SODIVERSUM

Learning Guide

BODY STORIES

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Using This Guide

The **Body Stories** e-Course is structured into 5 thematic units, delving deeply into various aspects of the course topic. Each unit consists of five mini-episodes, followed by a learning assessment exercise, totaling 2.5 self-paced hours. The accompanying Learning Guide enhances the educational content by providing additional information, discussion/reflection questions, and related resources and activities.

To maximize the impact of your learning experience, we encourage you to use the Learning Guide effectively. Establish an inclusive space for discussion by drawing inspiration from the guide's suggested questions and activities. Just as the mini-episodes of **Body Stories** share authentic anecdotes about diverse experiences of living in a human body, your discussions can create a supportive environment that dissolves shame and challenges societal pressures related to beauty standards, gender, and self-acceptance.

Remember, the goal of these conversations is to learn and share, fostering active listening and respectful dialogue. By embracing the insights provided in the Learning Guide, you can ensure that everyone feels comfortable contributing their thoughts and experiences, promoting a richer and more inclusive learning journey.

Utilize this guide not only to navigate the thematic units and discussions but also to contribute to creating a space where diverse voices are heard, valued, and appreciated.

Director's Statement

Body Stories is a collection of authentic anecdotes about diverse experiences of living in a human body. These narratives touch on deeply personal memories of families, religion, social media, sexuality, pleasure, food, medical conditions, tattoos, body size, and the struggle for self- acceptance. This transformative project creates a safe space that dissolves shame by speaking personal truths to the powerful external and internalized pressures we face to conform to unrealistic body standards. **Body Stories** gives us tools to free our bodies and minds from the grip of commodification and perfectionism.

We cast 25 storytellers and worked closely with them, to guide them to share their truths in an empowering way. As the director of this project, I had the privilege and pleasure of being on set as they bared their souls to our cameras and let us into their most precious stories.

Now, you get to hear these stories. Get ready to be moved, surprised, and to hear your own story reflected. I am convinced that telling stories with digital media is one of the most—if not the most—effective lever for opening minds, normalizing diversity, broadening perspectives, changing perceptions, and stimulating self-reflection. It is a change agent on all sorts of dimensions, from brain function to setting patterns for the language we use, how we relate to each other, and what future we envision for ourselves.

In our world, in our societies, it is crucial that we grieve, comfort each other, and stay connected to our common purpose—to harness the power of visual storytelling to promote the causes of justice and personal dignity.

At So Fare Films we are going to keep directing our solidarity and passion, and all the beautiful diversity of experience and skill sets assembled amongst us, toward telling the stories of people who have struggled against marginalization, oppression, misunderstanding, discrimination, and a very narrow set of prescriptions keep getting under their skin in sneaky, subtle, powerful ways. We will continue, defiantly, building tools that unleash and normalize the vibrant kaleidoscope of diversity. We are learning, as we go, and we will keep our irons in the fire of this fight. We know who we are and we've got each other, and a beautiful tornado of momentum we have built through sheer will and pure creativity.

When overwhelmed by the complexity of supporting our dream of a production company capturing true stories from underrepresented voices, I connect with the deep "why." One "why" is the **Body Stories** team at So Fare Films, fostering mutual respect and appreciation as we engage in visual storytelling. Another "why" is the opportunity to address the demand for balanced media that counters toxic narratives and stereotypes. Additionally, the satisfaction comes from building a foundation together. Yet another "why" is the belief that story-based diversity education improves the world by speaking to the emotional brain and heart. The ultimate "why" is our commitment to diversity as a source of richness, advocating for dignity, respect, equity, and inclusion.

The upcoming Body Stories aim to normalize and neutralize dysmorphic views of self and bodies, freeing people from societal pressures. We view the body as a vessel for life, not for conforming to beauty standards. Despite our differences, we're united in this journey. Thank you for watching.

Jenn Lindsay
Producer/Director of Body Stories
CEO and Head of Production at So Fare Films

Assistant Director's Statement

Body Stories was a transformative and deeply resonant project. Collaborating with a diverse group of 25 storytellers who courageously opened up about their lived experiences within the confines of their own bodies was not only professionally enriching but also personally moving. This project has emerged as a powerful testament to the strength that lies within vulnerability and the capacity of storytelling to dissolve the shackles of shame.

Body Stories is not merely a collection of narratives; it is a courageous exploration of the multifaceted tapestry of human existence, as seen through the lens of our physical selves. The storytellers, each with a unique perspective, delved into deeply personal aspects of their lives, ranging from family dynamics and religious influences to the intricacies of identity, social media pressures, and the pervasive impact of beauty standards and diet culture. As an assistant director, witnessing the authenticity and raw honesty with which these stories were shared was a profoundly touching experience.

Our team worked tirelessly to create a safe and inclusive space for storytellers to express their truths, some for the very first time. The process was not only about capturing these narratives but also about fostering an environment that encouraged self-reflection, empathy, and understanding. It was heartening to see the project evolve into a platform that dissolves the shame associated with societal pressures, allowing individuals to confront and challenge unrealistic body standards.

Body Stories is more than a visual and narrative journey; it is a call to action. Through the lens of diverse and authentic experiences, it serves as a catalyst for change, urging viewers to question societal norms and expectations. My hope is that those who engage with this project will not only be educated about the myriad challenges faced by individuals in their quest for self-acceptance but will also be motivated to tell their own stories.

Working on Body Stories has been a privilege, and I am grateful to have played a role in amplifying these important voices. It is my sincere belief that the ripple effect of this project will extend far beyond the screen, fostering a culture of openness and acceptance. May the echoes of these stories inspire others to embrace their authenticity and embark on their own journeys of self-discovery and self-love.

Nino Malakmadze
Assistant Director of Body Stories
Production Specialist at So Fare Films
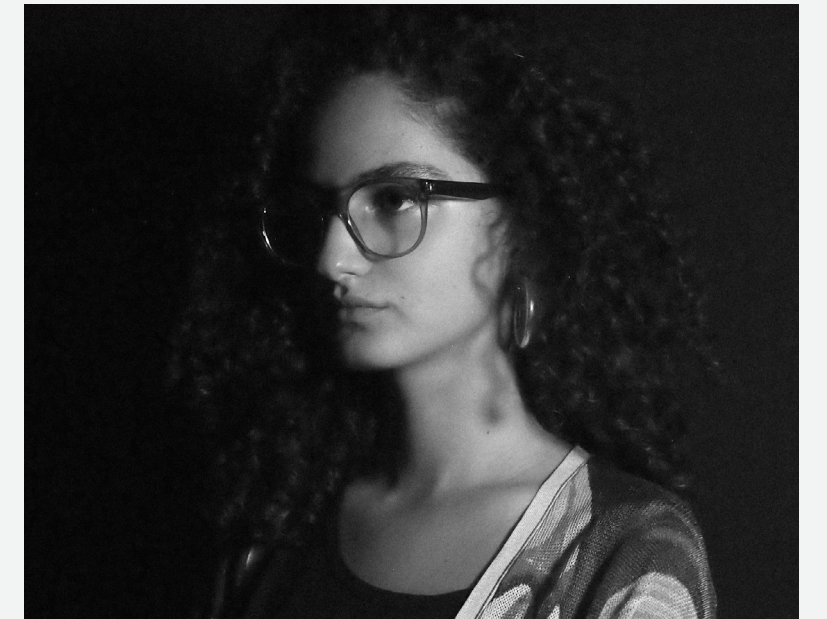
Writers' Testimonials

Across cultures and genders, our relationship with our bodies undergoes significant changes. How we perceive ourselves and how society views us can have a profound impact on our development and growth, both physically and mentally. After watching this series of stories—spanning topics such as self-acceptance, biases in sports for different racial groups and body forms, interreligious dialogues and body standards, and finally, toxic masculinity and female ideal types—we can conclude that our bodies are vessels meant to be filled and shaped.

I, personally, have struggled with my body. Since childhood, I've endeavored to love myself in all sizes and across different cultural spaces. After watching this series, I felt comforted, realizing that there is hope and that I am not alone. From the moment we are born, we embark on a journey of self-discovery, and our bodies serve as the ships that carry us through it. This is why we need to love and learn to make our first home comfortable. The diverse stories shared in the series underscore how society sets expectations and standards for our bodies, and how people tend to perceive certain bodies. It's a realization that's not confined to one social group or country but is a universal human experience.

Our mental well-being is intricately connected to our bodies. Physical health influences mental health, and vice versa. Hence, it's crucial to make an effort to create a comfortable environment for those around us. Let's strive to understand that everyone's journey is different, and each body is beautiful in its own unique way.

Julissa Castro Ruiz,
John Cabot University Alumna

Our body is our home, enabling us to exist in the world. However, for many, this home—this shield that should protect us—becomes a cage. For each of us, our bodies undergo profound transformations over our lives, manifesting in immensely different ways depending on who we are. **Body Stories** candidly portrays how our experience with our bodies is a deep, sometimes painful, and sometimes liberating journey.

The series recounts, in an honest and almost brutal manner, the challenges of living in a body influenced by factors such as gender, beauty standards, expectations, medical conditions, mental health, and various intertwined variables. As a person taller than average, I have always grappled with a conflicting relationship with my body. I've often wished to be born shorter, just enough to escape being scrutinized from bottom to top. The attention I receive for my height, often considered compliments by others, casts a spotlight in which I feel extremely exposed.

Body Stories serves as a medium for both the storyteller and the viewer to come to terms with their relationship with their bodies, fostering empathy and recognizing that everyone is unique.

Marica Loffreda,
student at John Cabot University

As someone who was a part of the **Body Stories** project as a storyteller, I thought I knew what to expect. I had friends who worked on it and told me the gist of what their story was about, I knew how I did mine. But after seeing the completed works and seeing how much deeper everything was than the two or three word description I was given, I was blown away. Hearing other's experiences in their own bodies– with race, religion, sexuality and so much more– gave me a whole new perspective I wasn't expecting.

Growing up in California was growing up in a melting pot. I'm an example of that. But even then, the question of "what's your experience in your body" is never thought of. We acknowledge a difference and carry on. Moving to Italy, I realized that that's not always the case. I often get stopped walking down the street or at the store (sometimes to an uncomfortable amount) by people asking where in Asia I'm from. And while I didn't understand it at first, I realized it's because the culture here is not the same melting pot I grew up in. Where "racially ambiguous" or "mixed" is not as common, especially when you don't pass for one race or another. Having body stories like this and helping share bits and pieces of the melting pot allows for these curiosities to be answered and realize that we all have something to share.

**Isabella Arguello,
student at John Cabot University**

Watching **Body Stories** made me realize that we all have our own perception of our body, whether it be a good or bad one. Each of our experiences of living in a body is unique, and the majority of the time it can be distorted by our environment and individual opinions. After hearing the storytellers' struggles, I felt some type of comfort because I also have a body story of my own. Witnessing the changes of my body throughout the years, and knowing that I still have more to come, has been a challenge. In addition to this, the stereotypical standards of being Latina have always created a body dysmorphia that affects me to this day. The series can be a journey for many however the common ground of appreciation and acceptance of what it is like to live in a body is what viewers will connect to the most. **Body Stories** pushes viewers to be mindful of others and of ourselves, to not be too hard on how we look, and to respect the distinct quests towards acceptance.

**Paola Villacres,
John Cabot University Alumna**

Working on **Body Stories** was a wonderful experience, both as a storyteller and as a writer. As a storyteller, it gave me the opportunity to reflect on myself and on my relationship with my body; and speaking those thoughts and feelings aloud helped me come to terms with them, and myself, and know myself better. As a writer, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity this project gave me to research and to delve deeper into a world that meant so much to me (classical ballet) and to gain a deeper understanding of how the dance technique is linked to the body; as well as discovering and learning about another world that I felt completely alien to me: that of pregnancy, matresence, and motherhood.

Watching the completed series, hearing all the stories, seeing all the journeys different people went through, and how they mingled together left me with a sense of awareness and positivity. I see now, much more clearly than before, that are still many issues and taboos around appearance, religion, gender, heath, ect., but the sunny outlooks of people like Rosanna, Niki, and Lorenzo; and the perseverance shown by Marsha, Nat, and Ludovica, leads me to believe that all those obstacles can be countered (if not overcome) by being true to yourself and finding people and environments that allow you to flourish. This series also left me with a feeling of comradery since it showed that men struggle with their body image as well as women. Hopefully knowing, and being reminded of this, can help us all feel less lonely and lend each other a hand.

Sofia Elliot,
student at John Cabot University

Watching **Body Stories** was an eye-opening, deeply transformative experience. The raw honesty, vulnerability, and openness each speaker shared were moving and served as a powerful reminder of the diverse personal journeys we all undertake. Many, including myself, often feel that they are tackling these journeys alone. Several speakers discussed the isolation they experienced throughout their body story. This series challenged the sense of loneliness by exposing the viewer to a myriad of personal experiences and providing space for introspection.

As someone who has also struggled with body image and self-acceptance, this series provided me with much-needed camaraderie and comfort. While I may not have had the same experiences as every speaker who shared their story, their candidness and sincerity were both inspiring and encouraging.

Our bodies are unique, and our individual relationships with them are complex. Body Stories builds mutual respect, understanding, and compassion, reminding viewers that we are not alone as we navigate the physical and mental changes our bodies undergo throughout our lifetimes.

Ilianna Delgado,
John Cabot University Alumna

Module 1: Beauty Standards and Diet Culture

STORYTELLERS: ARINA POLISCHUK, GIGGS KGOLE, ISABEL GARCIA, JENN LINDSAY, SOFIA INNOCENZI

Your body is your temple, which is why how you feel mentally and emotionally is connected with your body. We try to fit in society whether we do it consciously or unconsciously. Every society imposes beauty standards that are sometimes unattainable leading people to feel frustrated. Across cultures and ages, beauty standards may differ, but the one thing that remains is that for some, attaining these standards and body image ideals can be difficult. Sometimes, these standards favor one group more than the other and are heavily rooted in Eurocentrism and Whiteness. "There's a reason that so many people still think of an 'all-American beauty' as a thin, blonde, blue-eyed white woman. It wasn't until 1940 that the rules were changed to allow women of color to enter the Miss America pageant" says Leah Donnella, editor on NPR's Code Switch team.

As we scroll through social media, we are bombarded with influencers' posts, beauty ads, and all sorts of videos that are targeted to the way we look. According to Statista's Global Consumer Survey, almost half of the New Year's resolutions in the U.S. were based on fitness and weight loss. With billions spent every year on the way our body looks and how society perceives us it is hard to ignore the important role diet culture has on our society in both socioeconomic and mental health-wise. The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention have stated that "about 59 million Americans spend money out-of-pocket on complementary health approaches, and their total spending adds up to $30.2 billion a year." The urge to conform to oppressive beauty standards, found in virtually every social demographic, has made diet culture so profitable for corporations but costs us too much as individuals.

Diet culture measure personal value by our looks, encouraging a vicious cycle of trying to become perfect which may be frustrating for many and encourages low self-esteem. We strive to be smaller, fitter, and more attractive, and those who don't are deemed lazy. The hyperfixation with how our body looks has a negative impact on our mental health conditions, such as producing high levels of stress and anxiety, and has normalized eating disorders among the younger generations. Businesses will prey on these weaknesses and encourage the consumption and purchase of more products that will help you attain the best body according to the beauty standards of your respective society. Every year new trendy diets, detoxification regimens, and weight loss plans are marketed and are sold out immediately. We feel worthless when we fail to meet this unattainable ideal of health because we are constantly striving to attain it. It is impossible to feel fulfilled while pursuing this state of perfection because beauty standards and diets are continually changing.

Written by Julissa Castro Ruiz

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Discussion Prompts & Questions

SOCIAL MEDIA'S EFFECT ON DIET TRENDS AND UNREALISTIC BODY STANDARDS

As social media's influence in society grows, so does the reach of diet culture. Social media promotes unrealistic body standards and glorifies extreme weight loss. Most Instagram posts are airbrushed and photoshopped before being uploaded, setting unattainable standards. This phenomenon leads millions to follow unhealthy trends and habits in an attempt to emulate the influencers in their feed. As influencers with "perfect" bodies continue to gain followers, there is a pressing need for more responsible and body-positive approaches.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the influence of media on body standards:

1. How do media and advertising shape societal beauty standards?
2. How do body positivity influencers counterattack the beauty standards?
3. What responsibilities do influencers with a large following have in promoting a healthy and positive body image?
4. How can society encourage a more diverse and inclusive representation of body types on social media?
5. What role do Photoshop and image editing play in promoting unrealistic beauty ideals?
6. Are there ethical concerns associated with airbrushing and photoshopping images on social media platforms?
7. How might individuals distinguish between authentic content and curated images on social media, and what impact does this distinction have on their self-perception?

DIETING TRENDS AND MEDIA INFLUENCE ON BODY IMAGE

Dieting trends, with their focus on quick solutions and drastic changes, have a significant impact on how people perceive their bodies. Diets, frequently advertised in the media, perpetuate the notion that a particular body type is desirable, contributing to dissatisfaction with one's own appearance. When individuals pursue unattainable goals, these trends have the potential to reinforce a negative self-image. To foster a more positive and realistic body image, a healthier strategy is needed — one that places greater emphasis on balanced, sustainable lives rather than on quick fixes.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about diet culture and dieting trends:

1. What are some dieting trends that you have heard of and participated in? What were the outcomes of them?
2. How does the media contribute to the promotion of diet culture?
3. What are some of the long term consequences of dieting?
4. How might the emphasis on quick solutions in dieting trends affect mental health and well-being?
5. Do you believe there is a difference in the way various cultures perceive and promote body image ideals?
6. Are there any alternative approaches to health and well-being that you find more appealing than traditional dieting?
7. In what ways can we challenge and counteract societal pressures that contribute to the perpetuation of a particular body type as desirable?
8. Have you noticed any shifts in societal attitudes towards body image in recent years? If so, what do you think has contributed to these changes?
9. How can education play a role in fostering a healthier approach to body image and well-being?

CELEBRITY CULTURE'S IMPACT ON BODY IMAGE AND IN SHAPING BEAUTY STANDARDS

In today's interconnected world, celebrity culture wields a profound influence on societal perceptions of beauty and body image. The pervasive nature of social media magnifies the visibility of celebrities, shaping the aspirations and self-perceptions of countless individuals. The allure of fame often intertwines with the perpetuation of idealized beauty standards, prompting questions about the responsibility celebrities bear in influencing public attitudes towards appearance. This prompts a critical examination of the dynamics at play — from the subtle cues in fashion choices to the explicit endorsements of specific diets and beauty products. As we navigate the blurred line between curated images and reality, there is a pressing need to delve into the multifaceted impact of celebrity culture on body image and to explore avenues for fostering healthier perspectives.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the influence of celebrity culture on beauty standards:

1. How does celebrity culture contribute to the shaping of societal beauty ideals?
2. In what ways do celebrities influence public perceptions of body image and attractiveness?
3. Can celebrity endorsements of certain diets or beauty products perpetuate harmful trends?
4. How do celebrities respond to societal expectations regarding their appearance, and does this influence their followers?
5. What role does the fashion industry play in promoting specific body standards through celebrity culture?
6. Are there positive examples of celebrities using their platform to challenge traditional beauty norms?
7. How might the pressure to conform to celebrity beauty standards impact mental health and well-being?
8. Can celebrity culture be a force for positive change in challenging societal beauty standards?

PEER PRESSURE AND SHAPING BODY IMAGE

In the complex interplay of human connections, peer pressure exerts a subtle yet significant influence on the intricate fabric of body image. As individuals move through various social circles, the pull of societal norms often prompts conformity in the pursuit of acceptance. This phenomenon is particularly evident in beauty standards, where the desire to belong can lead individuals toward specific diets, fashion trends, or even extreme beauty practices. In the digital age, social media amplifies the impact of peer pressure, with curated images setting standards for emulation.

Exploring how peer pressure shapes societal beauty ideals and impacts individual well-being raises important questions. Can peer influence have positive aspects, promoting self-care and healthy habits? How do cultural expectations and social media magnify the effects of peer pressure on body image? These queries prompt reflection on the intricate relationship between societal beauty norms and individual self-perception. As we navigate these complexities, we can consider the role of education and support systems in empowering individuals to resist negative peer pressure, fostering a more positive approach to body image.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the role of peer pressure in shaping body image:

1. How does peer pressure contribute to the formation of societal beauty standards within different social groups?
2. Are there positive aspects to peer influence on body image, such as promoting self-care or healthy habits?
3. How does social media amplify the effects of peer pressure on body image?
4. Can peer pressure contribute to the normalization of unhealthy dieting habits or extreme beauty practices?
5. Are there effective strategies for individuals to resist negative peer pressure and maintain a positive body image?
6. How can educational and support systems help individuals navigate and resist negative peer pressure related to body image?

Module 2: Family

STORYTELLERS: DINA FRANCHI, ELENA VARASI, ELEONOR SCLAVOUNIS, ISABELLA ARGUELLO (BELLA), ELIAS RODRIGUEZ

As we grow into our bodies, the people with whom we surround ourselves play an important role in our self-esteem and development. During the initial stages of our lives, our family members assume this crucial role. Family plays a pivotal role in early development, influencing not only our societal functioning but also shaping how we perceive ourselves. According to a survey from the Mental Health Foundation, 29% of young people reported that their families had a negative impact on their body image, both directly and indirectly. While social media does contribute to the impact on body image in younger people, the relationship and security one has with their family also determine how much external factors affect them.

Families and the roles within them are also impacted by society and external sources. In the traditional nuclear family, the husband is often designated as the breadwinner and the wife as the caretaker. In the 1950s, this structure was sustainable. However, in the 21st century, both heads of the family must secure employment to meet demands. Often, the responsibility of caretaking and housekeeping still falls on the mother. Mothers are typically expected to balance work life, home life, and child-rearing, which entails significant physical and emotional labor. The roles and expectations placed on mothers during the childbearing process and subsequent steps are often more extreme than those placed on fathers.

Family roles are not fixed. The relationships we maintain with each other are as integral to a family/community as the "traditional" nuclear family. These relationships, whether romantic, platonic, or familial, form a spectrum as complex as our individual selves. Expectations surrounding these relationships barely scratch the surface of their true nature. According to a census by the House of Parliament, 3.2% of individuals identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and 0.5% identify with a gender different from that assigned at birth.

These complex identities and relationships contribute to how we view ourselves. The relationships we engage in, whether familial, romantic, or platonic, all play a part in our day-to-day lives and shape our self-perception. Regardless of the type of relationship, those we surround ourselves with contribute significantly to our body stories.

Written by Isabella Arguello

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Discussion Prompts & Questions

THE OVERLOOKED POSTPARTUM EFFECTS

Postpartum effects are not commonly discussed in healthcare or the media. One in seven women experiences postpartum depression, yet there are limited resources on how to handle this specific form of depression. The media significantly influences how people perceive the postpartum body, often portraying women on TV magically bouncing back after giving birth. This lack of education and awareness about the effects after birth can make mothers feel alienated and leave them thinking that they are alone in their symptoms.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the influence of childbirth on mothers:

1. How might the changing prenatal and postpartum body affect self image?
2. How does culture affect motherhood and the emphasis of importance on it?
3. How do societal expectations and media influence contribute to unrealistic perceptions of the postpartum body, and what impact does this have on maternal self-image?
4. In what ways can healthcare providers improve postpartum care to address the emotional and mental well-being of mothers, especially regarding postpartum depression?
5. To what extent does the portrayal of postpartum experiences in the media contribute to the sense of isolation felt by mothers, and how can media representations be more realistic and supportive?
6. How do cultural beliefs and norms shape the experience of motherhood, and how can cultural sensitivity be integrated into postpartum support services?
7. What are the societal expectations placed on women regarding returning to their pre-pregnancy state, and how does this influence their mental health during the postpartum period?
8. In what ways can education and awareness campaigns bridge the gap in understanding postpartum effects, ensuring that mothers are not left feeling alone or misunderstood?

THE INFLUENCE OF OUR EARLY FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN SHAPING OUR IDENTITIES

Our families play a foundational role in shaping our earliest relationships and significantly contribute to our development. From the moment of birth, our primary interactions and caregivers are our family members. The manner in which they treat us leaves a lasting imprint on our self-perception and influences our social interactions. Beyond individual interactions, their values become integral to our own, and their beliefs serve as the initial framework through which we interpret the world until we gain the ability to think independently. In essence, the family serves as the cornerstone in the construction of our identities, laying the groundwork for the values, beliefs, and interpersonal dynamics that shape us throughout our lives.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about family relationships:

1. How do family dynamics contribute to the development of self-acceptance, and is there a way to separate these influences in the process of self-discovery?
2. To what extent does the presence or absence of familial support impact an individual's journey towards self-acceptance, and can support from non-family sources be equally influential?
3. How does the media shape societal expectations of relationships, and does it create additional pressure to conform to certain relationship norms?
4. In what ways can individuals foster self-acceptance despite conflicting family values, and how does the process differ when familial support is lacking?
5. Can the influence of family dynamics be effectively navigated to promote self-acceptance, and what role does self-awareness play in this process?
6. How does the comparison of one's own familial relationships to societal norms affect self-acceptance, and are there strategies to reconcile conflicting expectations?

Module 3: Gender and Sexuality

STORYTELLERS: DARIA KOZLOVA, KYREE MYERS, QUAN TRAN, ROSANNA MIRYAM SIRIGNANO, LORE POLVERARI

Gender and sexuality intricately weave into the fabric of body appearance and the complexities of body image. These elements, however, are not static entities but fluid constructs subject to nuanced interpretations shaped by internal and external influences. The intricate interplay between gender, societal expectations, and body image is particularly noteworthy, given the profound impact of sociocultural standards associated with these factors.

Across the spectrum of religions, within the dynamics of male and female roles, and in the variances between Western and non-Western cultures, societal ideals of physique exert a considerable influence on the perception of one's own body. These influences contribute to the kaleidoscope of perspectives on body image, each tinted by the cultural lens through which it is perceived. Moreover, the concept of sexuality plays a pivotal role in shaping the psychological construct of body image, introducing yet another layer of complexity to this multifaceted issue.

From a psychological standpoint, a complex amalgamation of social, psychological, and cultural elements fuels a compelling desire to mold and refine one's body shape. This pursuit, when successful, results in tangible improvements in self-confidence, self-worth, and various psychological aspects that collectively contribute to enhanced overall well-being. However, the pursuit of an idealized body image is not without consequences. Deviations in defining this ideal have given rise to previously unthinkable pathological conditions, ranging from health problems to mental disorders, underscoring the darker side of societal pressures regarding body image.

To navigate this intricate landscape, it is imperative to appreciate the dynamic relationship between internal and external factors. Understanding that 'healthy' and 'attractive' manifest in diverse forms is a crucial step toward fostering positive behaviors. Rejecting the notion of the body as an object and, instead, viewing it as an instrument can potentially promote a healthier body image. Embracing the uniqueness of each individual's body becomes paramount, steering the focus away from conforming to external gender and sexuality norms that not only vary globally but are also inherently distinct within each person. The key lies in cultivating a sense of comfort within one's own skin, fostering a narrative that values authenticity over conformity and individuality over societal expectations.

Written by Paola Villacres

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Discussion Prompts & Questions

THE MEDIA'S EFFECT ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The portrayal of gender and sexuality in the media has a profound impact on societal norms and individual perceptions. Media has played a pivotal role in shaping the idealized representations of gender and sexuality, often reinforcing stereotypes and unrealistic expectations. As seen in Quan's personal narrative, these standards can vary across different cultural contexts, and the media plays a significant role in perpetuating these norms. This not only affects mental well-being but can also have physical health consequences as individuals strive to attain unattainable ideals.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the influence of media on gender and sexuality:

1. How does the media contribute to the reinforcement of specific body ideals for individuals of different genders and sexual orientations?
2. Are there particular media platforms that tend to push unrealistic body standards to a greater extent, and what motivates their choice of these platforms?
3. Do you know of any differences between body image ideals across cultures?
4. What steps can we take as consumers of media to encourage healthier body standards and more inclusive representations of gender and sexuality in the media?

THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The educational system plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of gender and sexuality, influencing not only individual self-perceptions but also broader societal attitudes. In many cases, education serves as a foundation for understanding one's identity and navigating relationships. Examining how educational institutions address gender and sexuality can shed light on the challenges faced by individuals and contribute to fostering more inclusive environments.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the influence of education on gender and sexuality:

1. How do educational institutions currently address issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation?
2. In what ways can the curriculum be modified to promote a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of diverse gender identities and sexualities?
3. How do societal expectations regarding career choices and academic interests contribute to the perpetuation of gender norms within educational settings?
4. Are there specific challenges faced by individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ in educational environments, and what measures can be taken to address these challenges?
5. How can educators actively contribute to creating safe and inclusive spaces for students to explore and express their gender and sexuality?

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON SHAPING THE PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Cultural and religious influences are intricate threads woven into the fabric of our identity, exerting profound impacts on societal perceptions of gender and sexuality. While body image is a complex and deeply ingrained aspect of who we are, certain cultures and religions may find it challenging to engage in open conversations about these subjects. The interplay between culture, religion, and gender, which collectively mold our identities, significantly shapes our understanding of beauty, self-worth, and societal expectations. In the context of gender and sexuality, the influence of cultural and religious norms is particularly pronounced, contributing to the establishment and perpetuation of historical societal norms. Acknowledging how culture, religion, and gender intersect in shaping perceptions is crucial for comprehending the psychological and social consequences of established norms. As with body image, these topics may be considered sensitive or even taboo, making it essential to navigate conversations with cultural sensitivity and openness to encourage positive change in societal attitudes.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion on cultural and religious influences on gender and sexuality:

1. What are the mental health implications of not conforming to cultural or religious ideals regarding gender roles and sexuality?
2. How can we promote more positive and inclusive body image perceptions within various cultural and religious contexts, recognizing the intersectionality of gender and sexuality?
3. In what ways do cultural norms contribute to the pressure individuals feel to conform to specific beauty ideals, particularly in terms of physical appearance?
4. How do societal expectations and stereotypes about what is considered attractive or acceptable for men and women influence our self-esteem and self-worth within the context of cultural and religious norms?
5. Are there examples of cultural or religious practices that actively challenge traditional gender norms and contribute to more inclusive and accepting attitudes toward diverse expressions of gender and sexuality?

THE EFFECT OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE ON THE PERCEPTION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Diet and exercise play a vital role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, but they also have a significant impact on how individuals perceive their own bodies and how society views gender and sexuality. It is essential to consider these factors from an informed perspective to prevent the pursuit of unrealistic goals at the expense of one's well-being.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the correlation between healthy lifestyles and perceptions of gender and sexuality:

1. What are some of the common dieting and workout plans targeted to different genders?
2. Does dieting and exercise impact societal perceptions of gender roles and sexuality? How do these factors intersect with notions of gender and sexuality?
3. What are your thoughts on "influencers" in the diet and workout industry? How do they contribute positively or negatively to body image, gender roles, and the understanding of sexuality in society?

Module 4: Transformation

STORYTELLERS: LINDA MARTINEZ, LUDOVICA CASTELLANA, NIKI PETROCHI, MARIANNA, MARSHA DeSALVATORE

Transformation is a fundamental quality of the tapestry of human experience, and the metamorphosis of our bodies stands as one of its most profound dimensions. The human body, an intricate and adaptable system, undergoes a continuous process of change and evolution throughout our lives, mirroring the dynamic interplay of internal and external experiences. This intricate dance of transformation unfolds across multiple dimensions, and when connected to our bodies, it represents a profound experience that intricately shapes our physical and emotional wellbeing.

The journey of body transformation spans diverse dimensions, with physical transformation encompassing not only the developmental stages from infancy to adulthood but also the nuanced changes influenced by our evolving identities. Our bodies, as vessels of identity, undergo transformations that extend beyond the physical realm. These transformations are not isolated; rather, they are intimately interwoven with mental health and healing journeys, as well as our perceptions of body image and self-awareness.

The symbiotic relationship between mental and emotional transformations and the physical metamorphosis creates a holistic tapestry of the human experience. The mind and body are powerful collaborators, with transformations often occurring in tandem. Emotional transformations and the practice of mindfulness, rooted in strong psychological foundations, contribute to the intricate dance of change within us, enriching the multifaceted nature of our transformative journey.

The exploration of transformation, particularly in the context of the body, unfolds as a profound odyssey within the human experience. Body transformations—whether physical, emotional, or psychological— are interconnected, playing a pivotal role in shaping our identity and overall wellbeing. In navigating the ongoing journey of transformation, we not only uncover our physical potential but also open doors to self-awareness, resilience, authenticity, and empowerment. Embracing the multifaceted nature of transformation, we find ourselves in a perpetual state of evolution, a testament to the intricate and interconnected facets of the human experience.

Written by Marica Loffreda

Discussion Prompts & Questions

TRANSFORMATION AND SELF-EXPLORATION

Our bodies can transform in various ways, including age, injury, and identity. These transformations are not mutually exclusive and can happen concurrently, which can challenge our sense of self and comfort in our own bodies. Body transformations may also occur alongside emotional transformations, adding another layer to our journey of self-exploration and understanding. Self-perception, mental health, and body transformations may not always align, making the human experience more complex.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the correlation between transformation and self-exploration:

1. How do body transformations challenge our self-perception?
2. How does this change throughout different periods of our lives?
3. Is mental health always linked to body transformations?
4. When emotional and physical transformations do not align, how does this impact our journey of self-exploration?
5. Can emotional and physical transformations push us further towards self-acceptance? Are we stronger as a result?

TRANSFORMATION AND THE MEDIA

Media in popular culture posits the idea that there are "right" and "wrong" body transformations, and celebrates specific kinds of bodies, while disparaging others. The physical transformations that come with age are portrayed particularly negatively in the media. This negative representation perpetuates an unrealistic expectation in society, and often leads people to try to maintain a version of themselves that will inevitably change throughout their lives. The representation of body transformations can impact our body image and mental health.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the correlation between transformation and the media:

1. What body transformations are deemed "right" and "wrong" in the media?
2. How does media inadvertently impact our body image and comfort in our bodies?
3. Is aging always demonized in the media? As people challenge certain portrayals, do media representations become more diverse?
4. Can all body transformations become normalized in the media?

TRANSFORMATION AND COMMUNITY

Physical, emotional, and psychological bodily transformations can be an isolating experience, and can be especially difficult to discuss with others. These transformations can range from exciting to frustrating and everything in between. Often we can find solace by sharing our experience with our communities and asking for their support, where we may realize we were less alone than we thought. Finding communities who share these experiences and understand the complexities can bring comfort, while also expanding the discourse outside of these circles.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the correlation between transformation and community:

1. Are body transformations always isolating? What forces may contribute to this isolation?
2. How can our communities bolster our self-acceptance and understanding of these experiences?
3. How can communities with shared experiences be difficult to find?
4. How can communities foster larger discussions in society? How do they challenge the norms that are widely accepted?

TRANSFORMATION AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Throughout our lives, we undergo various transformations that contribute to our personal growth. These transformations may include changes in our perspectives, values, and aspirations. Personal growth often involves stepping out of our comfort zones and embracing new challenges. How do transformations contribute to personal growth? In what ways can personal growth be both rewarding and challenging? Are there specific life events or experiences that have sparked significant transformations in your personal journey? How do these transformations shape your current self and future aspirations?

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the correlation between transformation and personal growth:

1. Can personal growth be intentional, or is it often a result of unexpected transformations?
2. Are there cultural or societal factors that impact how we perceive personal growth and transformations?
3. In what ways can setbacks and failures contribute to personal growth and transformation?
4. How does the concept of personal growth intersect with the idea of continuous learning and self-improvement?
5. Are there particular strategies or practices that individuals can adopt to navigate transformative periods more effectively?
6. Can personal growth be a collective experience, influenced by the communities and environments we are a part of?
7. How do external factors, such as economic changes or technological advancements, contribute to personal transformations on a societal level?
8. Is there a balance between embracing change for personal growth and maintaining stability in certain aspects of life?
9. Can self-reflection and mindfulness play a role in fostering personal growth and navigating transformative experiences?

Module 5: Self-Acceptance

STORYTELLERS: BELLA MARCHESE, COBY HOBBS, GIORGIA OST, NAT HASAN, PAPE DIAGNE

Self-acceptance is broadly defined as: a person's acceptance of all their attributes, whether positive or negative. In a society that often focuses on achievement and recognition, it is easy for people to compare themselves to their peers and be very self-critical and self-conscious. While these behaviors can also pave the way to personal growth, studies have shown that critique/objectivity can do more harm than good if people don't fully accept themselves.

It's important to make the distinction between self-acceptance and self-esteem. The first should be unconditional and constant, whereas the second can rise or fall according to our perception of ourselves and our various achievements. The PsychCentral blog illustrates it like this: "Self-esteem is about how you perceive yourself — whether you feel you're worthy and good… self-acceptance is about accepting yourself regardless of whether you feel worthy or not." Because of this, a study from 2019 found that "unconditional" self-acceptance was a better predictor/indicator of mental well-being rather than self-esteem.

Self-acceptance can be hindered by a number of factors: upbringing, stigmas and discrimination, and more generally: any message or behavior that might make someone feel inferior. Like many patterns in psychology, low self-acceptance can often be traced back to someone's childhood; a study from 2016, published in Turkey found that: "participants were more likely to experience self-acceptance if they remembered their parents accepting them in their childhood." On the contrary, a case study from 2007 showed that growing up in environments and around people with little empathy can also have a negative effect on one's ability to accept themselves; since, as the Harvard medical blog states: "we develop our self-esteem, in part, from others appreciating us."

Along with family dynamics, social dynamics such as exclusion or discrimination, can also have a negative effect on how we view and accept ourselves. A review from 2020 stated that: "LGBQ+ individuals had lower levels of self-acceptance compared to heterosexual participants."

As well as external stimuli and messages, our own minds can also influence self-acceptance. An article in the Harvard Health blog states, "if you feel negatively about yourself, the brain regions that help you control emotions and stress have less…tissue to 'work with,' and will therefore respond less effectively even if we are trying to help ourselves with practices like mindfulness.

There are many techniques to help boost self-acceptance: some that simply involve doing volunteer work, or journaling, and surrounding ourselves with positive people and environments; others are more oriented towards psychological behaviors. The Harvard medical blog, for example, mentions two kinds of meditation: mindfulness meditation and loving-kindness meditation. The former involves observing our emotions when they arise and acknowledging them without judgment; the latter, "exercises oriented toward enhancing unconditional, positive emotional states of kindness and compassion."

Since each of us is unique, we will all face different challenges and have different responses to the messages which influence our self-acceptance. The key is to not let them define us.

Written by Sofia Elliot

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Discussion Prompts & Questions

SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND SELF-FORGIVNESS

In a world saturated with stigmas and an overarching focus on meeting societal expectations, the challenge of forgiving our faults and celebrating our unique qualities becomes apparent. True self-acceptance involves a profound acknowledgment – we are not perfect, and that's perfectly okay. It requires embracing the idea that our essence is a harmonious blend of strengths and imperfections, recognizing the beauty in our authenticity.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about acknowledging our flaws:

1. Do you think we are objective when we look at ourselves in the mirror (or as people in general)? Or are we more positively/negatively biased? If so, what affects/ creates these biases?
2. How do societal stigmas and expectations impact our ability to forgive our faults and celebrate our unique qualities?
3. Why is acknowledging imperfection crucial for genuine self-acceptance?
4. Can you share a personal experience where embracing both strengths and imperfections led to greater self-acceptance?
5. What are some dynamics that might foster self-acceptance?

SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND DISCRIMINATION

Within the landscape of self-acceptance, messages and attitudes laden with hostility and discrimination can significantly contribute to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. This exploration delves into the repercussions of societal judgments, shedding light on the formidable hurdles individuals face in their quest to fully embrace and celebrate their true selves, despite the often challenging external environment.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about discrimination and insecurities:

1. In what ways do messages of hostility and discrimination contribute to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy?
2. How can individuals overcome societal judgments to foster a more positive self-image?
3. What role does societal change play in creating a more accepting and inclusive environment for everyone?

SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND THE MEDIA

As an influential force in modern society, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping our self-perception. The messages that inundate our news feeds possess the power to either uplift or dismantle our self-esteem. This segment delves into the nuances of how we interpret and relate to these messages, highlighting the critical importance of understanding and managing the impact of social media on our ongoing journey toward self-acceptance.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the correlation between transformation and community:

1. How does social media influence the way we perceive ourselves?
2. Does social media have a bigger effect/influence on our own self-acceptance, or on our ability to accept others?
3. Can you share examples of positive or negative experiences with social media impacting your self-esteem?
4. What strategies can individuals employ to navigate social media in a way that promotes positive self-perception?

SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships and attachments constitute another vital dimension of self-acceptance. Learning to view ourselves through someone else's eyes can be a transformative experience, revealing both the brilliance and shadows within our personality. This segment delves into the intricate dynamics of interpersonal connections, exploring how these relationships influence and shape the way we perceive ourselves, adding depth to the multifaceted journey of self-acceptance.

The questions below can stimulate a group discussion about the correlation between transformation and personal growth:

1. How do relationships and attachments contribute to our self-acceptance journey?
2. Can seeing ourselves through someone else's eyes lead to positive personal growth?
3. What role do healthy boundaries play in maintaining a positive self-perception within relationships?

Taking Action

To cultivate a constructive learning and discussion space around the topics of body image, beauty standards, family dynamics, transformation, self-acceptance, and gender and sexuality, it's important to plan ahead for next steps. This can help participants leave the conversation feeling motivated and hopeful, even in cases where the discussion may have been challenging. If your group is not specifically organized for a particular project or local issue, it may be helpful to spend some time brainstorming possibilities.

One way to kick-start the brainstorming process is to challenge the group to think about ways they can respond to a call to action. For example, you could ask the group to think about how they can actively promote body positivity, challenge harmful beauty standards, and encourage self-acceptance within their communities. Alternatively, generate a list of practical initiatives aimed at dismantling toxic diet culture or organizing events that facilitate open dialogue on gender and sexuality.

It's important to note that actions are most effective when they address local circumstances and are driven by the people impacted by the issue, in coordination with those who will be most affected. Adopting the "nothing about us without us" approach ensures that the efforts are inclusive and representative. Be sure to research existing initiatives and tap into available resources and networks.

By taking concrete actions and working collectively, we can create a more inclusive and harmonious society, where bodies flourish, and mutual understanding and respect are fostered. Let's come together to promote interfaith cooperation, challenge stereotypes, and build bridges of understanding among people of different religious backgrounds.

Resources

ON BODY IMAGE:
Mindful Food & Motion

National Eating Disorders Association

The Body Positive

ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY:
"Talking About 'Toxic Masculinity,'" Randy Flood, Men's Resource Center

Resources for Trans and Gender Diverse Young People

"Resources We Love," School of Sexuality Education

Transgender Resources | GLAAD

Understanding Male Body Image & Mental Health | Optimale

ON FAMILY:
Human Rights Campaign

Positive Identity

Postpartum Support International

TRANSFORMATION:
"Puberty," Healthy Children

Transgender Resources | GLAAD

SELF-ACCEPTANCE:
Eshel Online

"Getting Started with Mindfulness," Mindful

How To Practice Self Acceptance | BetterHelp

"Racial Stress and Self-Care: Parent Tip Tool," American Psychological Association

Glossary of Terms

BEAUTY STANDARDS AND DIET CULTURE: ARINA

EATING DISORDER: A behavioral condition characterized by severe and persistent disturbance in eating behaviors (and patterns) and associated distressing thoughts and emotions.

BEAUTY STANDARDS AND DIET CULTURE: ISABEL

D.E.: (acronym) Disordered Eating.
MAST CELL ACTIVATION SYNDROME: A medical condition that causes mast cells to release an inappropriate amount of chemicals into the body, causing allergies and a wide range of other symptoms.

BEAUTY STANDARDS AND DIET CULTURE: JENN

FAT-PHOBIA (OR WEIGHT STIGMA): The stigma (negative attitudes and beliefs) surrounding larger bodies.
METABOLIC PARALYSIS: When an individual tries to lose or gain weight, the body perceives weight change as a threat to survival and adapts by reducing metabolism and increasing hunger signals in order to self-regulate, even when bodies are labeled "overweight."
METABOLIC SET-POINTS (THEORY): A theory that states that our bodies have a preset weight, or range of weight that it tends to defend and maintain.

BEAUTY STANDARDS AND DIET CULTURE: SOFIA

ARABESQUE: position in ballet dancing in which the dancer stands on one leg, with their other leg lifted and stretched out backwards, at 90° or higher, with their arms stretched out in front of them. The pose has four variations which differ according to technique and choreography.
HYPER-EXTENSION: excessive straightening of a joint or limb beyond its normal range of motion.
HYPER-MOBILITY: An unusually large range of movement of the joints and limbs.
TURN-OUT: The external rotation of a dancer's hips, legs and feet.
VAGANOVA: A ballet technique and style developed by Russian dancer and choreographer Agrippina Vaganova in the early twentieth century, which is now taught and studied in most of Europe.

FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS: DINA
MATERNAL DEPRESSION: Umbrella term that encompasses the different conditions that can affect women during pregnancy and up to one year postpartum.
POST-PARTUM CARE: The medical and emotional support provided to a mother after giving birth.

FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS: ELENA
MATRESENCE: The shift a person's identity undergoes when they become a mother (or simply a parent).
POST-PARTUM DEPRESSION: A form of depression that many parents experience after having a baby. It can affect both men and women.

FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS: ELEONOR
MONOGAMY: The cultural custom or ideal of having a sexual/romantic relationship or marriage with only one other person at a time.
POLYAMORY: Having sexual or romantic relationships with two or more people at the same time, with the consent of all the people involved.

FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS: ISABELLA (BELLA)
HAPA HAOLE: Hawaiian term meaning "half-foreigner" that was originally used as a derogative/negative; it is now being re-claimed in a more positive light by Asian-Americans to describe their identity.
MULTI-RACIAL/MIXED-RACE: Coming from and/or having parents and relatives who come from different racial/cultural background.
SANSEI: Japanese term used to describe someone born as the third generation of a Japanese-American family.
YONSEI: Japanese term used to describe someone born as the fourth generation of a Japanese-American family.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY: DARIA
DAT MOSHE: Jewish phrase meaning "the law of Moses"; a set of modesty guidelines directly from the Torah.
DAT YEHUDIT: Jewish phrase meaning "The law of the Jewish Woman," referring to the accepted standard of modest dressing in the Jewish community.
TZNIUS: A Jewish term that means modesty. It is a commandment given to the Jews by G-d, encouraging people to dress modestly.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY: KYREE

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY: A theory/concept that attempts to explain men's power over women through the normalization of certain ideals and behaviors associated with masculinity.
TOXIC MASCULINITY: Ideas about the way that men should behave that have harmful consequences on others, such as homophobia and violence.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY: QUAN

BODY-DISSATISFACTION: A person's negative attitude towards their body in relation to a cultural/desired ideal body-image.
BODY-IMAGE: The combination of thoughts and feelings people have about their bodies.
MASCULINITY: Set of characteristics and qualities traditionally attributed to men.
MUSCLE-DYSMORPHIA: An obsessive desire to become stronger and more muscular.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY: ROSANNA

HIJAB: A term referring to both the headscarf/head-and-neck covering worn by Muslim women, and the practice of veiling itself.
MOSQUE: The building/location in which the Muslim religious services are celebrated.
SHAHADA: The declaration/profession of faith in the Islamic religion.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE: BELLA

BODY-DYSMORPHIA: A mental health disorder that leads to distress over one's appearance.
MINDFULNESS: The practice of being aware of your body, mind, and feelings in the present moment, but not being overwhelmed by them.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE: NAT

CULT (CONTEXTUALIZED): A religious group, often living together, whose beliefs are considered extreme or strange by the broader society. But the word can also refer to more general religious practices and beliefs, i.e. Hindu, Christian, etc.
INFORMED CONSENT: An agreement to something on the basis of full information of its consequences and effects.
PSYCHOLOGICAL COERCION: Manipulating or forcefully persuading someone to do something they are unwilling to do.
PSYCHOLOGICAL DECEPTION: Hiding a truth for one's personal gain.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE: GIORGIA

DISSOCIATION: A coping mechanism characterized by a feeling disconnection from oneself and the world.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE: MARSHA

CHELATION THERAPY: A a medical procedure used to remove metals from the bloodstream.
THALASSEMIA: Aan inherited blood disorder which causes the body to make less of the protein hemoglobin.

SELF-ACCEPTANCE: PAPE

BIAS: Supporting or opposing someone or something because of personal opinions.
IMPOSTER SYNDROME: The feeling of self-doubt and incompetence that persist despite one's experience and accomplishments.
MICRO-AGGRESSIONS: Seemingly inconsequential yet harmful forms of oppression
STEREOTYPE: A preconceived idea about an individual or a group of people which results from a collective, often distorted mindset.

TRANSFORMATION: LINDA

AGEISM: Discrimination or bias towards certain people because of their age.
GENDERED IMPOSTER SYNDROME: The feelings of self-doubt linked to gender stereotypes and biases.
MENOPAUSE: When a woman's menstrual cycles stop due to lower hormone levels.
SEXISM: The biased belief that the members of one sex are more or less intelligent, able, skilful, etc. than the members of the other sex.

TRANSFORMATION: LUDOVICA

AMV: (acronym) arterio-venous malformation.
PARALYSIS: Being unable to move all of, or parts of the body; usually due to disease or injury.

TRANSFORMATION: MARIANNA

EARLY PUBERTY: When a child reaches puberty at an earlier age than average.
SEXUALIZATION: An emphasis on the sexual nature of person or object.

TRANSFORMATION: NIKI

BIO-CENTRIC PARADIGM: The belief that gender comes in two: man and woman (male and female); and that the way a person expresses their gender corresponds to their biological sex.
TRANSITIONING: Shifting towards a gender role different than the one assigned at birth.
TRANSSEXUAL/TRANSGENDER: A person who suffers a discrepancy between their physical body and their internal self, often characterized by a persistent identification with the opposite gender and a sense of unease

BODY STORIES

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