

Bead #5 ♡ Your Body!

"Girls of all kinds can be beautiful – from the thin, plus-sized, short, very tall, ebony to porcelain skinned, the quirky, clumsy, shy, outgoing and all in between. It's not easy though because many people still put beauty into a confining, narrow box. Think outside of the box. Pledge that you will look in the mirror and find the unique beauty in you."

— Tyra Banks (model)



Bead #5

Knowledge is power. Have you ever heard that saying? Your body is going through enormous change – more so than at almost any other time in your life! At times you may feel out of control and a little crazy but, having a little knowledge about what is going on will help you cope with and maybe even celebrate the changes. Now that’s POWER!

We already talked about your brain and how your thoughts and emotions affect how your body looks and feels. That’s called the mind-body connection. It’s really easy to forget how closely they are connected!

When your body reaches adolescence, you start going through puberty. That’s the stage where your body slowly and gradually changes from looking like a girl to becoming more like a woman. It can be scary at times but know that every girl goes through it.

What happens inside your body is very complex and mostly driven by naturally-occurring chemicals, called hormones, that are created in the cells and glands of your body. In girls, hormones are what trigger your breasts to grow and monthly cycle to start. During puberty, your body’s shape will change too. Girls grow taller, become curvier and gain weight. These are all healthy signs.

LOVE
YOUR
BODY!

Unfortunately in our culture, outward appearances sometimes matter more than who we are on the inside. Girls often get the message they must look and dress a certain way or else they are considered flawed or less than ideal. In the media, girls are usually portrayed as super skinny, with perfect skin and hair.

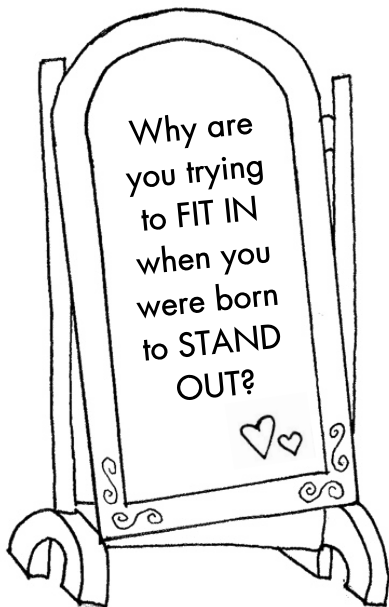
There’s a reason for that Companies who make products for girls hire advertising agents to sell their product. Agents are experts at this! Ads typically will try to get you to think that there’s something wrong with you or missing in your life, and if you just buy their product, it will be fixed. Want beautiful eyes? Buy this make-up! Want a skinny body? Buy this diet food! Want to have fun with a group of smiling friends? Go to this restaurant!



Don't be fooled. Many ads are not even close to being realistic, especially when it comes to portraying faces and bodies. It's not uncommon for photographers to improve photos by "photoshopping" and airbrushing. Such correctors are often used on graduation and wedding portraits to make people look their best by eliminating acne, stray hairs or shadows. But now, because of high-powered computers, nearly everything in a photo can be changed and often is. Advertisers start with a photo of a model and then can change her eyebrows, cheekbones, lips, neck, waistline and any other feature until the final photo is, well, "perfect" but definitely not realistic! This is all to persuade you to want to look like her. How likely is that!?

"The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty" illustrates this point in a video available on YouTube (www.youtube.com). Use your search engine to find the "Dove Evolution" video and watch it. Then, spend a day *really* noticing how girls are portrayed in the media – especially in advertising and on television. Compare how those girls look (and act) with the girls in your life.

Obviously models and actors want to look their best. There's nothing wrong with that. Just start noticing when the messages you are being sent do not line up with how you think, feel or believe. If you compare yourself to something that is not realistic, you will always come up short.



According to Missrepresentation.org (an organization dedicated to looking at how the media portrays females), 53 percent of 13-year-old girls are unhappy with their bodies. That number increases to 78 percent by age 17. Girls spend a lot of time and energy thinking about what's wrong with them and tons of money trying to fix it. Girls say things such as: "I'm too fat." "I'm too short." "I'm too tall." "My hair is too frizzy, curly, dark, light or whatever." You've probably heard it all!

What would happen if girls started to embrace and appreciate their bodies? Imagine if every day you looked at yourself in the mirror and liked what you saw. What if girls started seeing advertisements and television shows with a more critical eye? Knowledge is power.



Activity

Look up the word MANIPULATION in the dictionary or online. Note that the word has both positive and negative uses. Think about an ad that you've seen in a magazine, on TV, or on a billboard that has tried to manipulate you into buying a product. In the space below, write about how it feels to be manipulated in a negative way. It's not that you should never look at ads or buy new products. It's just important to think about who you are and what you value so you can think critically and not be negatively influenced or manipulated by others.



Activity

Write down five things you like and appreciate about your body. Next, think about anything that you criticize about your external appearance. Then, turn that criticism into a positive. For example:

Instead of thinking:

"My thighs are too big."

Try thinking:

"My thighs are healthy and strong. Maybe I'll try running track in junior high."

Instead of thinking:

"My hair is too frizzy."

Try thinking:

"My hair is naturally curly, which makes it easy to style."

Instead of thinking:

"I hate that my skin breaks out."

Try thinking:

"Breakouts are a sign that my body is changing. I'll keep my face clean and know that this is not going to last forever."

Five things that I like and appreciate about my body:

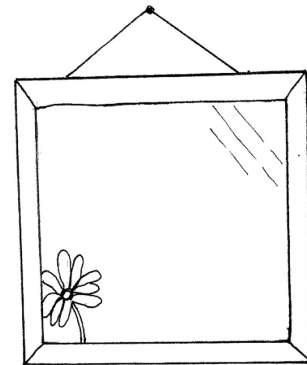
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Something I criticize about my outward appearance, that can be turned into a positive:

Activity

For the next seven days, look in the mirror every night before you go to bed. Think about all the awesome things your body did for you that day. For example:

- + Passed a difficult math quiz
- + Ran to catch the school bus
- + Played badminton in gym class
- + Enjoyed a delicious, mouth-watering bowl of strawberries
- + Hugged your best friend



Say a positive statement about your body to affirm how much you appreciate it. If your negative self talk speaks up, say hello (oh, you again), then focus on your positive statement. After a few days, you may notice that your list is endless. Plain and simply, your body is amazing!

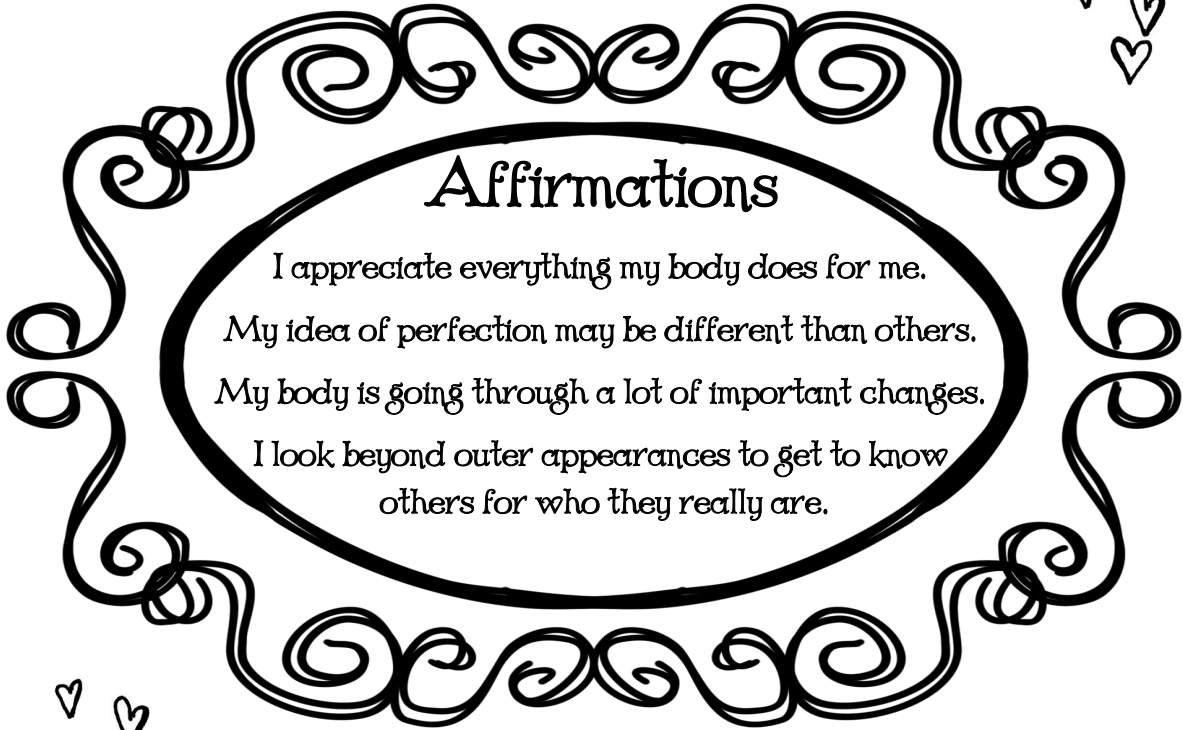
Activity

One of the best ways to learn to love your body is to take good care of it. Try this – think of your body as a computer. If you drop your computer, spill soda on it, overload its processor or ignore viruses, it will crash, and not work properly. There’s an old saying – “garbage in, garbage out,” and it applies to computers and people. Learning how to take care of yourself is a skill that will benefit you throughout life.

Taking care of your body includes eating healthy foods, getting plenty of rest, drinking water, moving or exercising every day, and avoiding harmful things. You will learn more about this in a later section but for now, monitor what habits you have already developed that positively and negatively affect how your body feels. For example, are you cranky when you don’t get enough sleep or tired after eating too much sugar? Notice how good you feel after playing outside in the fresh air, curling up with a good book or eating a freshly picked apple. In the space below, record **ONE** idea for taking better care of yourself:

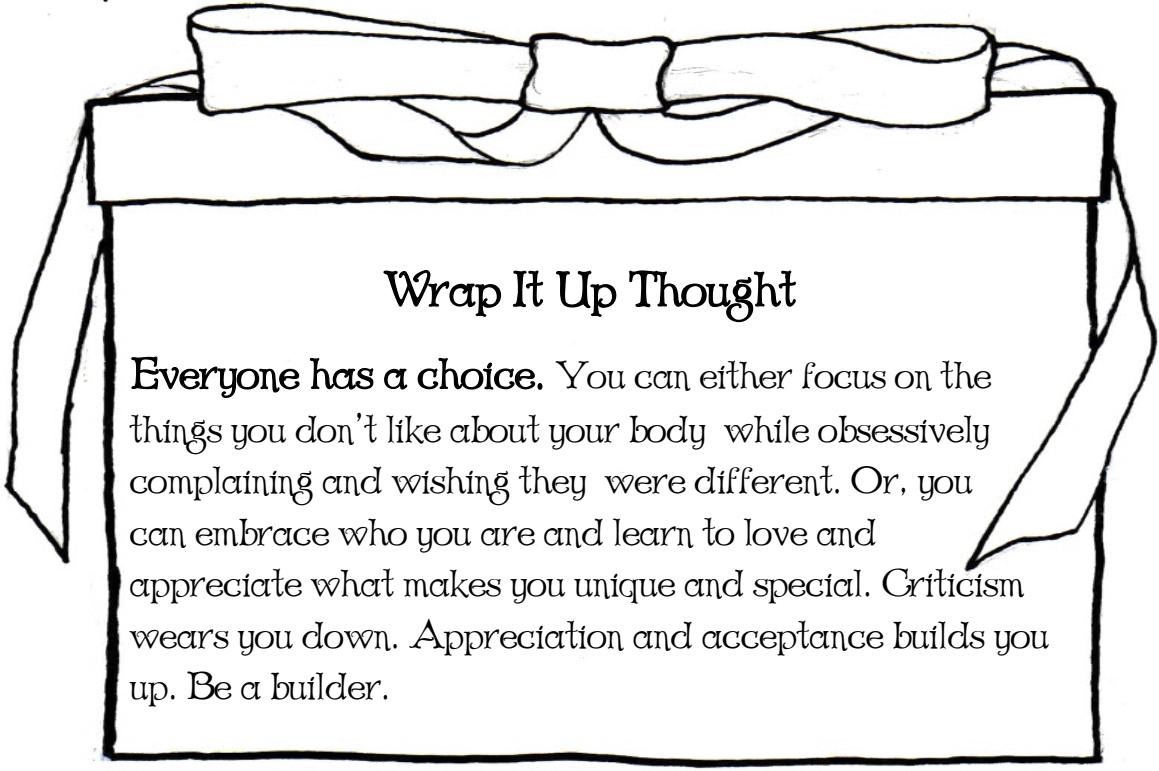


We suggest ONE idea because every journey starts with a single step. You don’t need to overhaul anything. Focus on small steps because they add up to big improvements!



Affirmations

I appreciate everything my body does for me.
 My idea of perfection may be different than others.
 My body is going through a lot of important changes.
 I look beyond outer appearances to get to know
 others for who they really are.



Wrap It Up Thought

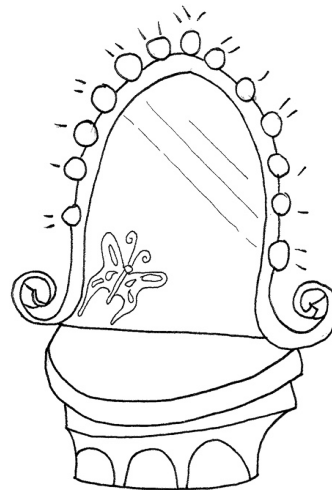
Everyone has a choice. You can either focus on the things you don't like about your body while obsessively complaining and wishing they were different. Or, you can embrace who you are and learn to love and appreciate what makes you unique and special. Criticism wears you down. Appreciation and acceptance builds you up. Be a builder.

Bead #5

Lizzie Velasquez has been called the ugliest woman on earth. Now, in her 20's, she weighs only 60 pounds (despite eating almost continually throughout the day), is blind in one eye, has wrinkled skin and looks very different. Born with an extremely rare disorder, she wasn't expected to live. But "lived" doesn't begin to describe Lizzie – thrived would be more like it. Despite being bullied and ridiculed, she is a college graduate, motivational speaker and author. She teaches kids (and adults) about tolerance and acceptance and how to go beyond appearances to get to know the real person. To learn more, check out: www.aboutlizzie.com.

This shiny bead reminds us how often we look at our reflection in the mirror and judge ourselves critically. It's very easy to get caught up in this limited physical reflection. But we are so much more than our physical body and appearance! Next time, skip the mirror and see your reflection in others.

Chances are good that you bring joy to many people – your parents, siblings, other relatives, friends, classmates, teammates, pet, children you babysit, and more. Let this bead be a reminder of the limited reflection of your appearance and the unlimited potential you have to impact others.



explore, embrace, empower

