to ensure that at least 2 students of each marginalized group are included in the creation of groups so that one student does not feel targeted. This is a best practice suggestion, but please be sure not to call this out in the classroom as to not make any student feel tokenized in anyway.

¹Benes, Sarah, and Holly Alperin. *The Essentials of Teaching Health Education: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*. 2nd ed., Champaign, IL, Human Kinetics, 2022.

Notes to Educator



Personal Biases & Lived Experiences:

Educators should explore and be aware of their own personal bias and lived experiences of privilege or oppression before implementing this lesson. Note that everyone can relate to low self-esteem, but not every educator can relate to the experiences of oppression or discrimination. While answer keys with suggested responses for learning activities are provided in this toolkit, educators are encouraged to personally work through and complete the student assignments before implementation to understand the experience that students will be having as they participate in the lesson.

Potential Adaptations

While the intention is for this lesson to be facilitated as designed, educators know their students and school communities best and are empowered to make adaptations/modifications as they see fit. Consider the following possible modifications:

- + Working through case studies entirely as a large group
- + Adding in opportunities for students and staff/trusted adults to share lived experiences
- + Involving other trusted adults to facilitate small group conversations while working through case studies
- + Give students multiple case studies and discuss the intersectionality of discrimination
- + Integrating children's stories regarding appearance discrimination
- + Gamifying concepts and/or utilizing educational technology tools
- + Adaptations for virtual learners (i.e. digitize case studies & questions, utilize breakout rooms)



How To Use This Guide

Suggested Time Allocation

This is the amount of time generally recommended for students, to achieve learning outcomes and improve body confidence. This may be adapted to suit the needs of your class.

🕒 15 mins

Lesson Learning Objectives

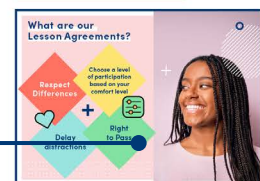
Students should achieve these objectives by the end of each section.

Presentation

These are visual cues and learning objectives to help you facilitate the lesson effectively.

Introducing Appearance Ideals

Presentation



Educator Actions

Educator Notes

Handout



APPEARANCE IDEALS

Educator Actions

Bullet points highlight important questions to ask students to ensure key concepts are addressed with optimum impact on body confidence.

Text in **BOLD** indicates instructions to help structure planned activities, e.g., when you should play films or use handouts.

Educator Notes

Desired Responses

Notes/Desired Responses

Possible answers to look for from students, but also offers ideas for guiding their responses as they develop their understanding of key concepts and improve their body confidence.

Handout

Introducing Appearance Discrimination

 3 mins

By the end of this activity, students will understand appearance discrimination.

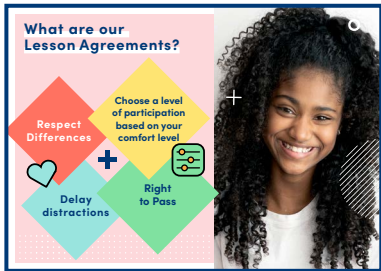
Presentation



Educator Actions

Introduce the lesson:

Explain that today's lesson will help students think about appearance ideals, appearance diversity and inclusion in our society. The lesson will assist them as they explore discrimination that occurs as a result of appearance ideals and brainstorm ways to create a more appearance-inclusive society.



Lesson group agreements
(as in Confident Me lesson 1, if not being taught as an extension).

Reinforce that this learning community and this lesson are intended to empower students. However, discrimination is a sensitive topic that many people, even middle schoolers, have personally experienced. If at any time during this lesson you feel harmed and not empowered, please tell me and we will make a plan to ensure your emotional safety.

Educator Notes

If allowable by school culture, consider inviting students to step out of the room and/or to visit the counseling center if they need to at any point during the lesson.

Presentation



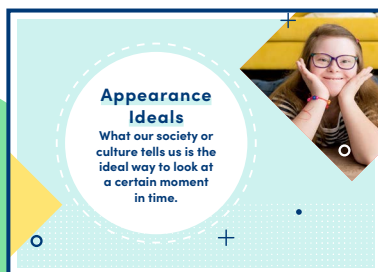
Educator Actions

Ask:

- + What are we learning today?

Share the slide and the learning outcomes:

- + What is appearance discrimination?
- + How does appearance discrimination affect someone's body confidence?
- + How can middle schoolers respond when they see appearance discrimination?
- + What are the benefits of having a more inclusive community?

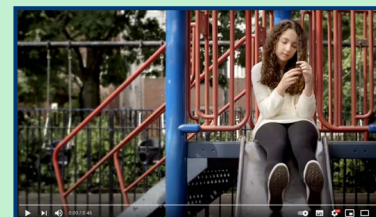


Review Appearance Ideals by reviewing the slide and the definition listed.

Educator Notes

This will be a review if this lesson is being taught as an extension to the single lesson or five-lesson program.

*If time permits, consider showing (or re-showing) "[Change One Thing](#)" video.



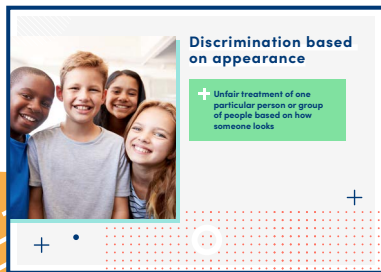
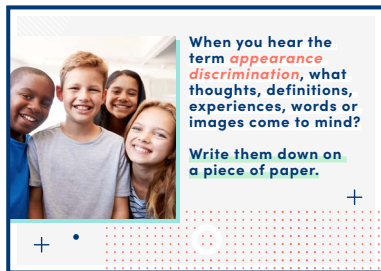
Please note that if this lesson is being taught in sequence (meaning after the other five Dove Self-Esteem Project lessons), this video will be a repeat from a previous lesson. It is not required to teach this lesson in sequence however.

Exploring Appearance Discrimination

 30 mins

By the end of this activity, students will learn to identify situations of appearance discrimination and explore opportunities for supporting people who experience it.

Presentation



Educator Actions

Ask:

What do you think appearance discrimination means?

Have students take 2–3 minutes to write or draw a response. Invite students to share with the class.

Tell them this lesson will address appearance discrimination, how it affects people, and how we can be upstanders and support those who experience appearance discrimination.

Introduce the definition of discrimination:

What is discrimination?

The practice of unfairly treating a person or group differently from other people or groups of people.

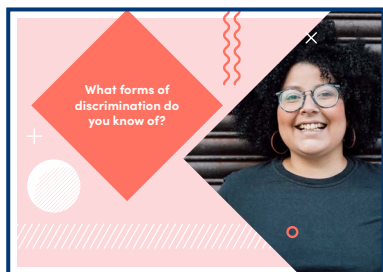
If applicable, refer to the chart paper or virtual white board you created as a class. Discuss the connection between their brainstormed ideas and the definition you just shared.

Educator Notes

Tech Opportunity: Students use a platform like Jamboard or MURAL to add an image, word, thought or definition to a virtual white board.

Creative Opportunity: Students draw or write their thoughts on large post-it notes and place on a white board or chart paper in the room.

Presentation



Educator Actions

Explain that there are many types of discrimination in our society, which means practicing something. For example, you have probably heard of racism. Racism is when people practice unfair treatment of others based on the opinion of that one race.

Refer to the slide.

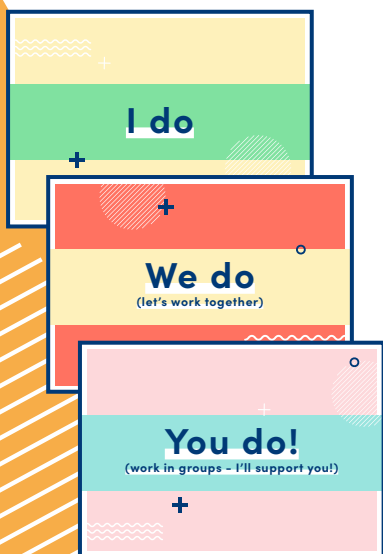
Ask:

What other types of discrimination can you think of? Have students brainstorm a few.

Share that some of them or people they know have possibly experienced discrimination and that can have a negative impact on a person's well-being. Before we can dive into combating appearance discrimination, we need to make sure we understand forms of it and how appearance discrimination relates to mental well-being.

Educator Notes

The Educator can refer to the handout to help prompt students, as needed. The students will not yet have this handout.



Gradual Release of Responsibility Activity

"I Do"

In this first step, the Educator will present a completed example of the work that students will be doing.

"We Do"

In this second step, the Educator and students will work together to complete a different case study than what the Educator just presented.

"You Do"

Tell students they will be placed into groups to complete this task collaboratively and explore some of these forms of discrimination a little more. Remind students of the group agreements. Hand out "Types of Discrimination" page and one or more Case Studies with questions to each group. Have them read it and discuss while answering the questions, referring to the definitions of types of discrimination handout. Ask them to prepare a 1 minute share out with the rest of the class. Each group should select a reporter to share out. Students can also think about how one person could face different types of discrimination at the same time and that is called Intersectionality.

Have each group share. Send students back to their seats.

For the exemplar/model, the Educator should use one case study from the work that they (the Educator) did as preparatory work for this lesson. (see "Personal Biases & Lived Experiences")

There are many case studies available for student exploration. The Educator should choose an appropriate number of case studies for the class population. There will be opportunities later to explore any unused case studies.

If time does not permit for small group work, it is appropriate to skip this section and focus on the previous activity.

The Educator can/should utilize suggested responses for each case study to prompt students as needed.

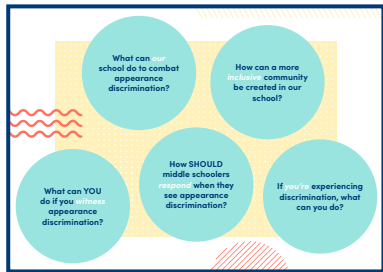
Find the case study responses on page 15-18 in the appendix

Combatting Appearance Discrimination

 14 mins

By the end of this activity, students will be empowered to stand up against appearance discrimination.

Presentation



Educator Actions

Say:

We've spent much of this lesson exploring different types of discrimination and the negative impact that appearance discrimination has on a person's well-being. While knowledge IS power, we also have the power to combat discrimination by being an upstander. One person's action can make a difference – you can make a difference in the life of a person experiencing appearance discrimination.

Let's start by thinking big:

- + What can our school do to combat appearance discrimination?
- + How can a more inclusive community be created in our school?

Now let's narrow of focus:

- + What can YOU do if you witness appearance discrimination?
- + How SHOULD middle schoolers respond when they see appearance discrimination?

Finally, if you're experiencing discrimination, what can you do?

Educator Notes

The term "upstander" is commonly used in bullying prevention education. An upstander is a person who stands up for other people.

If students have previous experience with activism and/or advocacy, make that connection here.

Student responses will vary based on the culture, policies, and infrastructure in the school. Educators should brainstorm ideas prior to the lesson.

Desired Responses

- + Question the discriminatory behavior (why are you doing/saying that? why is that happening?)
- + Reach out to the person experiencing discrimination – check in on them and let them know that you see the discrimination and that you don't agree. Be inclusive.
- + If it's not dangerous to do so in the moment, use your voice to stop the behavior (i.e. "That's out of line" "Cut it out" "I can't believe you're acting this way")
- + Tell a trusted adult what you see and how it makes you feel.
- + The things that fit what society has determined as the norm are part of the problem. Students can begin to change the norm by asking for changes through letter writing, emails to companies, and using social media to speak up about issues of discrimination.
- + Train school staff on the correct and incorrect way to treat students who may have additional and/or diverse needs and experiences.

Recognize that it is not YOUR fault, think about your strengths and contributions to the community/school/your friendships and families. Tell students to take no ownership for the actions of others.

The Educator should provide students with information about connecting with appropriate school personnel. Educators should also create a list of local/regional anti-discrimination and youth empowerment resources / agencies.

Closure

 3 mins

By the end of this activity, students will be empowered to stand up against appearance discrimination.

Presentation



Educator Actions

Share:

Learning about these forms of discrimination and recognizing their impact on humans is the first step in making our world more inclusive. We don't always have the power to change society/the system right now and in this moment, but we can play a role in our behavior to address discrimination. There are times a person may also face multiple forms of discrimination at the same time, this is called intersectionality.

Ask:

What have we learned today?

– Students respond.

Remind students that the lessons in this series are all about learning to challenge or resist the pressures we face to match appearance ideals, and how we can focus on other qualities that help us all make the most of life. Remind students that our appearance has little to do with who we are because our qualities have nothing to do with our appearance.



Thank students for their participation and draw the lesson to a close.

Closure

Suggested Revisit of Concepts:

In an effort to solidify and extend student learning, consider revisiting a case study that was not discussed during today's lesson in 2-3 weeks and then again in 5-6 more weeks.

Additional Suggested Resources

Childrens' Books:

A Kids Book About Racism

Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o

Hair Love by Matthew A. Cherry

I Am Enough by Grace Byers

A Kids Book About Belonging

Eyes That Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho

What If We Were All The Same by CM Harris

Middle Grades/YA Book

We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices Edited by Hudson & Hudson

This Book is Anti-Racist by Tiffany Jewell

Stamped By Jason Reynolds & Ibram X. Kendi

This Appearance Discrimination Extension Lesson was created by Cairn Guidance in collaboration with Dr. Marisol Perez, REACH Institute at Arizona State University.

Appendix

Case Study Responses

Case Study #1:
Veronica

01

“Here it is, the week I have been waiting for. I’m so excited yet feeling uneasy. I don’t know what it is about running for student council that feels so daunting. I’ve been told by my friends that this would be a perfect position for me. I think I can change things to make it better for students. Unfortunately, that has gotten me in trouble a few times. It sometimes seems that being assertive or fighting for what is important isn’t a trait that is appreciated for females, as it is seen as being bossy and aggressive. How is it that the same decisions made by the males in student council are looked at differently? Maybe that’s why they are viewed as the better candidate? I have to keep reminding myself of the things I have accomplished that would make me a strong candidate, even if they have gone unnoticed or even ignored. The students in our school deserve to have someone that supports and acknowledges everyone, regardless of gender.”



HANDOUTS 2 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

01 **What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!**

Sexism

02 **How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person’s body confidence and/or make their life difficult?**

Veronica feels that she is not as worthy of being the student council president because of her female body. She may unintentionally limit herself because she is a girl.

03 **How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?**

We can tell her that she can do anything she wants to. Girls are just as capable as boys. Kamala Harris, a woman, is now the Vice President of the United States. We can make campaign signs that support her.

04 **What’s wrong with the system that’s creating this problem?**

In US and world history, we are most familiar with men who are successful leaders; we don’t hear about successful women leaders as much. In history, women were not allowed to be leaders and that seems to carry over to today.

Case Study #2:
Skyler

02

“I’m a bigger kid...well actually I’m a BIG kid. I’m bigger than literally everyone in my school, even the teachers. I definitely stand out in my grade and even in my school. I’m tall and kind of wide. My parents say that I’m “big-boned” whatever that means... I know they’re just trying to make me feel better. All I know is that I can’t hide...ever...everyone knows where I am, but at the same time, I can’t buy clothes or shoes at a regular store. How does this make sense??? You can’t miss me, but I can’t find anything to fit me. Everything that fits me is made for adults, but I’m just a middle schooler. Ya know what else? Bathroom stalls at school are the worst. It’s like they crammed as many possible toilets into the bathroom as possible and then put some walls and doors up. I don’t fit...literally, just because I’m a big kid means I have to either squeeze myself into the stall or go to the nurse’s office just to use the restroom. It’s a pain.”



HANDOUTS 4 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

01 **What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!**

Sizeism

02 **How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person’s body confidence and/or make their life difficult?**

Skyler could feel bad about their body instead of recognizing all of the great things that they can do because they are tall. It’s obviously hard to find clothes that fit and to fit into a school bathroom – both of these make his life difficult.

03 **How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?**

Remind Skyler of the great things that their body can do, tell them that everyone has trouble finding clothes that fit their body and their style, talk to the principal about redesigning bathrooms to be more size inclusive, Listen to them complain; agree that it sucks.

04 **What’s wrong with the system that’s creating this problem?**

Bathrooms are built too small and companies make clothes that fit “most” / average (or small) people. Being average size is seen as normal and being big is not.

Appendix

Case Study Responses

Case Study #3:
Bodhi

03

“I do watch and read the news sometimes and I catch reports here and there. I did read about the wrestler who was required to cut their locks in order to compete during a match. I wear my hair in locs. I asked my mom if I could grow them when I was in third grade. A lot of people in my family and neighborhood wear locs or other natural styles. Anyway, it's a cultural thing. My locs are kinda long, since I'm in middle school and it's been a few years since I began my journey. How would I feel if I was told I had to cut my locs to compete? Especially if I had them all season long. What do I do? What about my team and school? What about my cultural expression? This kid had been tying them up and putting them under a cap all season. Nobody said anything. Wrestlers also wear protective headgear. They cut all of the wrestler's locs off. Years of cultural expression. It's a hairstyle. The apology afterward would not have meant much to me. If the rule or policy says everybody has to have shoulder-length or above hair, I get it. Why wasn't the rule enforced all season long? Why did they cut all of the wrestler's locs off? I just don't get it. Locs represent who I am. I follow rules. This seemed kinda mean.”



HANDOUTS 6 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

- 01 What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!

Hair Discrimination

- 02 How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person's body confidence and/or make their life difficult?

If Bodhi ends up cutting his locks, he'll feel internally conflicted about his culture expression and his behavior/choice to cut them off.

Self-expression, uniqueness and individual value are all ignored.

- 03 How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?

Encourage Bodhi to ask his coach why this is a rule and explain the cultural aspect of his hair style. Suggest that Bodhi find a sport that supports his hair or join a wrestling club with different rules. I would tell them “This sucks, I don't agree, but we have to follow the rules.” “Tell them it's their decision, they need to make a decision.”

- 04 What's wrong with the system that's creating this problem?

Short straight hair is seen as the preferred style for this sport; the message is sent that having long hair/locks is not appropriate to be successful in this sport. *Hair is a huge part of identity for many and to put parameters on how people can wear their hair is not ok.*

Case Study #4:
Jada

04

“I was so excited when I made the cheerleading team. I have always wanted to be in front of a crowd cheering at all the football and basketball games. But lately I find myself trying to come up with excuses to quit. Don't get me wrong, I love cheering, the reason is some of the girls on the team keep complaining that my makeup and skin shade doesn't “match” the other girls. Let's not even talk about what they say about my hair. Do they not realize that there is absolutely no foundation out there that matches my dark skin tone? That I have to buy 3 or 4 bottles of foundation to mix to come close to what my real skin tone is, and even then it's not a perfect match. In fact more often than not it looks fake. I have to make the decision, a face that looks fake, or blemishes left uncovered. It is so embarrassing and at times shameful to hear the comments from the girls.”



HANDOUTS 6 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

- 01 What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!

Colorism/Shadeism

- 02 How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person's body confidence and/or make their life difficult?

Jada could feel that her skin makes her less in the eyes of the team; or makes her less pretty/attractive. She might not feel confident and comfortable in her own skin...literally. *She is tempted to give up something she loves which could affect her quality of life.*

- 03 How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?

I would tell her she's beautiful. Encourage her to tell a trusted adult about the comments. Ask the team members why they are making comments about matching. *Speak to the cheer coach about what's going on.*

- 04 What's wrong with the system that's creating this problem?

Makeup companies create limited selection of darker skin-tone foundations. Cheerleaders are expected to match. *All people aren't taught how to value the uniqueness of every human. People have no choice of the skin tone they are born with, but all should be embraced and shown in ads, products, etc.*

Appendix

Case Study Responses

Case Study #5:
Sam

05

“Just one more time, I am so sick of this. Like a favorite role model says, ‘I am so tired of being sick and tired of being sick and tired.’ I live in a largely Asian community in a very nice city. I was born and raised in the United States, though you would not think so from the unkind comments received from peers. You know, schoolmates, classmates, friends! Strangers in the mall, etc. Kids just like me. You see my parents are immigrants. Naturalized citizens. My grandparents live with us, too. We live in an area where there are mostly immigrant and American born Asians. Though I was born and raised in the city where I was born, I have a bit of accent because of the influence of my relatives and immigrant neighbors. I have classmates who think it is funny to ‘pick on’ how I speak. I have been told to go back to my country. That wouldn’t be fair, since this is my country. Or even if I did come here to live from another country like other classmates it is an unkind thing to say. I have been accused of causing a disease. I suppose I may be guilty of spreading a cold or two, but I’m sure that’s not what they mean. Most I’m sure are only repeating what adults have said around them. The bigger hurt comes from the kids that are supposed to be my friends. They are cool when it’s just us, but when they have an audience, they suddenly say mean, unkind, biased, racist, or prejudiced words about people who look like they are from another country to me or about me. My appearance. My features represent my connection to my family. My speech represents my community. Who I am represents the United States. I need people who say they are good people to really be who they say they are.”



HANDOUTS 12 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

01 What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!

02 How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person’s body confidence and/or make their life difficult?

Sam will feel that his/her race is less important or worthy than other races. Sam might feel ashamed of being Asian American. Sam might feel less confident in his/her own body that in the past has brought much pride because it represents Asian culture. ***Sam may not want to come to school. Sam may also become depressed.***

03 How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?

Tell a trusted adult about what is happening. When I hear any comments like this, I can tell the person to stop and tell them that they are being racist. Reach out to Sam and check in on them, letting them know that you see the discrimination and that you’re not OK with it.

04 What’s wrong with the system that’s creating this problem?

Asian Americans are a marginalized community. Or even if they are immigrant families they should not face racism. ***In some instances, Asian Americans are not being acknowledged and accepted as American Citizens.***

Case Study #6:
Dakota

06

“Each week my teacher rotates students by desk, first seat to last seat, last seat, one up and so on. The classroom has desks in the center and is surrounded by tables used as workstations. Every week I participate in the weekly seat move, but somehow, I never end up in the front desk. I decided to pay closer attention to how this was happening. My parents have said, if I do not understand something to respectfully ask a question. I asked the teacher why I never rotated into the first seat, after having just landed in the second seat the week before. I asked this question when once again, I was told to rotate to the last seat. Instead of answering my question, the teacher said one of my classmates could use some peer help in this class, so I would sit where that student was. It was suggested that because we were of the same race, the student would work with me better than anyone else in class. What? I’ve been in school with most of the other students since elementary school. This student is new this year and I hardly know them. I looked around the room at my middle school classmates and realized there were only two students of a different race – the other student and me. Come to think of it, this student never made it to the first seat either. When I talked them later, they said they didn’t like the first seat. Any other seat was fine. I wondered the teacher decided we should stay in the rear seats so we could work without disturbance. Really? I could name other students who were better suited to help this student. I approached the teacher about the situation. The response was as I expected – kind of vague and evasive. However, I was not headed back to the rear and I wasn’t going to let this student anymore. I wasn’t really a great help to them, and I wasn’t letting the teacher off the hook for this micro-aggression. There is an underlying issue here and I do not like it. It’s time to talk to the adults in my life – at home and here in school.”



HANDOUTS 12 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

01 What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!

02 How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person’s body confidence and/or make their life difficult?

Dakota won’t feel as confident in his/her body because their race isn’t the same as everyone else’s. This person is not getting as many opportunities because of their race and they are being asked to help another because of their race even though they’re not qualified; this might make Dakota feel like s/he is ONLY his/her race and nothing else.

03 How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?

Tell a trusted adult who isn’t the teacher involved. Tell Dakota that I see what’s happening and that I don’t think it’s right. Encourage Dakota to talk to the teacher respectfully again. ***Also, the students could speak to the school principal on Dakota’s behalf.***

04 What’s wrong with the system that’s creating this problem?

Even though schools are not legally allowed to be segregated, they still are. Many schools are mostly one race with a few kids of other races. Some (many) adults are not aware of their discriminatory behavior and/or personal bias.

Appendix

Case Study Responses

Case Study #7:
Pax

07

“My family recently moved and I had to switch schools. I was so excited to go to my new school and to make new friends, but I feel like I don't belong. I used to enjoy going to school but not anymore. I wish I could go back to my other school. Everyone treats me differently here. I use a wheelchair to get around which makes navigating the narrow halls hard to begin with...and I don't know the building yet so that makes things even more difficult for me. In the morning, I can't even get through the school doorway without my wheels getting caught. I am always late for one particular class because I have to take the long way around, the direct route to this class is just too narrow for my chair when all of the other kids are there, too. In this classroom, my teacher said she likes to seat me in the front right-side of the classroom closest to the doorway so I won't disrupt the class since I am always late. My teacher also thought it would be a good idea to seat me there just in case I have to go to the bathroom. She thought it would save me time getting to the bathroom being close to the doorway. This teacher needs to be a bit more open-minded and see me for who I am, not just that I use a wheelchair. Could this person ASK me what I need or want instead of just assuming? This teacher even said that they didn't think I would attend the upcoming school dance because I wouldn't be able to dance. I feel misunderstood, mistreated and like an outcast... I feel marginalized. Why does everyone, especially one of my teachers, treat me this way? Why can't I be treated as a normal human being? I feel like I don't belong here.”



HANDOUTS 14 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

01 What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!

Ableism

02 How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person's body confidence and/or make their life difficult?

Pax may not feel confident in everything that his/her body CAN do, but instead will focus on what it can't. Pax may be limited in opportunities because of the seat in the classroom. Pax may feel like an outsider or that s/he doesn't belong in this school, making learning and growing in this school difficult. *Pax may develop low self-esteem or become depressed. Pax may also begin to make excuses to stay home from school.*

03 How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?

I could walk with Pax to and from classes so s/he isn't always the only one who is late. Pax could tell a trusted adult about the situation and I could go with Pax to do that. I can ask to work with Pax in class. I can tell Pax that I see the ableism happening and that I don't agree with it. *I would volunteer to help Pax get to class by agreeing to be his/her buddy.*

04 What's wrong with the system that's creating this problem?

Many schools, especially ones built long ago, are not designed for people with a physical disability.

Case Study #8:
Taylor

08

“Most of my friends love the end of the winter season. Everyone associates spring with warm weather and tank tops. Not me, I want nothing to do with the sun. To me it means PE outside. Why is it that one of the most common chemicals to prevent skin cancer is white? If I do go out, I have several options. Wear sunscreen and look ashy, or wear nothing and the scars from my acne get darker. I wish PE wasn't mandatory. My PE teacher won't even allow me to stay inside and workout. I would rather not change for class and lose points than have to worry about my skin.”



HANDOUTS 16 APPEARANCE DISCRIMINATION

01 What type of discrimination is present in the case study? Highlight one. Use the handout for help if you need it!

Colorism/Shadeism & Racism

02 How could/does this type/these types of discrimination affect the person's body confidence and/or make their life difficult?

Worrying about skin color/tone will become the focus of Taylor rather than learning and being active in PE; this will make life difficult. *She may worry about people making fun of her for looking ashy.*

03 How can a middle schooler support a person experiencing this discrimination?

Talk to PE teacher with Taylor or mention something to a trusted adult at school. Offer to wear a hat during PE with Taylor. Tell Taylor that you see the problem and that you don't agree with it. *Help Taylor do research to see if there are any tinted sunscreens.*

04 What's wrong with the system that's creating this problem?

PE is mandatory and being outside in nice weather is expected for all students. Many teachers are white and don't know how the sun impacts different skin types because they haven't lived it. *Teachers are not trained on the variety of needs that come with a diverse population.*

