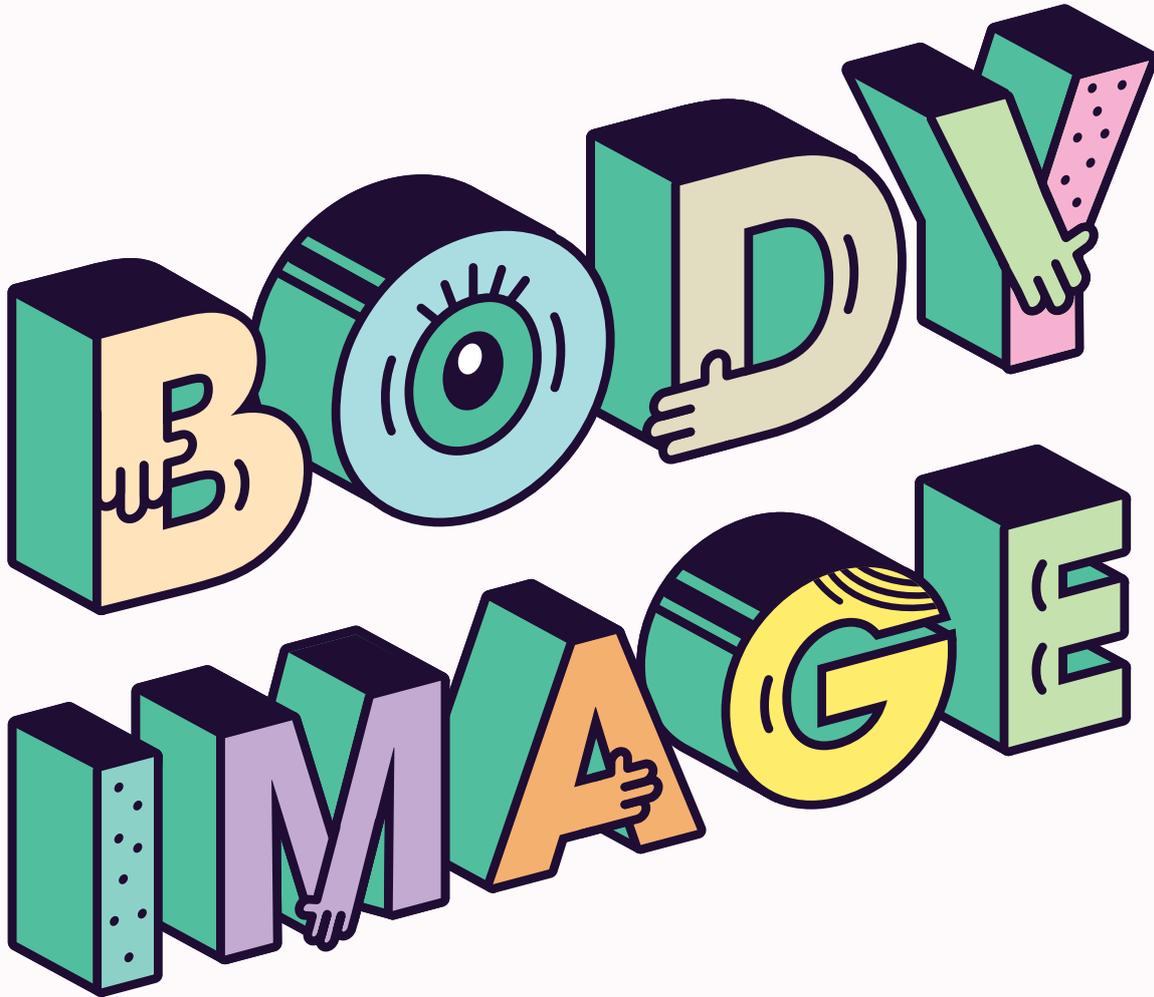




Peer
Education
Project



Mental Health
Foundation



**How we think and feel
about our bodies.**

Assembly



Assembly script:

- **Cover slide**
Slide 1 4
- **Introduction**
Slide 2 5
- **What is body image?**
Slides 3-5 6
- **What is mental health?**
Slide 6 9
- **How is body image linked to our mental health?**
Slide 7 10
- **What can affect our body image?**
Slides 8-14 11
- **Final thoughts**
Slide 15 18
- **Where to find more information and support**
Slide 16 19

This assembly has been developed from the Mental Health Foundation's Peer Education Project (PEP) - a secondary school-based, educational programme that aims to give young people the skills and knowledge they need to safeguard their mental health and that of their peers.

PEP is a carefully researched, effective approach to mental health education whereby older pupils within school or college deliver mental health lessons to younger pupils.

For more information about PEP and how your school can get involved, [click here](#).



Assembly aims:

- To understand what body image is and why it is important for mental health and wellbeing.
- To think about what can affect body image.
- To learn how to develop a good body image.

You will need:

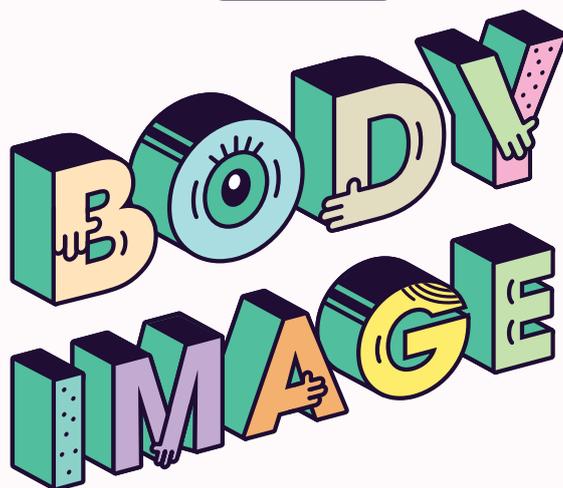
- Assembly script
- PowerPoint slides

Estimated delivery time:

- 20-30 minutes
- The assembly script can be divided into smaller sections and delivered across multiple assemblies, form times or lessons to fit into your timetable.

To ensure the content is most relevant, update the assembly script and PowerPoint slides to reflect the support available to your pupils if they are struggling with their body image and mental health.

Slide 1



How we think and feel about our bodies.

Assembly

Script

Welcome to today's assembly on body image.



Slide 2

Introduction



This assembly will cover:

-  What body image is.
-  What affects body image.
-  Why body image is important for our mental health and wellbeing.
-  How we can develop a good body image.



SLIDE 2

Script

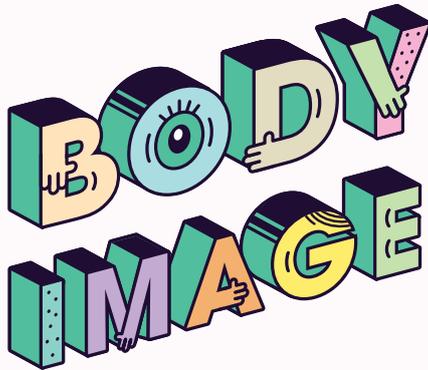
Body image is a subject that is relevant to us all. We all have our own body – unique in shape, size, skin tone, and ability – and we all have our own body image.

This assembly is an opportunity to understand:

- what body image is,
- what affects it,
- why it is important for our mental health and wellbeing; and
- how we can develop a good body image.



What is body image?



Body image is how we think and feel about our bodies.

SLIDE 3

Script

Body image is a term that can be used to describe how we think and feel about our bodies. How we think and feel about our bodies can change over time and in response to different circumstances.



Slide 4

What is body image?

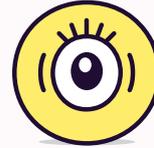


Good body image is:

- 👁️ Feeling satisfied and confident with our bodies.
- 👁️ Showing our bodies respect, appreciation and acceptance.
- 👁️ Having a healthy balance between valuing our bodies and the other parts of ourselves that makes us who we are.

"A healthy body image isn't a destination. It's about the journey towards acceptance."

MHF Young Leader



SLIDE 4

Script

Good body image is described as:

- feeling satisfied and confident with our bodies,
- showing our bodies respect, appreciation, and acceptance; and
- having a healthy balance between valuing our bodies and the other parts of ourselves that makes us who we are.



Slide 5

What is body image?



Body image concerns identified as one of the biggest challenges faced by young people in the UK.

SLIDE 5

Script

Research conducted by the Mental Health Foundation, in 2018, identified body image concerns as one of the biggest challenges faced by young people in the UK, alongside concerns of 'lack of employment opportunities' and 'failure to succeed within the education system'.

If we continue to feel unhappy with our body – either because of its appearance or the way it works – we may show signs of poor body image or body dissatisfaction. This can increase the risk of making unhealthy choices to change our body to feel accepted.

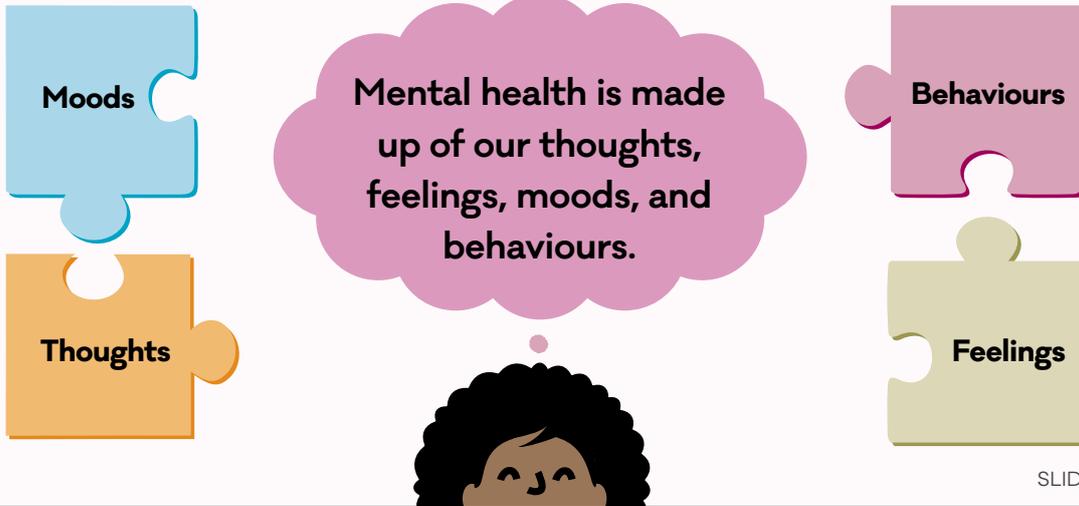
For example, a **survey** of UK adolescents by Be Real found that 36% agreed they would do 'whatever it took' to look good, with 57% saying they had considered going on a diet, 10% saying they had considered cosmetic surgery and 10% of boys saying they would consider taking steroids to achieve their goals.

It is important to talk to someone we trust about how we are feeling and be supported to look after ourselves and make healthy, body decisions.



Slide 6

What is mental health?



Script

Mental health is made up of our thoughts, feelings, moods, and behaviours. Mental health is not fixed throughout our lives. Just like physical health, mental health can change depending on experiences and circumstances, as people move through different stages of life.

Mental health is something we all have and need to look after. Each of us will find different things helpful for our mental health.

Learning about how body image affects mental health and wellbeing can help us to understand how to protect it and maintain good mental health for ourselves and others.



Slide 7

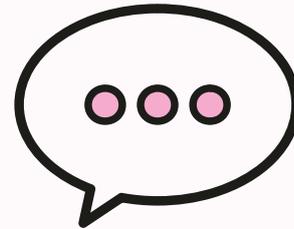
How is body image linked to our mental health?



Body image can affect:

- Self-esteem and self-confidence
- Mood
- Self-image
- Self-thoughts
- Social interactions with others

If you are worried about yourself or a peer, it is important to talk to a trusted adult.



SLIDE 7

Script

Body image is closely connected to our sense of self, our wellbeing, and our mental health.

Body image can affect aspects of our mental health and wellbeing, both positively and negatively, including:

- self-esteem and self-confidence,
- mood,
- self-image (how we view ourselves, and how we think others view us),
- self-thoughts; and
- social interactions with others.



Slide 8

What can affect our body image?



Personal relationships with our own bodies.



SLIDE 8

Script

There are many factors that can affect our body image, like the experiences we go through, our age and gender, as well as our cultural environment – all of which will be different for each of us.

Personal relationships with our own bodies

Sometimes we can experience 'body ideal internalisation'. This means feeling pressured to live up to an 'ideal' body type or appearance and feeling shame, or other uncomfortable emotions, when we think of ourselves as not meeting this standard.

TOP TIP: Do something that lets your body know you appreciate it. Take a bubble bath, practise relaxation, or get your body moving. It is important that we appreciate our body and learn to look after it.

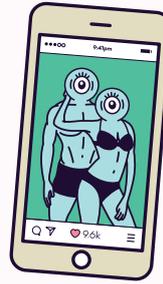


Slide 9

What can affect our body image?



The media and social media.



TOP TIP:
Reflect on the social media accounts you follow and how they make you feel.

SLIDE 9

Script

The media and social media

We are often exposed to unrealistic 'ideal' bodies through film, television, magazines, advertising, and social media, which can lead us to make negative comparisons with others based on appearance.

In 2019, the Mental Health Foundation [found](#) that 25% of young people said celebrities caused them to worry in relation to their body image, 19% of young people said TV shows caused them to worry in relation to their body image, and 40% of young people said that images on social media caused them to worry in relation to their body image.

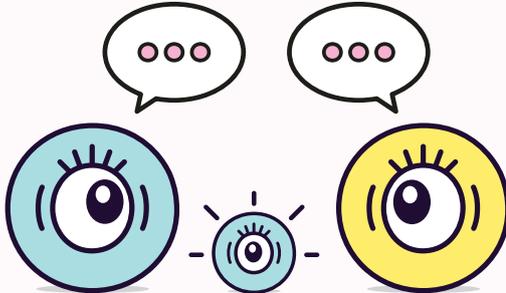
TOP TIP: Take note of the social media accounts you follow and how they make you feel. Consider muting, unfollowing or deleting social media apps and accounts that make you think and feel negatively about yourself and your body. Social media can have a positive influence on how we think and feel about ourselves, we just need to follow content that boosts our confidence and self-appreciation!



What can affect our body image?



Relationships with people at home.

**TOP TIP:**

Start small when speaking with someone at home about body image and be patient.

SLIDE 10

Script

Relationships with people at home

Our relationships with people at home can affect our body image. This can be in direct ways such as how they feel and speak about bodies and appearance, and in more indirect ways, like their eating habits.

TOP TIP: If you want to speak with someone at home about body image, start small. Body image is a topic that can be difficult to talk about, so having the space for each person in the conversation to listen and reflect is important. Sometimes we may not get the response we hope for or need at the time. They may need time to reflect before being ready to talk and support. Be patient.



What can affect our body image?



Relationships with peers.

**TOP TIP:**

Praise yourself, and others, for qualities beyond body image that make you, you, and them, them.

SLIDE 11

Script

Relationships with peers

Peers play a more prominent role in relation to our body image as we move through adolescence and beyond. Sometimes we may experience unsupportive comments, actions or pressure from peers relating to body image, often reinforcing what an 'ideal body' looks like.

In 2019, the Mental Health Foundation [found](#) that 40% of young people agreed that comments from their friends have caused them to worry in relation to their body image. This correlated with a [survey](#) by Be Real of UK 11–16-year-olds that found over half of young people had experienced appearance-based bullying, with 40% of those young people experiencing bullying at least once a week and 54% saying the bullying had started by age 10.

However, supportive, healthy friendships have been shown to help build and protect good body image and increase body satisfaction.

TOP TIP: Accept compliments by saying 'thank you', but also praise yourself, and others, for qualities beyond body image that make you, you, and them, them.



Slide 12

What can affect our body image?



Health conditions or disabilities that change how the body moves and functions.



TOP TIP:

Be your own friend. Think about what advice you would give to a friend struggling with low body image.

SLIDE 12

Script

Health conditions or disabilities that change how the body moves and functions

For individuals with health conditions or disabilities, the difference between individual body image and body ideals can feel greater, especially when there is less representation of diverse body types in the media and other outlets. This can cause increased feelings of worry and shame about their bodies. Many individuals with health conditions or disabilities can find it more difficult to feel comfortable and accepting of their body image.

For example, one [survey](#) found a higher proportion of adults who had a health problem or disability that substantially limited their daily activities reported feeling shame (31%) or feeling down or low in the last year (47%) because of their body image compared to individuals without a limiting condition (18% and 32% respectively).

TOP TIP: You are more than your body image. When struggling with low body image thoughts, be your own friend. Think about what advice you would give to a friend.



Slide 13

What can affect our body image?



Key life transitions that change the appearance and functioning of the body.



TOP TIP:

Feel prepared and read up on potential changes that can happen during life transitions such as puberty.

SLIDE 13

Script

Key life transitions that change the appearance and functioning of the body, such as puberty

As bodies change during puberty (for example in height, weight, and shape), it can be a point at which we compare ourselves with peers and our own ideas of what an 'ideal' body looks like. It is important to remember that puberty affects people at different times and at varying speeds, so comparisons can have a big impact on someone's body image.

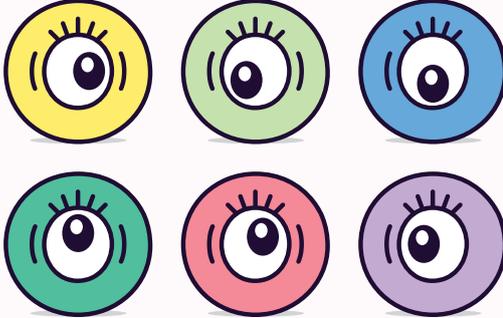
TOP TIP: Feel prepared. Read up on potential changes that can happen during life transitions such as puberty. Speak to someone you trust about any concerns you have.



What can affect our body image?



Ethnicity and cultural background.



TOP TIP:

Be inquisitive. Learn about the similarities and differences in body image ideals between different cultures and ethnicity groups.

SLIDE 14

Script

Ethnicity and cultural background

Our ethnicity and cultural surroundings will influence the way we think and feel about our bodies. If we are surrounded by body ideals that differ from the cultural norms and values we hold, this can place pressure on us to change our bodies and increase body dissatisfaction.

For example, [research](#) suggests that body dissatisfaction is more common in countries where people lead a lifestyle more characterised by high levels of individualism and have greater access to body-centred information and images through the media. This is due to higher levels of pressure to conform to the social body image norms.

TOP TIP: Be inquisitive. Learn about the similarities and differences in body image ideals between different cultures and ethnicity groups.



Slide 15

Final thoughts



Body image is how we think and feel about our bodies.



Good body image is building a healthy relationship with our bodies.

Our body image is unique to us and will reflect our experiences and circumstances.



SLIDE 15

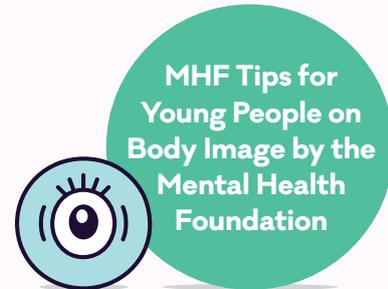
Script

This assembly has highlighted that body image is more than just how we look. It is also how we think and feel about our bodies. It's important to remember that we all have our own body image that is unique to us. Take some time to think about your own body image and what you can do to build a good body image.



Slide 16

Further information and support



SLIDE 16

Script

If you are worried about yourself or a peer, it is important to reach out to a trusted adult – this could be a member of staff at school, someone at home, or another person in your life.

Share information about the support options within your school and local community, adding details on the slide.

You can also find out more tips for developing a good body image by reading the [MHF Tips for Young People on Body Image by the Mental Health Foundation](#).





[mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

 [Mental Health Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthFoundation)

 [mentalhealthfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthfoundation)

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Many thanks to the pupils and staff at Royal High School Bath, St Edmund's School, St Mungo's High School, Upper Wharfedale School and Whitburn Church of England Academy for supporting the development of this resource.