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EHE 310

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Strength Based Approaches

**USC 8.5 -** Assess how body image satisfaction/dissatisfaction and over-reliance on appearance as a source of identity and self-esteem affects the quality of life of self and family.

**Before the story telling lesson:**

I would want students to have developed a strong understanding about what body image is and how it effects their self-confidence before I begin talking about eating disorders.

I would have students begin to have discussions about what they love about themselves and what sorts of new things they think they should try that interest them. It’s important that students develop the confidence to try new things. They could create some sort of self-portrayal that only showcases the positive things about themselves. This could be done using the Circle of Courage to teach students that it is important to live a well-balanced and passionate life. They would be required to fill in all sections of the circle; belonging, mastery, independence and generosity with things that are true about them. This will teach students to focus on their strengths and begin to have a better self-confidence. This could be done using pictures cut from magazines, things they draw or words they write. This activity is a way to introduce the Circle of Courage and have students begin to relate what’s in their circle to their own self confidence. It would be a starting point to begin discussing important issues such as body image and how they are influenced by media.

I would have students practice giving and receiving compliments with each other. I think it’s important to not only be able to give compliments but also be able to accept them. Too often, someone will compliment us and we’ll try to pass it off and feel uncomfortable being given compliments. For example, a person may tell you that you look really great today. And for some reason we want to react in a way that puts ourselves down. You might respond by saying “oh really? I woke up really late today and probably look so gross.” It is something that is hard to do. It is challenging to accept kind words about ourselves and may make someone feel arrogant of self-absorbed if all you say is “thank you”! Learning to love yourself is so important and by giving and receiving compliments it will have all students learn how awesome it feels to speak kindly to one another and how it boosts their overall mood and the way they think about themselves. This would be a nice way to incorporate generosity, belonging and mastery into the classroom because students will feel welcomed, they will make each other feel good and pay attention to all the good things they can do.

I would want to teach students the importance of eating balanced meals and engaging in healthy physical activities that improve their overall health. Students would understand that what they put into their bodies is critical to how they will feel about themselves and impact how their body functions. Students will understand how making healthy choices is up to them and within their power. Students will be informed on nutritional facts in different foods and be given enough information to have the knowledge of what types of food they want to put in their bodies. Students could track what they eat in a week to make them more aware of what they eat and then develop meal plans with healthier options if their current choices aren’t very nutritional. During this time students could also become more conscious of how much physical activity they are getting in a day and track their screen time. My hope is that if students are actually paying attention to their activity and eating patterns they may begin to think of more healthy choices in the future. This would be a great way to really develop students’ independence and have them take control of the types of choices they make for their own health.

**After the story telling lesson:**

Students will be asked to write in a journal answering the following questions:

* Has there ever been a time when you struggled with something and didn’t want to tell anyone? Tell me about it if you would like.
* If you were ever in a bad situation or were dealing with something negative, who would you tell and why?
* If someone came to you with a serious issue, what would you do?
* What are some things you can think of that could prevent you from getting into negative/unhealthy situations?
* What are some signs or tell-tale ways to know if one of your peers may be struggling? How can you help them?

I want students to learn how to express themselves and think about how they would respond in certain situations before they happen. If they know who they can go to talk to it will help them prepare and not feel so alone if they are ever put in unhealthy or uncomfortable situations. They will develop their independence of being able to make good choices and know who to turn to if they need. They will also develop their sense of belonging because they will prepare how to help the people around them and learn the importance of checking in on their peers.

I would want students to know the effects of social media on our self-confidence and how often the images they are exposed to of perfect bodies aren’t realistic at all. Our society is surrounded by images of “Instagram models” and celebrities who appear to live the perfect life and it is easy to compare ourselves to these images and these seemingly perfect people. We would have class discussions about the likelihood of people photo shopping and enhancing their images to make themselves look better than they actually do in real life. I could display real photos that have been enhanced to show how undetectable the photo shopping can be. It is especially simple now with all the different apps and filters on our phones to change the pictures we take. I want students to know that they shouldn’t feel pressured to enhance their own photos to look a certain way because they are wonderful exactly how they are. I would have students create a paper version of an Instagram page that showcases body positive messages and posts. They can include pictures of themselves and the things they like and create confident and uplifting captions for their images that are real and relatable. This will increase their confidence in themselves and be a way to oppose the fake images and unrealistic lives they see every day on social media.

Following my story telling, I do not want students to think of eating disorders as something that is acceptable and cute in the way that my sister did. I would want students to understand the horrific impact that all types of eating disorders or exercise addiction can have on a person’s body and their life. I would have students find a way that media presented an eating disorder in a movie or on a TV show and then compare it to the actual real effects of eating disorders. The reason I want them to compare how eating disorders are presented in media to real life is that often times the media version makes eating disorders seem much less serious than they actually are. By finding real facts and stories about eating disorders, students will begin to make a more educated image in their head of what eating disorders actually look like. They will have the knowledge to make healthy food options and know that anorexia and bulimia are not intelligent “quick fixes” or a realistic way to improve their lives. Eating disorders are a slippery slope to fall down and very difficult to overcome once they become an addiction because it impacts the way their brain perceives themselves and their disorder. I would hope that none of my students ever look at food and their bodies as the enemy. I want them to be educated enough to make the healthy, confident choices.

After discussing eating disorders and exercise addiction in more depth, I would have students look for different resources and services available in our community that offer support and counselling. In small groups they will do this research and create a poster and then share it with the class, where it will remain hanging for the entire year. This will allow students to know that there is support out there if they ever need it and they will have the information they need to get help. I do not want any student to suffer quietly because they don’t know who they can talk to or they don’t think their problem is serious enough. My hope is that all students have enough confidence and positive body image to never get stuck in unhealthy habits, but if that isn’t the case, then at least they will have the right information of where they can go to get help.