

DEAL WITH IT

BODY IMAGE

BECAUSE ALL BODIES ARE GREAT BODIES



Tierra Hohn
Illustrated by Marne Grahlman

ARE YOU TOO FAT, TOO THIN, TOO TALL, OR TOO SHORT? IS YOUR FACE TOO WIDE OR YOUR HAIR TOO CURLY? WHO DECIDES? YOU DO!

We're often more focused on ideas about how we should look, rather than the kind of person we are, what makes us unique, and what we can accomplish. All kids are bombarded with messages about what they should look like and shamed for not measuring up. This book will give you the tools to help you deal with conflict arising from stereotypes around body image.

- Body Image 101 explains what body image is and where it comes from.
- The "You Asked" sections offer real-life problems and solutions.
- Quizzes test your ability to identify body image issues, think critically, and find answers
- Additional resources puts helpful organizations, books, and websites at your fingertips.

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Other titles in this series



Ages 9+

ISBN-10: 1-4594-1453-5

ISBN-13: 978-1-4594-1453-2



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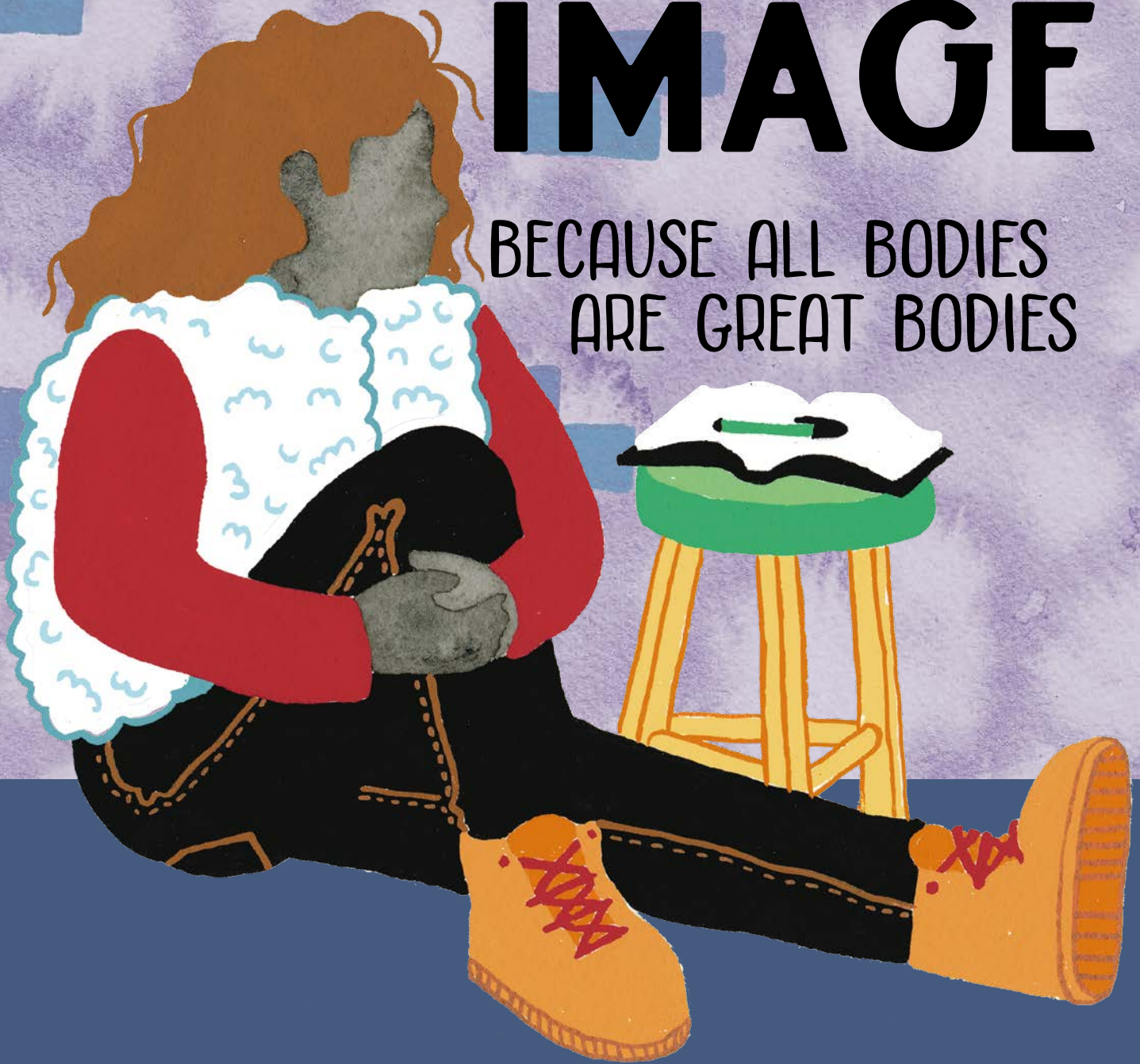
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James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers
www.lorimer.ca

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Toronto

An illustration of a schoolyard scene. In the background, a school building with the word 'SCHOOL' partially visible and a parking lot with three cars (red, blue, yellow) are shown. In the foreground, a soccer game is in progress on a green field. A goal is on the left. Several players in white and orange jerseys are on the field. One player is jumping to head the ball. A soccer ball is in the air. In the bottom left, two people are watching: one in a red shirt and one in a wheelchair. In the bottom center, a person in a red and white checkered shirt is sitting on the grass. On the right, a large tree stands next to a player in a white and orange jersey who is holding a soccer ball. A large red oval containing the 'Contents' table is positioned in the upper right area of the illustration.

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What is everyone fussing about?

It's the first soccer practice of the school year. You've been working on your skills all summer, and it shows. But your teammates are all standing around Chris. Over the summer Chris got taller and became buff.

"Chris, you look jacked!"

"Check out those arms."

"I bet you'll be a real striker now, Chris!"

You can't believe it when Samiya, the most popular girl at school, makes a big fuss over Chris's new body. She used to taunt him for being skinny, but now she is looking at him like he's a superhero.

Why is everyone more focused on what Chris looks like than on how he plays?

After practice, Samiya asks you, "Did you even work out this summer? You still look like a string bean!" Then she laughs.

How we feel about our bodies can affect how we feel about ourselves.

Our body image can also affect how we interact with the world around us, and that can cause conflict. In this book, we'll look at conflicts caused by body image. You'll learn ways to improve your own body image and recognize qualities within yourself and others that have nothing to do with appearance.

WHAT IS BODY IMAGE?



Body image is made up of the thoughts and beliefs we hold about our bodies.

This can include things like:

- Weight
- Height
- Shape/Size
- Hair
- Skin
- Other physical features

How you see your body affects how you see yourself. So, body image is also:

- How we think others perceive our appearance.
- Connected to our self-esteem.
- Influenced by the people and media around us.
- Thoughts and beliefs that can affect our physical and mental health.

Our bodies are more than just a collection of physical parts. We live in our bodies, and as they change, so does the way we feel about them.



OUR BODY IMAGE CAN BE INFLUENCED BY...

FAMILY

AISHA GOES TO HER AUNT'S HOUSE FOR HER COUSIN'S BIRTHDAY.



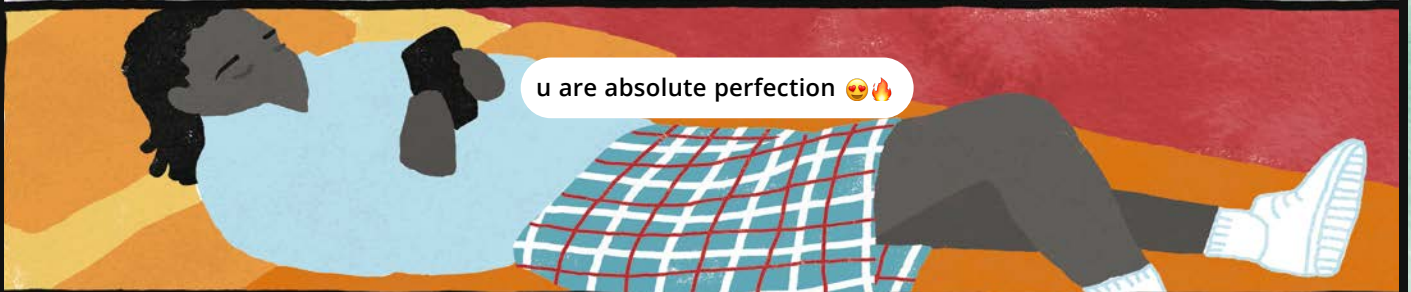
PEERS

TRISTAN'S FRIEND MAKES FUN OF HOW SHORT HE IS.



MEDIA/SOCIETY

VANESSA FOLLOWS CELEBRITIES AND INFLUENCERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.



PAST EXPERIENCES

CAMERON USED TO GET TEASED ABOUT HIS ACNE.



WHY DID SHE MENTION MY SIZE?
IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG
WITH ME? I'M NOT SURE IF I
WANT TO GO TO THIS PARTY
ANYMORE.

ALL PEOPLE TALK ABOUT IS
HOW SHORT I AM. IT'S NOT
LIKE I CAN DO ANYTHING
ABOUT MY HEIGHT. WHY IS IT
SUCH A BIG DEAL?

IS THIS WHAT PERFECT
LOOKS LIKE? IS THIS
WHAT I NEED TO LOOK
LIKE?

TAKE OFF THOSE
STUPID SUNGLASSES.
THERE IS NO SUN
INSIDE THE SCHOOL!

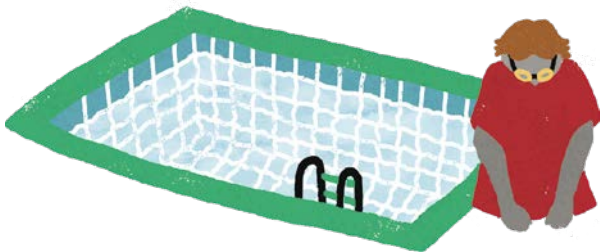
OH, WOW, MIKE DIDN'T
EVEN NOTICE THE
PIMPLE...

WHERE ON THE SCALE IS BODY IMAGE?

Body image can be an issue for some people and not for others. It's not always negative (judging ourselves as not good enough). It can also be positive (feeling good and comfortable in our own skin) or neutral (focusing less on what our bodies look like and more on what they allow us to do). Read the following scenarios and decide if each is describing a POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, or NEUTRAL body image scenario.

1. Terrance doesn't want to take off his shirt to swim because he's afraid of his body being judged.

Negative. Negative body image can have an impact on our actions. It can result in wanting to avoid people, places, or activities that we usually enjoy.



2. Cassandra doesn't like the gap between her teeth. Instead, she focuses on how her whole face lights up when she smiles.

Neutral. It would be great if we loved all parts of ourselves, but that may not always be possible. At the very least, we can try to accept ourselves.



3. Ahmad may not like every part of his body, but that doesn't mean he puts himself down. Instead he dresses in a way that reflects his personality.

Neutral. Self-talk matters. If we speak negatively about ourselves, we might begin to believe it. Say something positive about yourself the next time you stand in front of a mirror.



4. Alex has beautiful natural hair. But she wears extensions because she does not want others to ask questions or touch her real hair.

Negative. Hair is a wonderful way to express ourselves and to try out new looks. But it can be exhausting trying to please others, and it is not our job to make sure that others like the way we look.



- 5. Michael doesn't enjoy exercising several times a day, but he does it because he thinks it is the only way to be healthy.**

Negative. Exercise is not the only way to be healthy. In fact, too much exercise can be harmful. Bodies also require rest and nutrients to be strong.



- 6. Fatima always used to cover her scars. Over time, she realized that her scars were a reminder of her being a survivor of a car accident, so she stopped covering them up.**

Positive. We all have parts of ourselves that might make us feel uncomfortable, but we should never be ashamed of ourselves or what we have been through.



- 7. Amanda is the last girl in her grade to develop breasts. It makes her feel really out of place that her body does not look like her friends'.**

Negative. Everyone's body is different and develops at a different rate. These differences make us unique.



- 8. Tiana was told by her coach to lose weight to improve her endurance. Instead, she worked harder on her technique and ended up winning most of her races.**

Positive. Improving a skill requires practice, not weight loss. Losing weight is not always the answer.



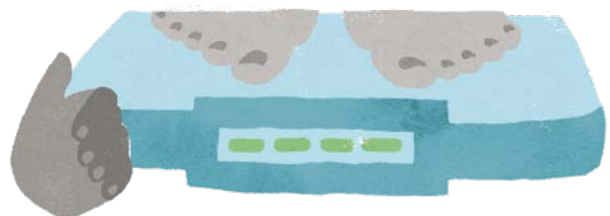
- 9. Maya's role model has dark skin, which makes Maya feel that her own dark skin is beautiful, too.**

Positive. Having a role model is important, especially if that role model looks like us! This can help to inspire and influence us in many great ways.



- 10. Carlos gets his weight checked every few months. His weight has gone up and down five to ten pounds over time, and he is fine with that.**

Neutral. A person's weight is constantly changing, even throughout the day. Instead of focusing on the number on the scale, we could focus on taking care of ourselves, inside and out.



YOU ASKED...



Q: I was born with only one arm. I have learned how to do many different things with the arm that I have — there really isn't much that I can't do! Having one arm does not bother me, but the reaction I get from other people does. When I'm in public, I see people staring at me. It makes me feel so uncomfortable, and sometimes I try to hide my body by wearing oversized shirts. What can I do to feel more comfortable?

– Arm Cover

A: Being stared at sucks. People might be looking because they are curious — not judging — but it still feels weird. Remember that you can't control what other people do, but you can decide how you respond. Try some positive self-talk — say things like "I am unique" and "I am enough." And don't cover yourself up if you do not want to, because you are amazing exactly as you are!



Q: Lately my brother has been working out and drinking protein shakes non-stop. When I asked him about it, he told me that he was tired of being skinny and not being noticed by girls at his school. He wants to be buff like the popular guys.

– Don't Need a Different Brother

A: It is normal to want to fit in or be liked by others, but there is no need to change our appearance in order to do so. There is no rule that says that boys need to be muscular. We are all unique in the way we look, the way we think, and in the way we see the world. Ultimately, people will like you for being yourself. The next time you speak with your brother, remind him of his other great qualities.

Q: I've always been in a bigger body. It's just the way that I was made. I never had problems with how I looked until I started middle school this year and other kids started making fun of my appearance. I often get stared at and I hear laughter when I walk down the hallway. Recently, someone called me "fatty." Why do people feel the need to point out when someone might look different?

– Fat Is Where It's At

A: Everyone is allowed to take up space. Your size might make others uncomfortable, but that is their issue, not yours. Their teasing might come from the fact that they are insecure about aspects of their own appearance. Try reclaiming the word "fat." It is not a bad word, despite what others might say. And it has nothing to do with who you are inside. If you feel comfortable in your skin, then that is the only thing that matters.

