

# STAY STRONG AND LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN



## AN EIGHT-WEEK GUIDELINE FOR RUNNING YOUR CLUB

This is a preview.  
To order the full curriculum please visit  
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# Love the Skin You're In Curriculum for Clubs

Media, Mental Health, and Mindfulness

## WELCOME TO THE CLUB!

Congratulations on your decision to create a place for young women to champion inner resiliency and mental health within your school walls! We applaud your decision to continue the conversation by becoming a leader for other girls at your school and are excited to have you join us in calling out gender and racial misrepresentation in the media while challenging young women to insist that their voices and imaginations be more valued than their looks and sexual behaviors. Together, we can inspire girls to value and practice positive self talk and see their power to choose connection with one another over looks-based comparison, competition, sexting, and spectator bullying.



## Stepping Stones

- Connect with Lindsay Brie Mathers on Facebook so she can provide your club with a peer mentor
- Pick a day of the month, a staff advisor, and a room that can host your members
- Announce Your Club through social media, posters, and school announcements
- On Day One of your club, together set your club's intentions. You may want to begin by surveying the group to get a sense of their specific needs.

## Girls walk away with:

- a reality check on culturally prescribed body image and sexuality stereotypes
  - the value and practice of positive self talk
  - the strategy to choose connection over competition with one another
  - a view of their bodies as instruments of fitness and strength rather than ornaments
  - assertive communication skills
  - a sense of their role in preventing bullying, most of which is looks-based
  - a vision for their role as leaders in the world
  - basic mindfulness and self-care skills
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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN

# STAY STRONG AND LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN AN EIGHT-WEEK GUIDELINE FOR RUNNING YOUR CLUB

## From Kick-off Assembly to Continuing the Conversation

Designed for optimal youth engagement, the *Love the Skin You're In* assembly speaks to media idealizations of women and the consequent influence they are having on young women's self perception. Participants are motivated to shift their conversations to a focus on inner resilience and well being. Our school clubs act as a catalyst for positive change, inspiring girls to grow love and respect for themselves, their bodies, and one another.

## Setting an Intention

It takes a village. That's why we are connecting girls across North America in conversations that reinforce the message that there is more to be than eye candy. Moreover, we are building a network in which no young woman falls through the cracks. Fostering interpersonal and intra-personal connection, the follow up curriculum is grounded in creating a sense of belonging, and teaching socio-emotional life practices that work. This eight-week series covers topics at the heart of girl culture such as body image, dieting, hyper sexualization, sexting and looks-based competition. Participants learn resilience-building skills such as empathy, yoga, mindfulness and communicating with compassion. Through goal-setting and contemplation they explore their roles as leaders and partners in their communities.



### WEEK ONE – AN APPETITE FOR LIFE

During our first week, girls who have seen the in-school assembly have an opportunity to share their excitement about the event that inspired their participation in the club. This is a great time to survey your club members, share stories, go over this curriculum, and get a sense of what young women personally want to cover during the weeks ahead. Remember, this curriculum is intended to be a guide. Feel free to add themes and activities that are relevant for your particular club. We would love to hear about your ideas so please send us pictures, etc. to help us all stay connected.



### WEEK TWO – BODY IMAGE: FROM DIETING TO NOURISHMENT

In week two we take a deep dive into the 2.3 trillion dollar industry that plays on our sense of security in an effort to convince us we are unworthy of love, self worth, etc. unless we look a certain way. We question the underpinnings of conversations suggesting that women's bodies should be treated like achievements if they are thin enough, and works in progress if they're not. We do straight talk on the myths and dangers associated with dieting, learn exercises for cultivating positive body image, and celebrate healthy, whole food choices.

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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN



### WEEK THREE – FROM HYPER SEXUALIZATION TO RESILIENCE

During our third week, we look at a culture that hyper sexualizes women and increasingly girls and how the internalization of these values pressures us from girls to glam. We'll explore mental health consequences of self-objectification, uncover the belief systems that compromise us, and learn practical skills for making self-affirming choices. This week is a reminder to value ourselves for our substance and unique humanity and remember the gifts we bring beyond being a sex object.



### WEEK FOUR – HARMONIZING MIND/BODY/SPIRIT

An experiential progression from stress to self-care, this week provides a moment to pause in non-verbal connection as we explore gentle yoga and basic mindfulness practice. Studies about the positive effects of yoga on body image abound and self compassion has been shown to be more effective than self-esteem building. This week will explore what that means by giving participants a guided experience of how it feels and how to make it part of daily life.



### WEEK FIVE – CONNECTION AND COMMUNICATION

Adolescence is an exciting time for exploring independence. Rooted in empathy, this week's focus will be on articulating our feelings, needs, and requests respectfully and assertively while honoring the person with whom we are in relationship. When we fully hold another's experience, and practice reflective listening, we forge new connections in our brains' associations of one another. This week will celebrate the value and practice of positive self-talk (intra-personal connection) as well as communicating directly and compassionately with others (interpersonal connection).



### WEEK SIX – A GLOBAL VIEW: LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT

What is possible when we awaken consciousness and change behaviors? We reach for our unique gifts and believe in our power to make a difference in the lives of others. A time for setting intentions and goals, this week forms a natural segue into girls' lived lives. Girls will walk away from the series confident that their voices, imaginations and authentic contributions are more important than how they look.

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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN



### BRIE MATHERS

...has spoken to 85 000 teen girls worldwide with her multi-media event *Love the Skin You're In*. Inspiring young women to find compassion within themselves and for one another, and to lead a new conversation about their bodies and beings, the Canadian-born McGill University graduate conducts connective school-wide body image events about media literacy and mindfulness. Brie is the author of *Freedom to Blossom*, a yogini, and girl power activist. She lives between Muskoka, Ontario and Jikoji Zen Center in California and is working on a documentary called *You Got This: Owning Body Image*.

### MEET OUR TEAM

She is joined here by her social media team members, who run Love the Skin You're In's social media channels and have provided the artwork and videos that form the core of this guidebook.



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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN

### TAKE OUR PLEDGE

- 1 I charge that the media's hyper-sexualization of girls and women is not en vogue with the full expression of our substance, complexity, and unique humanity. We are more than the sum of our parts; we are leaders and game-changers of the conversation.
- 2 I choose to champion my appetite for life by speaking my truth and standing for women's authenticity and diversity in all our shapes, sizes, backgrounds, and orientations, regardless of what consumer culture and the beauty myth say.
- 3 I redefine sexy as creative, kind, character-rich, and intelligent, recognizing that what my adorable, brilliant, sassy, authentic being is really hungry for is a powerful new legacy of love that stands free of the tyranny of image.
- 4 I live this pledge in my own life by caring for my body with nutritious food choices more but not all of the time, moving my body because of how good regular activity makes me feel, and taking a moment every day to be grateful for my body and my life.
- 5 I take this pledge for the benefit of my sisters across the world, recognizing that we are all in this together. I stand to speak up online for girls who are victims of looks-based and other bullying and participate in the creation of the safe and loving world I want to live in.

### CONDUCT GUIDELINES

We will “pass the talking stick”  
Do not speak during other’s sharing  
Practice deep listening

## WEEK THREE: MORE THAN EYE CANDY



### From Hyper Sexualization to Resilience

*During our third week, we look at a culture that hyper sexualizes women and increasingly girls and how the internalization of these values pressures us from girls to glam. We'll explore mental health consequences of self-objectification, uncover the belief systems that compromise us, and learn practical skills for making self-affirming choices. This week is a reminder to value ourselves for our substance and unique humanity and remember the gifts we bring beyond being a sex object.*

### OPENING CIRCLE/ICEBREAKER (15 MINUTES)

Write or type out the following quotes on small pieces of paper. Have each girl close her eyes and choose one of them from the pot, then read it aloud to the other girls in the group.

Curve: The loveliest distance between two points.

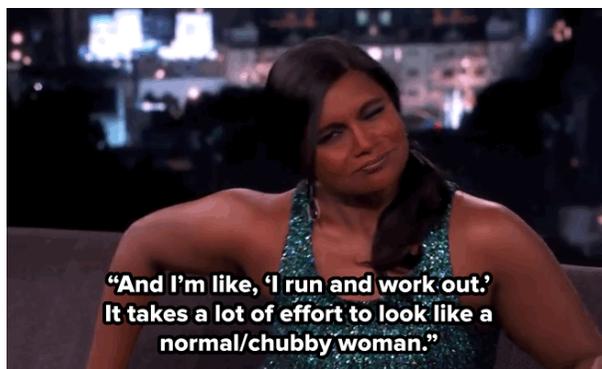
– Mae West

To ask women to become unnaturally thin is to ask them to relinquish their sexuality.

– Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*

I feel that life should be an art form. It should not be like a factory assembly line.

– Camille Paglia



There are more important things in life, like being a role model.

– Demi Lovato

I'm not a media darling. I'm not on the cover of all these magazines. I just quietly do my thing.

– Sarah McLachlan

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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN

I see my body as an instrument, rather than an ornament.

– Alanis Morissette

Plastic surgery and breast implants are fine for people who want that, if it makes them feel better about who they are. But, it makes these people, actors especially, fantasy figures for a fantasy world. Acting is about being real being honest.

– Kate Winslet

Yoga and meditation are ultimately about turning our eyes away from the airbrushed images of the outside world and looking deep within our own hearts.

– Anne Cushman

You've got to get up every morning with a smile on your face and show the world all the love in your heart. Then people gonna treat you better and you're gonna find, yes you will, that you're beautiful as you feel.

– Carole King

There's more to life than cheek bones.

– Kate Winslet

When I lay my head on the pillow at night I can say I was a decent person today. That's when I feel beautiful.

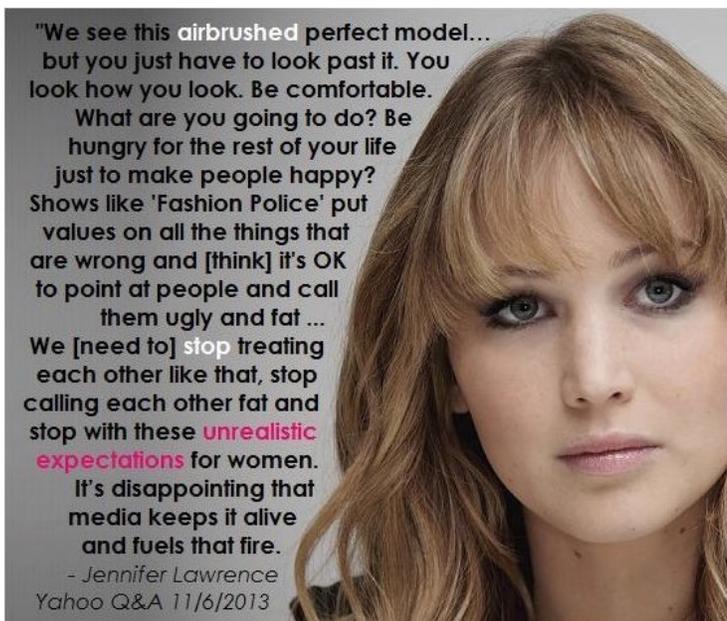
– Drew Barrymore

I'm not obsessed by looks. I think you can become a prisoner of your own image.

– Juliette Binoche

### READING – BREAKING UP WITH SELF-OBJECTIFICATION & BEFRIENDING YOUR BODY

*The teenage years are a turbulent time. The teen girl's brain is sprouting, reorganizing and pruning neuronal circuits that drive the way she thinks, feels, and acts – and obsesses over her looks. Her brain is unfolding ancient instructions on how to be a woman. During puberty, a girl's entire biological raison d'etre is to become sexually desirable... girls spend*



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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN

*hours in front of the mirror, inspecting pores, plucking eyebrows, wishing the butts they see would shrink, their breasts grow larger and waists get smaller, all to attract boys. Girls would likely be doing some version of this whether the media were there to influence their self-image or not.*

– Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain*

Okay ladies, let's face it. If we measure ourselves against society's insane beauty standards we all fall short. We're either thin enough but don't have big enough breasts, or we have the breasts but low and behold have curves in otherwise socially unsanctionable places to go along with them. What we must realize is the beauty industry wants one thing: money. Corporations create cradle to grave brand loyalty, teaching us early to think less and buy more. As long as we don't feel good enough exactly the way we are we will buy into their propaganda of a one-dimensional, homogenized, normalized kind of beauty and purchase their products. They want us to long for lustrous blonde hair, dazzling sea-blue eyes, and long lanky 11-year-old bodies that miraculously have 24-year old breasts. In Naomi Wolf's book *The Beauty Myth*, she calls out the writers of this myth: the dieting industry, the beauty and cosmetics industry and the plastic surgery industry. These industries would not exist if women didn't buy into their mythologies. They are not about the kind of beauty that makes us shine. They do not rely on us reveling in the skin we're in. They feed on inadequacy and self-loathing. When we entertain negative dialogues within, we have bought into their mythologies hook, line and sinker.

The other disturbing trend that popular media promulgates is the sexexploitation of girls at an increasingly younger age. Feeling that you have to perform sexually before you are good and ready is sexy nor healthy. Neither is the pressure of constantly experiencing yourself from the outside in through a lens of how advertisers falsely lead us to think men view us. Not only is this heterosexist, but it too promotes an obsessive experience with image that has been titled self-objectification, which means relating to ourselves as objects of others' sexual desires. It does not make us feel more free. It does nothing to increase our worth. It depletes us and robs us of what can otherwise be an innocent and exciting introduction to our experience of intimacy when we're good and ready. The companies will keep trying to coerce us otherwise because it's how they draw a ridiculous amount of profit. They are not motivated by love so we need be weary, conjuring our wise inner wild woman to read between their lines and insist on re-writing the female dream.

Your body is yours. It is yours to do with as you will. Grab your sword of light and carve a new constellation of belonging to you into the stars. It's time for a new legacy of love. Did you know that the root of the word courage comes from its

### THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

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**H**e said, "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

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latin origin, coeur, which means love? Our temples house magnificence beyond imagining. Inside them our true beauty resides, revealing itself in our capacity for kindness, the depths of our character and the boundlessness of our creative expression. When we know this beauty we are in touch with our true self, the home where courage lives.

Everything feeds us - not just food. The people we spend time with, the papers we read, the television we watch - all of this feeds the body/mind sensory information that teaches it how to be. Here are three ways that I deal with the indoctrination: I don't buy or read fashion magazines. I don't watch TV. I only attend movies with a storyline that deeply compels me. This is because I'd rather create my own story than passively watch someone else's story, especially when, more often than not, the characters being portrayed in that story don't reflect the beauty of reality – even if they claim to.

Reality TV shows reinforce stereotypes about women from all walks of life. People who join these shows have to sign contracts that allow the creators to alter their stories - often significantly. A study from the Girl Scouts Institutes found that girls who watch them accept and expect a greater amount of drama, aggression and bullying in their lives. Multi-conglomerate corporations are working at the head of the entertainment industries and they have very few female voices in positions of power and directorial roles. How can we expect to receive a balanced and reflective view of life when the camera is always in the hands of half of humanity and rarely with women? America's Next Top Model and The Bachelor are not about reality. They drive home the message that our true meaning lies in being thin, beautiful, and therefore marriageable.

So we need be very, very disciplined with ourselves when it comes to growing up in an age of hyped social media, profit-driven guilty pleasure television shows, and relentless beauty culture. If we fall asleep and allow ourselves to be lulled and numbed by the hypnotism of the media, in the worst case scenario, we buy into its limiting mythology and fall asleep to our own worth.

It's important to think critically, and it's also important to let ourselves play. It's not that make-up and fashion don't have a place. I adore the creativity I find in choosing clothes that make me feel self-expressed. I love to play with sparkly dust on my eyes and the drama of outlining my lips in red. This freedom to love herself through the play of adornment is a super fun part of being a woman and has marked the passage of womanhood for many cultures for Millenia. I wouldn't want to take this experience away from any girl who is drawn to it. (Nor would I want to force it on any girl who could care less.)



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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN

The point is that we can become absorbed with the the mirror and our adornment can come from a place of fear rather than love, and at its most extreme, fall into a pattern of self-objectification. If our inner critic is at the dressing table, we wind up changing our clothes too many times because we are entertaining and following negative thoughts about our bodies that strip all that fun away. This obsession robs us of our inherent right to the magical open radiance of the moment. It is no longer about self-expression, but perfection, which is the highest form of self-abuse. One of the great lessons I've learned is to make these things work for me rather than feeling burdened by externally imposed beauty rules. That means some days I am make-up free and some days I am putting color around my eyes. We can own our adornment. If you're marveling and having fun, thinking loving thoughts and feeling as though what is already beautiful is being enhanced, you are making make-up work for you.

How do I choose to spend my time instead? I find the things that nourish me. I read massively gripping novels written by extraordinarily talented writers, most of them women, who uplift and inspire me. I put my favourite music on my iPod, take it to the beach and dance my sweet petunias off to female rock stars. I find the poems that live inside me and give them voice. I consciously choose to spend a half hour



a day doing mindfulness practice because it opens things up, helps me to take myself less seriously, and furthers my curiosity about the nature of existence. I am nourished by dancing, long walks on the beach, playing with dogs and children, writing in my journal, and long, lavish bubble baths culminating in big fluffy white towels! These things fill my cup. They give me energy and open my heart. They uplift me. When I am uplifted I feel inspired to uplift the world.

## VIDEO SHARE FROM TEAM LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN – SOPHIA

### ACTIVITY

The following exercise is created to take us beyond the part(s) of our body that we don't like, judge, berate ourselves for by opening our perception to celebrate the parts we do like, then opening us up to loving not only those parts, but one another. Let your awareness float over a part of your body that you don't like. Then think of a part of your body that you do like. We want to make this truly transformational so

## PODCAST/VISUALIZATION {MOVING BEYOND BEAUTIFUL AND UGLY}

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## LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN

*Self-love is not about liking the body or liking the personality. The body may be beautiful or ugly; it doesn't matter. In true self-love, what is loved is what is unaffected by evaluations of beauty, ugliness, or personality.*

– Gangaji

## CLOSING CIRCLE

Get into partners and share with one another the part of your body where you have experienced the most discomfort. Share how that has made you feel, what other people have said that has hurt you, when you have felt pressured to sext a photo, what happened following, and how you felt afterwards. Once you have heard one another out, create a mantra that you can say or text to one another to remind one another of the love you want to carry around within you.





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