

Program
Introduction

BODY
CONFIDENT

ATHLETES



GLOBALLY, ONLY 15% OF GIRLS MEET THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DAILY MOVEMENT



Girls' concerns about their appearance can be a key barrier to playing and enjoying sports.

These concerns often stem from harmful gender stereotypes, unrealistic appearance and athletic ideals, uncomfortable and revealing uniforms and harassment about their appearance and performance from peers and coaches.

This unwanted attention and evaluation of the female body can lead to appearance pre-occupation and dissatisfaction among girls, which can in turn take their attention away from what their body can experience and achieve in sport.

INTRODUCTION

The Body Confident Athlete program was designed by leading researchers and experts at the Centre for Appearance Research and the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport. This program is designed to help coaches support their athletes* (See Page 12) in having a positive relationship with their bodies.

When athletes have a positive body image, they are more likely to accept and appreciate what their bodies can and cannot do, and perhaps do differently. They are also more likely to listen and attend to their body's needs, while ignoring harmful pressures from society. The people and spaces where athletes play have an important role in shaping how they view and connect with their bodies. Research shows that when girls play sports in inclusive environments that provide a safe place for all body types and abilities, they are more likely to appreciate, connect with and listen to their bodies. When we as a society create these spaces for girls, we can:

- ▶ **Stop them from dropping out of sport because of body image concerns**
- ▶ **Help them reclaim confidence in their bodies within sport environments**

- ▶ **Allow them to enjoy and excel in the sports that they love**

'Body Confident Athletes' is an evidence-informed program that is designed to be delivered by coaches like you! It educates athletes about harmful gender stereotypes, appearance and athletic ideals and how these can negatively impact their sports experience. It also upskills them with the knowledge and strategies to connect with their bodies and stop worrying about the way they look. In other words, when playing sport, an athlete's attention moves away from "what does my body look like" and towards:

"WHAT CAN MY BODY DO AND EXPERIENCE"

which in turn leads to greater body connection, concentration and competence.

Before you deliver the program to the athletes in your sports club or school, please read through the below information. If you have any questions or concerns about the content or your ability to deliver the program, we suggest you contact Info@bodyconfidentsport.com for further guidance and support.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

LET'S GO!

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Who should deliver the program?

- ▶ This program is designed to be delivered by coaches to girls* (See Page 12) in your sports club or school who are aged 11-17 in groups of approximately 10-20.
- ▶ It can also be delivered by an adult who has a trusted relationship with the athletes within the organization.
- ▶ For consistency and to create a team atmosphere, the same coach or facilitator should lead all three sessions of the program where possible.

What does the program cover?

SESSION 1:

This session sets the scene for athletes by introducing them to body talk, and how these conversations can reinforce gender stereotypes, appearance and athletic ideals, and negatively impact girls' sport experiences.

SESSION 2:

Athletes will learn how to focus on and accept what their bodies can do and experience during sport, rather than what it looks like. By shifting their focus, athletes are more likely to accept and appreciate their different abilities, and be in tune with what their body needs when playing sport.

SESSION 3:

To finish the program, athletes will learn the importance of listening to their bodies and its needs, as well as the consequences of not listening. Athletes will engage in a practical task, where they practice attending to their body and its sensations, while responding to its needs.

Your athletes will benefit most from the program if they attend all three sessions, so it's strongly recommended they commit to attending all sessions from the start of the program.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

How is the program structured?

The program consists of three sessions, which are all structured in the same way. Each session lasts for approximately 60 minutes, and will be broken up into 'four quarters', with a suggested time allocation provided for each.

1/ The Game Plan | 5 mins

Recap the previous session; outline the topic for the upcoming session.

2/ The Knowledge | 20 mins

Educational discussions on the topic.

3/ The Skills | 20 mins

Apply the above learnings practically.

4/ The Final Score | 15 mins

Remind your athletes to complete at-home activities; finish with a sense check.

In each session guide, we have indicated which activities are most important to complete in case you find yourself running short of time.



[See key activities].

However, for athletes to get the most benefit from the program, we recommend coaches aim to complete all activities within each session.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

What resources do I need to deliver this program?

PROGRAM MATERIALS

1. The coaches' guide:

This guide contains the key information you need to know before each session. It includes 1) the session topic, 2) the key activities for the session, 3) what to say and the best responses to questions and scenarios, and 4) supplemental notes for optimizing the effectiveness of the session. See the section on 'How to Use this Guide' (See Page 10) for further details on the key features of the guide.

2. The presentation slide deck:

This contains all the supplemental materials that should be presented to athletes across the three sessions, including examples of body talk and athletes who have advocated for body image equality.

3. The athletes' workbook (hardcopy or digital):

This is a private space for athletes to write their thoughts and responses to questions raised in the sessions as well as considerations they may have outside of the program. The workbook can be used digitally or as a hard copy.

RESOURCES FROM YOUR SPORTS CLUB OR SCHOOL

1. A digital device:

The program slide deck will need to be presented to athletes on an electronic device with sound (e.g., laptop and projector, tablet, etc.). The deck will contain images and video content that will help facilitate discussion and enhance the delivery of key concepts.

2. A whiteboard or recording surface (e.g., spare paper):

Each session will involve group discussions. To help facilitate discussion and aid athletes' retention of new knowledge, record their ideas on a surface that is visible to the whole group.

3. Whiteboard markers or pens for recording group discussions

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Where should the sessions be delivered?

Here are some things to consider when deciding on a location:

- ▶ It's important that your athletes feel safe and comfortable to fully participate in the program.
- ▶ The sessions will involve a combination of individual and group activities including discussion, writing and movement.
- ▶ We suggest planning ahead where and when each session will take place to ensure that the program is delivered in an appropriate setting and that necessary resources are available.

When should the sessions be delivered?

- ▶ The program is designed to work around teams' schedules. If appropriate, the session may replace a practice session over the three-week period, or be added as an extra session for your athletes to attend.
- ▶ To increase your athletes' motivation and commitment, we encourage including them in decision making about when the sessions will be held (e.g., replace a practice session vs. additional sessions).

HOW TO

USE THE COACHES' GUIDE

HOW TO USE

The coaches' guide

Coaches' actions – what to say:

- ▶ *"This text in quote marks with subtle underline are instructions of what to say to your athletes. These highlight important questions to ask athletes to ensure key concepts are addressed with optimum impact on body confidence."*

What to do:

- ▶ This text without quotations or subtle underline indicates instructions to help structure session activities, e.g., when you should play films or use worksheets. You can adapt these to suit the specific needs of your team.



Key Activities:

The priority activities are marked with this icon, in case you are short of time.

Flow

The coaches' session guide is designed to be read in two columns, starting with content in the top left and making your way down and then across to the right hand column.

Suggested time allocation:

This is the amount of time generally recommended to achieve learning outcomes and improve body confidence. This may be adapted to suit the needs of your team.



THE SKILLS

How to connect our mind and bodies in sport



Individual movement task

Overview and individual movement task | 15 mins

- ▶ "In last week's session you learned about focusing on what the body can do and experience, and why this is more helpful than focusing on what your body looks like."
- ▶ "In that session you wrote about your body functionality when playing sport."
- ▶ "Take a moment to reflect on what you wrote in your workbook – you can look back on it if you need."
- ▶ "In today's skill session, you're going to extend on this idea by focusing on and listening to your body while playing sport."
- ▶ "You will have 10 minutes of free-play by yourself. You can choose any movement or skill that you like. For example, you might choose to shoot on goal or practice tricks."
- ▶ "While you're playing, you are going to focus on what your body is doing, the sensations it's experiencing and what you might need."

Specifically:

- ▶ "Focus on what your body is doing."
 - ▶ "Focus on what your body is feeling."
 - ▶ "Focus on what your body might need."
 - ▶ "After 10 minutes we will come back and share our experience with the main group."
 - ▶ "Now, find a space for yourself, where you aren't distracted by others."
- Overview of group discussion | 5 mins
- ▶ "Who would like to share their experience? For example, "what felt good about focusing on what your body is doing, feeling, and needing, rather than on how it looked, or what was surprising?"

DESIRED RESPONSES

COACHES' NOTES

Session 3

14

Listening To Our Bodies In Sport

HOW TO USE

The coaches' guide

DESIRED RESPONSES

- ▶ This text not only indicates possible answers to look for from athletes, but also offers ideas for guiding their responses as they develop their understanding of key concepts and improve their body confidence.

COACHES NOTES

- Ideas and guidance for optimizing the effectiveness of the workshop.

Presentation:

These are visual cues and learning objectives to help you facilitate the workshop and deliver the content effectively.



THE SKILLS

How to connect our mind and bodies in sport

20
MINS

DESIRED RESPONSES

Below is an example of what it might look and sounds like when your checking in with your body:

- ▶ I want to shoot on goal.
- ▶ Do I feel warm enough to play? No – I'm going to do some star jumps and high knees to warm up.
- ▶ I can feel my heart pounding in my chest and my body feels warmer. Now, I'm ready to shoot on goal!
- ▶ I need to take a deep breath and concentrate on my technique.
- ▶ Are my legs bent and balanced? Yes, my legs feel strong and bouncy.
- ▶ Are my shoulders square to the basket? Yes – but my shoulders feel a little tight. I need to roll them back and take a deep breath.
- ▶ I notice that I'm smiling and I feel full of energy.
- ▶ I'm sweating and my mouth is dry. I'll grab some water.

Please note that coaches can adapt the above example to meet the description of their sport.

COACHES' NOTES

Athletes may need help remembering the prompts or re-directing their attention back to themselves (e.g., comparison making may have started). Therefore, feel free to move around and prompt them on the below:

- ▶ *"Remember this exercise is about you and your body."*
- ▶ *"It's OK if you become distracted by another teammate. Acknowledge that and bring your attention back to your body and what you're doing."*
- ▶ *"Remember: Focus on what your body is doing. Focus on what your body is feeling. Focus on what your body needs."*
- ▶ *"Don't underestimate the power of self-talk! Evidence shows it can improve confidence and performance. It works best when you focus on what you can and will do, rather than on what you cannot or will not."*

Session 3

15

Listening To Our Bodies In Sport



USEFUL TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

USEFUL Terminology & definitions

The below terms will be introduced and used throughout the program. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with these terms and their definitions, as well as normalize using this language beyond the program. After all, knowledge is power, and this knowledge can be used to support your athletes in challenging body image concerns in sports.

ATHLETE

When we use the term '**Athlete**', we mean anyone who moves their body in a way that makes them feel good. Athletes can be of different ages, genders, body types and abilities.

COACH

When we use the term '**Coach**', we mean any coach, volunteer, teacher, parent, guardian, caregiver, sibling or person who coaches or supports girls who move.

GIRL

When we use the term '**Girls**', we refer to the girl child defined as younger than 18 years old who was assigned female at birth, and all individuals who identify as a girl.

APPEARANCE IDEAL

What society considers the ideal or 'best way' to look (e.g., girls and women should be able-bodied, thin, have a flat stomach and clear skin)

ATHLETIC IDEAL

What society considers the ideal or 'best way' to look as an athlete (e.g., lean, toned muscles, able-bodied)

USEFUL Terminology & definitions

BODY IMAGE

How we think, feel and behave towards our body including the way it looks and how it works. This can include negative and positive thoughts, feelings and behaviors, such as shame, guilt, pride, self-acceptance, and engaging in or avoiding certain life activities – like sport!

BODY CONFIDENCE /POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

Accepting and appreciating our bodies for what they look like, and for what they can and cannot do, and perhaps what they do differently to others. When we are body confident, we are more likely to: 1) have better mood and self-esteem, 2) maintain exercise and sport activities, and 3) do better at school and in our relationships with friends and family.

BODY IMAGE CONCERNS /NEGATIVE BODY IMAGE

Many people have concerns about diet, weight and attractiveness. These concerns can lead to unhealthy preoccupations with body weight and eating, affecting self-esteem, mental health, and physical health.

SPORT

When we use the term 'Sport', we refer to any type of movement that we can do (competitive and non-competitive, individual and team, elite and non-elite, structured and unstructured). This can include walking, dancing, swimming, surfing, playing catch, taking part in a physical education lesson, playing football or competing at the Olympics. We believe that all movement is valid and important.

BODY TALK FREE ZONE

A commitment between teammates and teams to create a space where people avoid engaging in body talk and/or challenge this behavior when it occurs.

USEFUL

Terminology & definitions

BODY TALK

Positive and/or negative comments that reinforce appearance and athletic ideals. Whether a comment or conversation is intended as negative (e.g., "My thighs are too big") or positive (e.g., "You look good – have you lost weight?"), all body talk has the potential to be harmful. This is because these comments place greater importance on appearance, at the expense of valuing more intrinsic qualities such as someone's values (e.g., they are kind), interests (e.g., they enjoy kayaking) or actions (e.g., they support their friends).

INTUITIVE MOVEMENT

The practice of connecting with your body and its internal cues and using that to determine the type of movement you'd like to engage in, for how long and at what intensity.

BODY FUNCTIONALITY

Focusing on and appreciating what our bodies can and cannot do, and perhaps what they do differently to others.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Thinking that someone will look, think or act a certain way because they are a girl or boy, woman or man. Gender stereotypes include beliefs that, all girls prefer gymnastics and all boys like football, or boys are naturally more aggressive than girls. These stereotypes are harmful because:

- ▶ They do not consider people who identify with a gender that is not exclusively feminine or masculine (e.g., non-binary).
- ▶ They make assumptions about a person's abilities, interests and values.
- ▶ They may hold people back from living a life that they want, including pursuing their interests, career aspirations and relationships.

CHECKLIST & NEXT STEPS

CHECKLIST

& next steps

CONTENT

- ▶ Read through the introduction and overview (Pages 2-8).
- ▶ Read through and familiarize yourself with the session guides.
- ▶ Watch the training videos on how to effectively deliver the program.
- ▶ Make sure your athletes have access to their personal workbooks.

SPACE

- ▶ Ensure your sports club or school is aware that you're conducting the program.
- ▶ Book a space(s) to hold the three sessions.
- ▶ All sessions will require a space for private discussions and for session 3 you will also need a space for your athletes to play their sport.

TIME

- ▶ Decide on the date and times that you will hold the sessions with your team.
- ▶ For consistency, try and schedule the sessions at the same time and on the same day for three consecutive weeks.
- ▶ Inform your athletes and their parents/guardians about the program and when/where it will be occurring.

FAQS

FAQS

1. What happens if we run out of time, and I don't cover all activities?

Your athletes will benefit most from the program if they complete all activities across the three sessions. This guide provides suggestions for how to plan and structure the sessions, which will help reduce the risk of running over time or needing to skip activities. However, we recognize that even the best laid plans can be interrupted. Here are some tips for effectively delivering the program with the time you have:

- ▶ Try to keep within the suggested time allocation for each activity.
- ▶ If your athletes are particularly passionate about a topic, it's important to acknowledge their enthusiasm, suggest that the team revisit this topic and then gently move them onto the next activity.
- ▶ Make sure that at least the core material (symbolized with the icon on the left) is completed.
- ▶ Reduce the opening and closing of the sessions, by providing a brief introduction (Game Plan) and closing statement (Final Score), and always finish with the Three Step Sense Check.



2. Does promoting body confidence mean we promote obesity?

A healthy body is one that has good mental and physical health,

has a balanced and varied diet and is exercising moderately. Healthy bodies come in all different shapes and sizes and it's important that we take care of our bodies and appreciate them. The appearance ideal changes over time and cultures, and is a product of the society that we live in at a particular time. It does not reflect anything about the health of the body.

3. How can I avoid participating in ableism when talking about body image and movement?

Ableism is discrimination against Disabled people or those assumed to be Disabled. Ableism is rooted in the belief that non-disabled peoples abilities are superior. Ultimately, ableism creates barriers and prevents people from participating fully in life, including in sport. Be mindful that Disabled people, or people with impairments, experience additional pressures to appear "socially acceptable". It's important that we create accessible and inclusive environments that acknowledge differing abilities, not limitations. You can do this by: learning more about ableism, pushing for greater accessibility within your organisation, not making assumptions about individuals with impairments (e.g., they're unhappy; they're experiences are limited), and avoiding ableist language ("that's lame"; "the blind leading the blind").

3. What do I do if somebody becomes upset during a session?

Body image can be a sensitive and challenging topic for people to discuss, especially in a group setting. It's normal for your athletes to become frustrated and upset about their body image and the pressures they may feel to look a certain way. The safe space that you create can also give your athletes the courage to disclose what's happening in their lives. For example, they might disclose that they are being bullied about their appearance, have an eating disorder or are experiencing family problems. Distress and disclosure are normal and should not be dismissed. Here are some tips for how to support them and ensure their concerns are addressed:

- ▶ Do not interrupt or try to stop the participant. If you feel the discussion is veering off topic, you can suggest that you two continue the conversation after the session.
- ▶ Hear the participant through as far as they are willing to go – remember, it is not your role to cross-examine them.
- ▶ If an athlete shares something worrisome that you believe requires others' involvement, explain that you may not be able to keep this a secret and why, and who you will pass the information to. Remember,

confidentiality is important, and you should tell only people who need to know (this does not always include parents).

- ▶ If you feel the participant is in immediate danger, take immediate action (e.g., follow your organization's safeguarding policies).
- ▶ If you feel the participant needs further help and aren't sure what to do next, consult with a senior leader in your organization and national child protection authorities/charities.

4. What if some athletes don't want to speak up and participate?

Active participation is an important part of Body Confident Athletes. As their coach, you will play a key role in encouraging them to participate. Here are some tips for encouraging your athletes to speak out:

- ▶ To encourage participants to express their opinion, ask open questions that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”. For example, don't ask, “Did you enjoy that activity?”, but rather, “How might you use this strategy when playing sports?”.

FAQS

- ▶ Remind everyone of the ground rules they have established about listening to each other and taking turns to speak.
- ▶ Emphasize that every participant has something to contribute to the activity.
- ▶ In a friendly and positive manner, ask everyone to report or share perspectives.

5. Do I have to have a positive body image to deliver these sessions?

Body image concerns are very common among children, adolescents and adults. Even those with a positive body image can have moments where they don't fully accept or appreciate their appearance. You don't need a 'perfect' body image to deliver this program; but, it's important to be aware of your own body image concerns and how these might impact your athletes. For example, when speaking with athletes do you promote appearance ideals (e.g., "I wish I looked like [insert female athlete]; she has the perfect amount of muscle, but is still thin") or model harmful dieting behaviors (e.g., "I've been trying this new

intermittent fasting, and it's really helping my training")? To effectively facilitate this material, we encourage you to reflect on your own body image concerns, how these are expressed and avoid doing so with your athletes. If you still feel your body image concerns will negatively impact how you deliver the program and interact with your athletes, we recommend you speak with a leader at your sports organization and organize for another trusted adult to deliver the program. In the meantime, here are some resources that may assist you in your own body image journey:

- ▶ [10 Steps to Positive Body Image by the National Eating Disorder Association](#)
- ▶ [Developing and Modeling Positive Body Image by the National Eating Disorder Association](#)
- ▶ [Positive Body Image Workbook: A clinical and self-improvement guide by Nichole Wood-Barcalow, Tracy Tylka and Casey Judge](#)



**LET'S
GO.**