

# AWARENESS WORKSHOP

I am  
unique!



## **CREDITS**

### **DEVELOPMENT**

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This workshop is adapted from *The True Value of a Person workshop*, which is part of ÉquiLibre's *Healthy Mind, Healthy Body* program (HMHB).

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## ABOUT ÉQUILIBRE

ÉquiLibre is a non-profit organization whose mission is to prevent and reduce weight and body image problems through measures aiming to foster a positive body image and a healthy lifestyle. ÉquiLibre provides many tools, services and trainings for teachers and instructors in their work with youths. To view our service offer: [www.equilibre/intervenants](http://www.equilibre/intervenants).

## ABOUT THE SHAPE UP FOUNDATION AND PROGRAM

The Shape Up foundation is a non-profit organization that has for mission to help youth grow healthy. The objective is two-fold: encourage young people to adopt healthy eating behaviors and a physically active lifestyle. To achieve these objectives, Shape Up is a program that supports day camps and summer camps in their efforts to incorporate healthy habits into their practices. For more information: [www.goshapeup.ca](http://www.goshapeup.ca).

## ABOUT THE HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY BODY PROGRAM

This workshop, which is part of the *Healthy Mind, Healthy Body* program (HMHB), aims to promote positive body image and healthy attitudes and habits among youths with respect to their body, food and physical activity. This program, which targets not only youths, but also their parents and the adults in their lives, is disseminated in schools (primary school and high school levels) as well as in community settings. According to a study conducted by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec, the HMHB program is one of the best practices in regard to health promotion and prevention in schools. The program distinguishes itself by the fact that it is consistent with the *École en santé* approach as well as many aspects of the Education Reform. To learn more and to download other workshops, go to our Website at: [www.equilibre.ca/hmhb](http://www.equilibre.ca/hmhb).

## INTERVENTION SUPPORT (ONLY IN FRENCH)

Online or classroom training is available to better understand the problems associated with weight and body image, and to optimize youth intervention. To learn more: [www.equilibre.ca/formations](http://www.equilibre.ca/formations).

To support **parents**, who are role model for youths, show them credible resources in regard to weight and body image such as awareness tools, blog posts and conferences addressed to them. To learn more: [www.equilibre.ca/parent](http://www.equilibre.ca/parent).

Help youths develop critical thinking with fun and educational games and blog posts that can be found at [www.derrierelemiroir.ca](http://www.derrierelemiroir.ca).

## SHAPE UP FOUNDATION

Tools are available on the Shape Up Website for camp managers, coordinators and counsellors that wish to integrate a body image theme in their camps. For more information: [www.goshapeup.ca](http://www.goshapeup.ca).

*In this document, the masculine generic refers, without discrimination, to both the masculine and feminine genders and is used for conciseness purposes only.*

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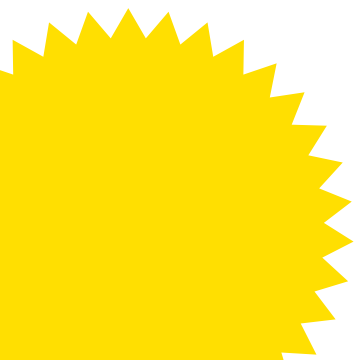
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# CONTEXT

To be read by the presenter before the activity is carried out.

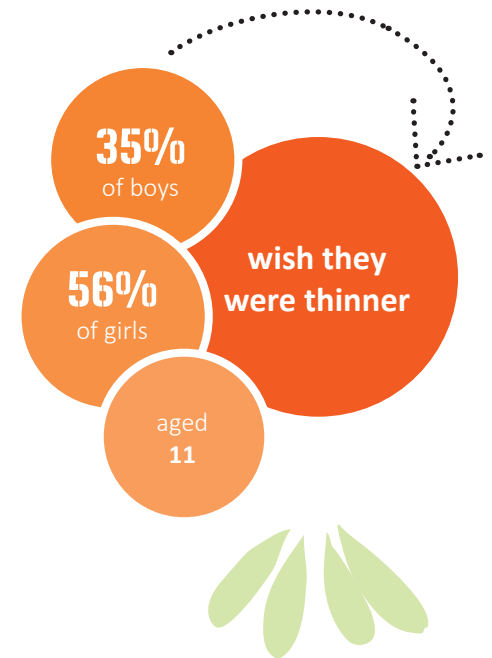
## UNREPRESENTATIVE BODY IMAGES

Young people are more than ever exposed in advertisements and the media to images of extremely thin or very muscular bodies. These images are hardly representative of the general population and cause several young people to be dissatisfied with their bodies. The more they are exposed to these images, the more they tend to forget that we do not all have to fit into the same mold. This constitutes an obstacle to the development of a positive body image and self-esteem. It is important to remember that there has always been and there will always be a natural diversity of body shapes within the population.

## BODY DISSATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Studies show that children as young as age five can experience dissatisfaction with their bodies or be concerned with their weight<sup>1</sup>. We also know that this dissatisfaction increases with age. According to a recent Quebec study, 35% of boys and 56% of girls aged 11 wish they were thinner<sup>2</sup>. These children are also more likely to be more dissatisfied with their body image as they grow up. This problem is not without risk and may:

- become an obstacle to the practice of physical activity<sup>3</sup>;
- trigger unhealthy eating habits (ex.: skipping meals, going on diets)<sup>4,5</sup>;
- lead to the development of bad lifestyle habits (ex: smoking)<sup>6</sup>;
- cause symptoms of depression and low self-esteem<sup>7,8</sup>.



1. Davison, K.K., C.N. Markey, and L.L. Birch, *Etiology of body dissatisfaction and weight concerns among 5-year-old girls*. *Appetite*, 2000, vol. 35, no 2, p. 143-151.
2. Aimé, A., Bégin, C., Valois, P., Craig, W., Brault, M.-C., & Côté, M.-L., *Environnement et discrimination à l'école primaire : Quel est l'impact de ces facteurs sur les habitudes de vie et sur le poids d'enfants et de pré-adolescents?* FQRSC, Actions concertées sur le poids, 2014.
3. C.D. Jensen et al., «Body dissatisfaction, weight criticism, and self-reported physical activity in preadolescent children», *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 2009, vol. 34, p.822-826.
4. F. Johnson, J. Wardle, «Dietary restraint, body dissatisfaction, and psychological distress: A prospective analysis». *Journal of abnormal psychology*, 2005, vol. 114, no1, p.119-125.
5. Evansa, E.H, Tovéeb, M.J., Boothroyda,L.G., Drewetta R.F., «Body dissatisfaction and disordered eating attitudes in 7- to 11-year-old girls: Testing a sociocultural model». *Body Image*, 2013, vol.10, no1, p.8– 15.
6. F. Johnson, J. Wardle. *op. cit.*
7. Almeida, S., Severo, M., Araujo, J., Lopes, C. & Ramos, E., «Body image and depressive symptoms in 13-year-old adolescents». *Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health*, 2012, vol. 48, no 10, E165–E171.
8. Van Den Berg, P.A., Mond, J., Eisenberg, M., Ackard, D. & Neumark-Sztainer, D., «. The link between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem in adolescents: Similarities across gender, age, weight status, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status», *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2010, vol. 47, no 3,p. 290-296.

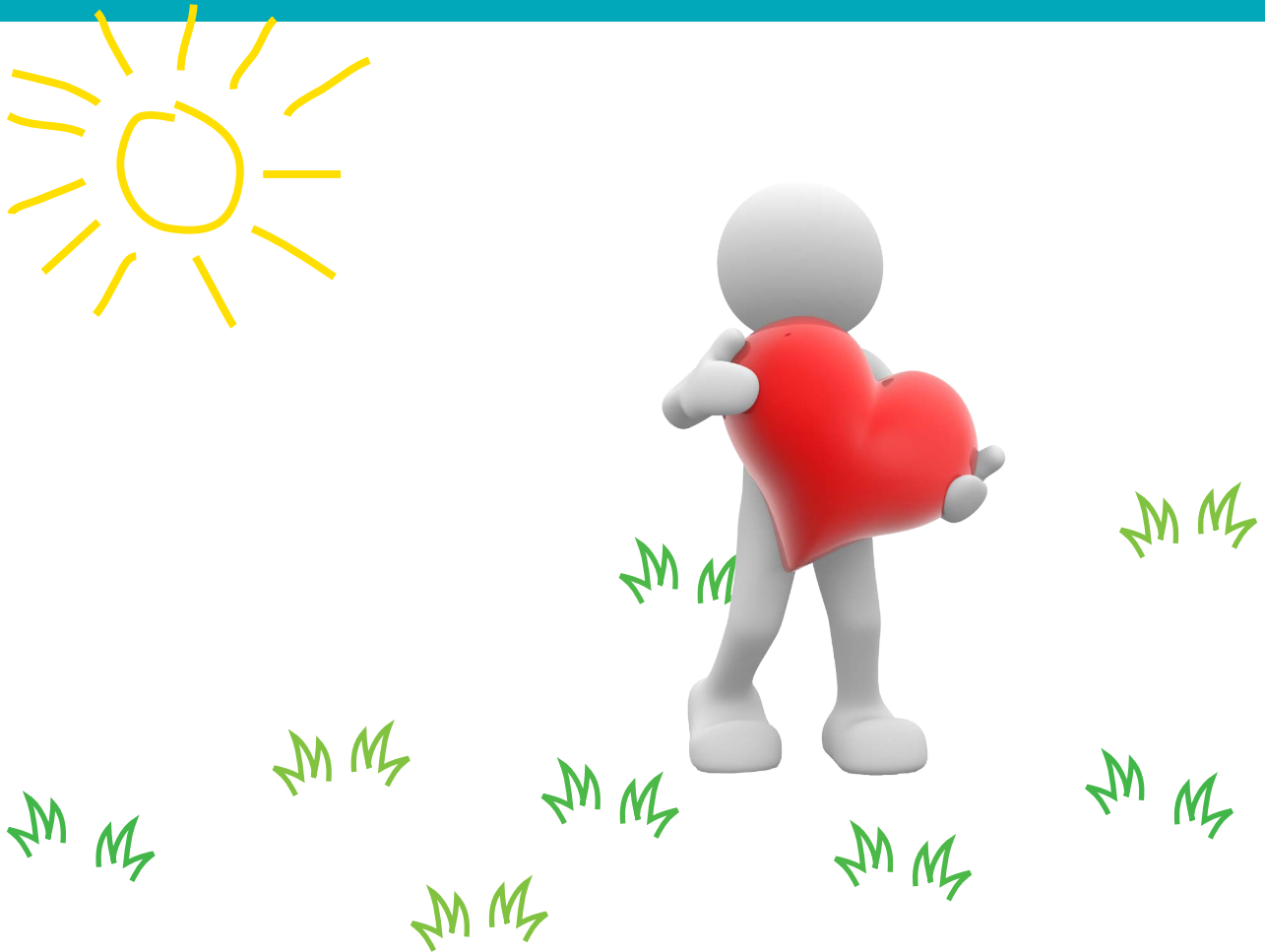
## BRINGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO SEE BEYOND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In today's society, we place a lot of importance on appearance. Self-esteem is often based on appearance rather than on several other factors. It is possible to positively influence young people's body image by encouraging them to diversify their representations of beauty. Adults in their lives can also help them to develop a positive body image by focusing on recognized protective factors:

- self-awareness and body awareness;
- body acceptance and confidence;
- distinguishing between our appearance and who we really are inside;
- feeling free to show ourselves as we are by valuing both specificity and diversity in individuals;
- resisting negative messages.

## A WORKSHOP TO HELP RECOGNIZE EACH PERSON'S UNIQUE NATURE

This learning situation focuses on the above-mentioned protective factors. First, youths will be asked to challenge the importance given to appearances by recognizing that the value of a person goes far beyond his physical appearance. They will also be invited to exchange views on personal qualities, competencies and strengths that make them unique.



# DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

I am  
unique!

## Target audience



This workshop was designed to be animated by a counsellor addressing youths aged from 9 to 11 years old attending a summer camp.

## Educational goal

Encourage youths to realize that they are unique by highlighting their personal skills, regardless of their physical appearance.

## Specific objectives

At the end of this workshop, youths will be able to:

- Question the importance placed on appearance;
- Recognize that the value of a person goes beyond their appearance;
- Identify the characteristics they appreciate in others and in themselves.

## Estimated duration



30 min

**NOTE:** This workshop was created to be conducted over a period of 30 min. If you wish, it is possible to extend the workshop, according to your context.

## Necessary supplies

- Pencil and eraser
- A cardboard circle per participant (center of the flower)
- Pieces of paper to form petals (each participant must have as many petals as teammates in his group)
- Documents to print :
  - *List of vocabulary words to describe a person* (optional) – 1 for the counsellor
  - *Memo addressed to parents* – 1 copy per youth

# THE WORKSHOP

## Introduction

### INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Present the general theme to youths:

- *Today, we will reflect on the importance we give to physical appearance and what makes each person unique.*

### ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT

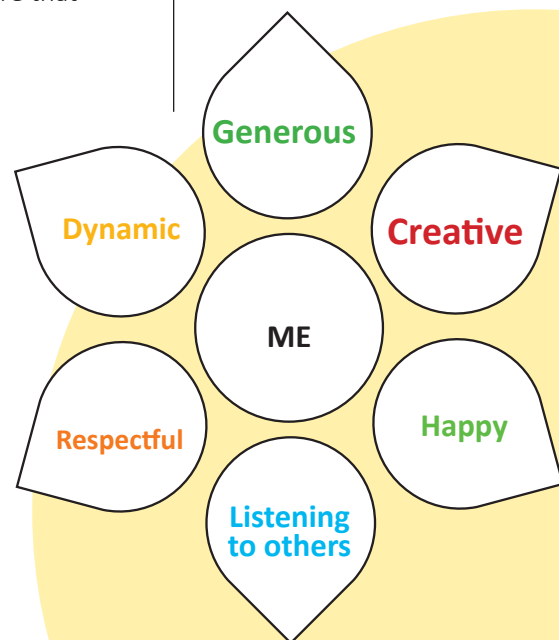
Create an environment of respect for the workshop.

- *In order for this workshop to be pleasant for everyone, it is important to agree to certain rules:*
  - *I respect others. Be respectful of others: all ideas and questions are valid, we do not laugh at others or their ideas.*
  - *I follow instructions: I follow instructions given for each activity.*
  - *The comments I make are constructive: I ensure that my comments are valuable to others.*
  - *I participate by expressing my opinions and encouraging others to express theirs.*



#### Duration

→ 5 min





# WORKSHOP [CONTINUED]

## Workshop

### PART 1 : 5 MIN

#### VOCABULARY WORDS TO DESCRIBE A PERSON

To help youths acquire new vocabulary for the workshop, ask them to name qualities or characteristics of a person's personality.

SUGGESTION: If need be, you can refer to the attached *List of vocabulary words to describe a person* to complement youths' suggestions.

Don't hesitate to question them on the meaning of certain words you are not familiar with.

### PART 2 : 10 MIN

#### I AM UNIQUE ! – WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU

Each person needs to think about a quality / skill / characteristic / strength for each of his classmates. He then writes it on a petal and sticks it to the center of the flower of the comrade to whom it corresponds. Thus, each person will see his flower complete with the addition of petals by each of his comrades.

Once this step has been completed, you can ask a few people if they agree that the qualities that have been assigned to them are read to the group. The presentation mode may differ depending on the dynamics of the group.

Example:

- Each person presents his/her own flower
- A person presents the flower of one of his comrades
- The flower of a person is presented and each comrade expresses himself on the petal that he wrote



#### Duration

→ 20 min

#### Supplies

- Pencil and eraser
- A cardboard circle per participant (center of the flower)
- • Pieces of paper to form petals (each participant must have as many petals as teammates in his group)
- List of vocabulary to describe a person (optional)

# WORKSHOP [CONTINUED]



## PART 3 : 5 MIN

### I AM UNIQUE ! – WHAT I LIKE ABOUT ME

Ask youths to read the qualities identified by their classmate and to answer the following questions:

- Are you surprised by what you are reading?
- What do you think makes you unique? What do you like about yourself?

Ask youths what they have learned from this activity. Discuss their findings.



## Messages to convey following the discussion

- What makes you appreciate a person cannot be seen in a mirror. It is important to distinguish the appearance of a person from what he is inside. In today's society, we tend to give too much importance to a person's appearance and to forget his qualities. Generally speaking, what makes you appreciate a person cannot be seen in a mirror. For example, kindness, intelligence, cheerful disposition, sensitivity, humour, etc. Chances are that you did not choose this person for his appearance!
- Try not to judge others by their appearance. We often judge others on how they look even though this gives us very little information on the person! What do you think?
- Your value as a person does not depend on your appearance.
- Don't forget that people appreciate you because you are unique! Just like the person you have chosen, you have characteristic strengths and qualities, regardless of your shape.
- It is important to learn to like, appreciate and accept yourself.
- You might have the tendency to only look at the aspects of your appearance that you do not like so much... This might make you forget your true value and that you are a lot more than a body!
- Try to focus your energy on learning to know yourself better and to make others aware of what is good and beautiful about you. And don't forget that it is because you are unique and precious that people appreciate you so much!

# WORKSHOPB [CONTINUED]

## Conclusion



### A LOOK BACK ON THE WORKSHOP

Review the learning situation by encouraging youths to express their thoughts on the activity.

You could do so by asking the following questions:

- Do you think that you have to *be good looking for people to appreciate you*?
- *What have you learned from this workshop?*
- *Did you enjoy this workshop? What part did you prefer? Why?*
- *Did you experience any difficulties? How did you overcome these difficulties?*

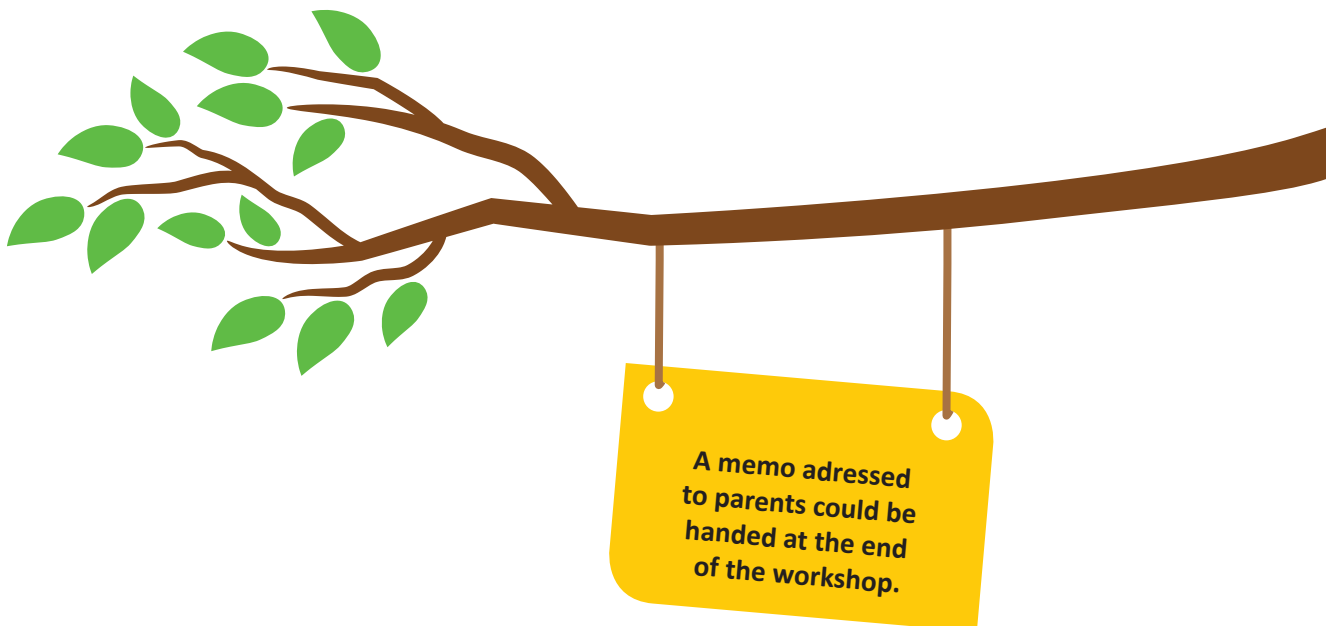


#### Duration

- 5 min

#### Supplies

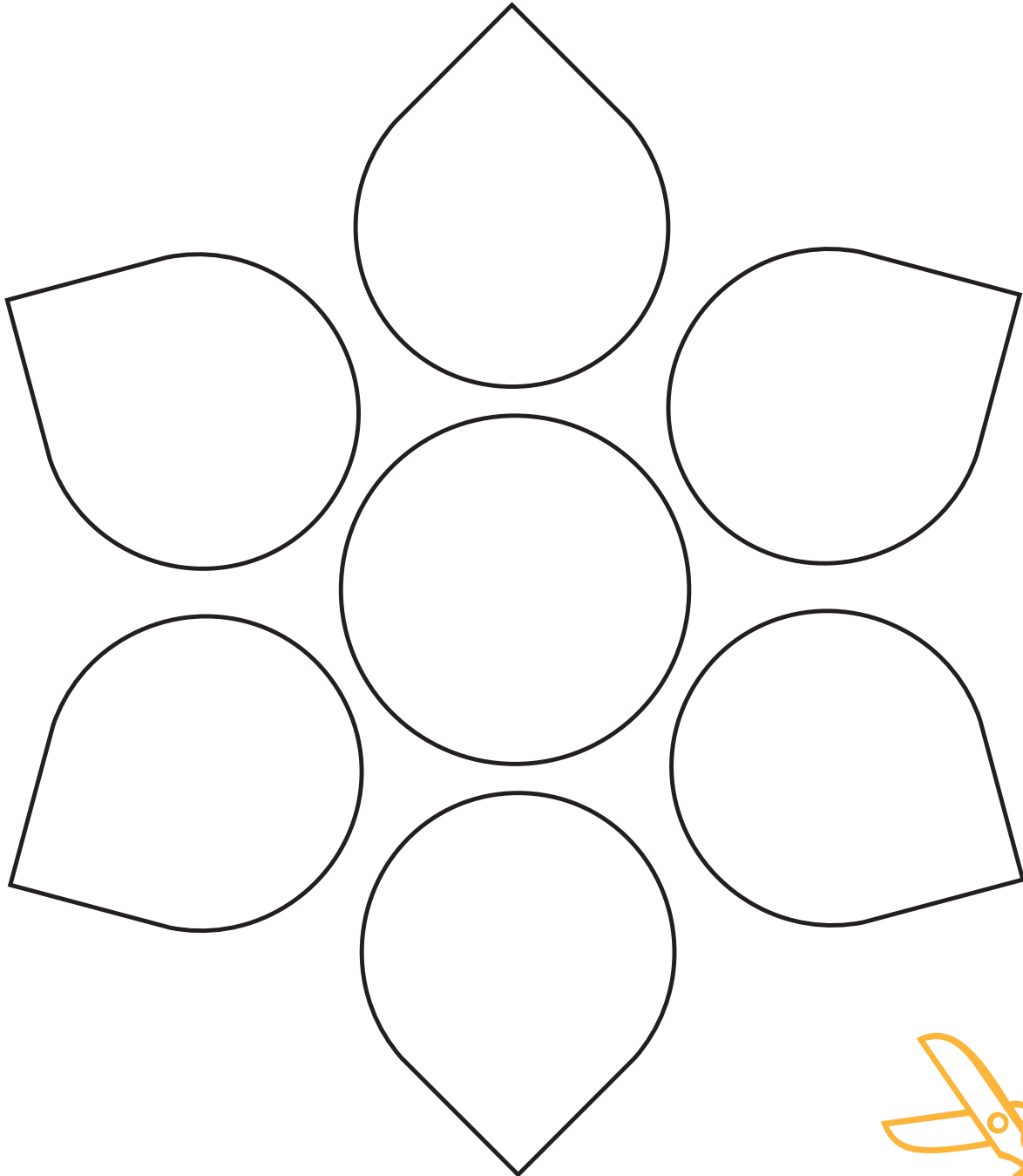
- Memo addressed to parents



# LIST OF VOCABULARY WORDS TO DESCRIBE A PERSON

Affectionate	Clever
Perseverant	Thinks ahead
Calm	Expressive
Understanding	Sociable
Sincere	Friendly
Curious	Trust worthy
Polite	Punctual
Responsible	Creative
Honest	Devoted
Ingenious	Open
Original	Patient
Optimistic	Funny
Giggler	Intelligent
Agile	Cheerful
Meticulous	Artistic
Efficient	Leader

# FLOWER TEMPLATE



# MEMO ADDRESSED TO PARENTS



Today, your child completed a workshop to help him or her recognize his or her own worth, aside from appearance. Our society is often quite focused on physical beauty, thinness and extreme musculature. Youths are very often exposed to these messages, leading them to think that their value as a person depends on their appearance or their weight. In order to develop their self-esteem and to help them feel good about themselves, **youths must realize that their personality characteristics and their skills are what make them unique, and that they are all beautiful in their own way.**

## 1. BODY DISSATISFACTION AMONG YOUTHS

Youths begin worrying about their appearance as early as 4 years old. **In elementary school, 45% of 9-year-olds are dissatisfied with their appearance**<sup>1,2</sup>. More than a third of 9-year-old girls have tried to lose weight<sup>3</sup>. This preoccupation is not without consequences. In fact, being dissatisfied with their body can interfere with children's relationship with food and physical activity. It can also interfere with their self-esteem and academic success.

## 2. WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

**As a parent, you can help your child resist the pressure of conforming to an unattainable ideal.** It is possible to help your child realize that most of the images in magazines are photoshopped, and give him or her toys that are less hypersexualized and a closer reflection of reality. You can also highlight your child's characteristics that are not related to his appearance. By showing your child that his or her strengths and qualities have nothing to do with appearance, you strengthen his or her self-worth and self-confidence. You can also pay attention to comments you make to yourself. When you comment on your own weight, even if your comments are not directed at your child, you send the message that appearance determines your value as a person. Try to learn to appreciate your body and avoid putting it down in front of your child.

### TO LEARN MORE...

Visit [monequilibre.ca/parents](http://monequilibre.ca/parents) where you can read the blog post titled "Comment avoir une influence positive sur l'image corporelle de mon enfant?". You will also find many other tools and blog posts to help your child develop a healthy relationship with his or her body and with food.

1. DAVIDSON, KK., CN. MARKEY and LL. BIRCH, "Etiology of body dissatisfaction and weight concerns among 5-year-old girls". *Appetite*. 2000, Oct., vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 143-151.
2. RICCIARDELLI LA, MCCABE MP. "Children's body image concerns and eating disturbance: a review of the literature", *Clin Psychol Rev*. 2001 Apr., vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 325-344. Review.
3. LEDOUX, M., L. MONGEAU and M. RIVARD, "Poids et image corporelle". In: *Enquête sociale et de santé auprès des enfants et des adolescents québécois* 1999, Quebec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2002, chapter 14, pp. 311-344.