

# self-esteem activity guide

*For mothers & daughters*  
aged 8-11

*Dove*  
self-esteem  
project



*Helps girls build  
body confidence*



“No young person should leave school feeling that they can’t participate fully in life because of the way that they think they look”

Dr. Nancy Etcoff, Director, Program in Aesthetics and Well Being,  
Department of Psychiatry, Harvard



## Our social mission:

To encourage all women and girls to develop a positive relationship with beauty, helping to raise their self-esteem, and thereby enabling them to realise their full potential.



# Contents

Why has this resource been produced?	04
How does this resource work?	06
How to use this resource	07
Encouraging your daughter to talk about her body	08
Mothers as role-models	09
How to create better feelings about you own body	10
Before you begin	11
Activity No. 1: Getting started	12
Activity No. 2: Mom and me	14
Activity No. 3: Where I'm from	16
Activity No. 4: My world	18
Activity No. 5: Changes!	19
Activity No. 6: Language decoder	22
Activity No. 7: Tricky topics	25
Activity No. 8: Being safe	26
Activity No. 9: My hopes	28
Dove Self-Esteem Project Global Advisory Board	30
Meet the family - further resources	31
Other resources and inspiration	32

# Why has this resource been produced?

Research shows a link between a mother's influence and her daughter's ideas about health and body confidence. If mothers can become more aware of their attitudes towards their own bodies and those of their daughters, they can help their daughters stand up to the powerful influences in our culture that undermine their own sense of beauty and self-worth.

Today there is more pressure than ever on young girls to be physically perfect. We see this reflected in the media all around us. Let's look at some worrying facts:

- 72% of girls feel pressure to be beautiful. (*The Real Truth About Beauty, Dove Global study 2010*)
- Over 60% of girls avoid certain activities because they feel bad about their looks.  
For example:
  - 19% won't try out for a team or club
  - 23% won't go to the beach or pool
  - 13% won't give an opinion
  - 15% won't go to school
 ('*The Real Truth About Beauty – Revisited*', *Dove Global study 2010*)
- Two-thirds (63%) of women believe that they are expected to be more physically attractive than their mother's generation. (*The Girl Scout Research Institute*)
- Satisfaction with body image decreases as girls progress to adolescence. While 75% of 8-9 year old girls say they like the way they look, but by age of 12-13 years, only 56% of girls like their appearance. (*Teens Before Their Time 2000*)



**Spurred by facts like these, the Dove Self-Esteem Project campaign aims to prevent the damage caused when young people develop low self-esteem from hang-ups about their looks. Clearly mothers have an important part to play too as they are in a very influential position to shape how narrowly or widely their daughters define "beauty".**

- Over 50% of 11-15 year old girls say that their mother helps them the most when they have a problem. (*The Ten Emerging Truths: New Directions for Girls 11-17, 2002*)



“Today, young people are growing up surrounded by increasingly unattainable beauty standards. Innovative materials like these offer adults the chance to be positive role models, and to make a significant positive impact on the self-image of young people when they need it most. This Activity Guide provides an impressive combination of fun exercises and communication tools that encourage conversation on an exceedingly difficult subject: body confidence and self-esteem.”

**Dr. Nancy Etcoff**

Harvard University, Director of Program in Aesthetics and Well Being; author of ‘Survival of the Prettiest, the Science of Beauty’

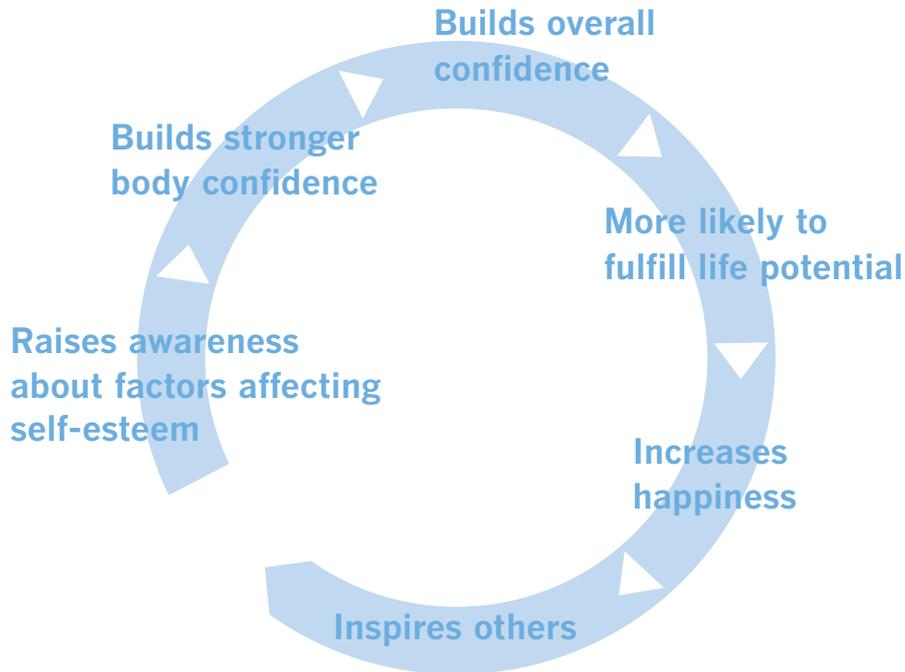


“Body image issues affect nearly all girls, undermining confidence and wasting emotional energy. I heartily recommend this resource to help girls, and their adult mentors, become more robust in their quest to reach their full potential.”

**Dr Susie Orbach**

Mother, psychoanalyst, body activist and author of numerous books on the body and emotional literacy including ‘Bodies’ and ‘On Eating’

# How does this resource work?



## What do we mean by 'happiness'?

Everyone wants to be happy. But what is it exactly and how do we get it? Well, that depends on the individual. Some people create an image of a specific set of external circumstances that they need to achieve in order to reach happiness, saying things like 'I'll be happy when I lose 5lb, get a new job, have a new pair of shoes.' Unfortunately, these 'ideas' of happiness are often influenced by the person's surroundings, their family, society, friends, the media – outside influences.

Real happiness comes when you gain a confident sense of yourself. You are not blocked by negative introspection, you are able to express your own thoughts and opinions, and most importantly, you can fully appreciate the powerful affects that come from having body confidence.

This resource aims to support parents and mentors (like you) in your conversations with your daughters around body confidence and self-esteem. It provides lots of opportunities to talk with your daughter about her body and the changes she will be going through. Your input is vital. She values you and looks to you to help with her confusion and questions.



# How to use this resource?

The booklet is split into two sections. The first half contains information for mothers on the journey their daughters take as they enter puberty. The remainder of the booklet contains a series of activities for mothers and daughters to do together, to explore issues around self-esteem and body confidence. Please read this booklet through in its entirety before spending time together on it.

## The importance of mothers

As a mom you are one of the most important influences in your daughter's life.

Long before peer pressure has kicked in, a mother's love and caring sets the foundations for her daughter's life. Who you are will profoundly affect who your daughter is and can be. Your attitudes and behaviours towards her, and the way you act, are like a script from which she will make the big decisions and choices in her life.

Clearly girls are affected by lots of other external factors. For instance, Dove's global research tells us that there is an epidemic of body confidence issues affecting girls and women worldwide:

**"A shocking 90% of all women want to change something about their appearance."**



Girls and women are constantly comparing themselves and trying to match up to the images of beauty that they perceive are linked to the happiness and success that they see all around them. As a result, body image dissatisfaction and eating problems are on the rise. Pressures to undergo cosmetic surgery are increasing too, as girls think that this is a solution to the ordinary issues they face in growing up.

Dove's research also showed that, as a mother, you can make a huge difference in educating and encouraging your daughter to challenge these negative cultural influences.

**This booklet helps you to enter into your daughter's world, understand what she's thinking and hear about the pressures she experiences, especially those that affect her body confidence.**

# Encouraging your daughter to talk about her body

Expressing open-minded curiosity in your daughter's development will make the changes that she is going through exciting rather than worrying for her. The activities that follow are designed to help make 'body confidence' part of your everyday conversation.

In addition, helping girls understand that the images of their favourite pop stars, TV stars and advert characters are fabricated really helps too. Media imagery uses so much special lighting and digital manipulation that it creates fantasy images rather than showing how people really look. Emphasising the uniqueness of girls' looks and style, their adorable freckles or the charm of their growing breasts while still having a baby tummy, will send a powerful message that you value their changes and that these are essential parts of who they are.



## Feelings

Emotions come in here too. Often body preoccupations and food problems are a response to emotions and unhappy feelings. We can help our daughters by letting them know that we all have mixed and complicated feelings at times.

Feelings aren't right or wrong, or good or bad. Sometimes our feelings frighten us, sometimes they embarrass us. Sometimes we just feel good. Sometimes we feel sad. Feelings are personal and an important part of each of us. Knowing how we feel is a way of knowing ourselves better and the same logic applies to your daughter.

The more she can accept her feelings, whatever they are, the more protected she will be from the tendency to turn the normal confusion of growing up into body or food problems. She will learn that whether she is happy or sad, excited or worried, pleased or discontent, she does not have to take it out on her body.

# Mothers as role-models

We need to realize that when we make negative comments about our own bodies or criticize our own eating, these are picked up by our daughters. If we:

- sigh when we look in the mirror
- routinely say we shouldn't be eating this
- weigh ourselves in front of our daughters
- talk about how we need to diet more strenuously
- complain that 'if only' we had a different nose / hair / eyes / hips our lives would be better

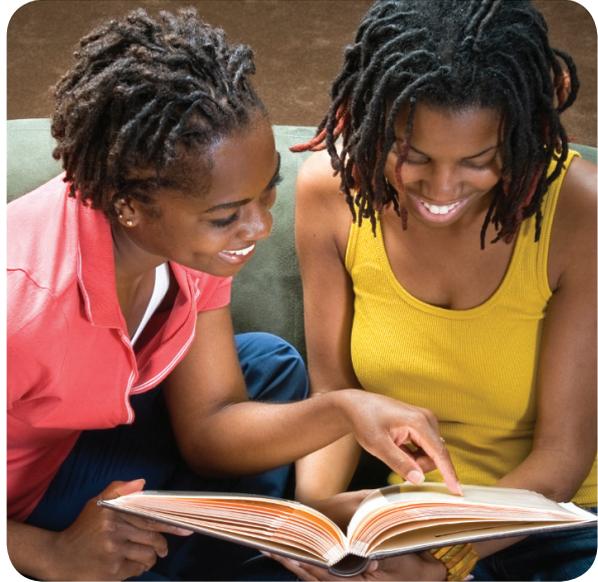
... then our daughters will believe it's natural for a girl to be critical of, and unhappy with, her own body.

Obviously it's not so easy to show a positive or confident attitude about your own body if you don't feel it. Reflecting on your own feelings and trying to stop showing any negative ones you have about your body when she is around (actually it would be great for you if you could stop altogether!) is important. Finding the right stance towards your own body might be tricky, but the more neutral to positive you can make it, the easier it will be for your daughter to develop a confidence about her own. Then she has more chance of avoiding the anguish about appearance that plagues so many girls and women.



# How to create better feelings about your own body

- Do look at pictures of yourself from a few years ago that you like. If you were dissatisfied with your body at the time and realise now that you looked just fine and wish you had that body today, do try to accept and enjoy your body as it is, at this stage. (It would be awful to look back a few years from now at pictures of you today and have those same regretful feelings.)
- Do move your body. Put on music and dance around or go for a walk. Feeling your body alive from the inside is a good antidote to the criticisms foisted on it from the outside.
- Do remind yourself that the images in magazines are often digitally touched up, stretched and lit in extraordinary ways rather than being pictures of real women.
- Do remember yours is a body that has lived, worked, given birth, brought up a child and run a household. Bodies change as we age and it is a fiction that they could ever look like the 'perfected' images in the media.



# Before you begin

Think back to the time when you were your daughter's age. It was probably a bewildering time. Perhaps your body was unruly. You may have been getting ready to change schools. The certainties of childhood were unraveling. What did you need from your mom, or the other significant women in your life, such as aunts? Are there things you would like to do differently for your daughter, especially considering the additional pressures she faces today?

Perhaps you didn't have to appear grown up or sexy quite so young? Today your daughter is bombarded with up to 5,000 media images a week that suggest how she should look and feel. Celebrities rule. Sex is presented as something she should take part in early. Buying the latest fashions and wearing make-up has come to be a pre-teen right. Plastic surgery is presented as an easy and worthwhile option she can look forward to. Being able to talk with your daughter about these many different pressures will help her enormously.

This booklet has activities for her to do on her own and others for you to do together. Before you get started, acquaint yourself with what her world is like.

- Watch her favourite TV programme. You'll probably be able to work out why she likes it, but if not, at least you'll have enough information to get a conversation going about it.
- Borrow her magazines and find out what they are writing about and the images they are using. Reflect on how those images make you feel now and how they might affect you if you were her.
- Listen to her latest downloads and focus on the lyrics. You'll be able to ask her about the music that appeals to her.
- Be a media interpreter. If you are seeing images on TV or in a magazine that promote ideas you think are damaging, talk about it with your daughter. Often those images we see are greatly enhanced to remove 'imperfections' – it's impossible for a girl to live up to a body ideal that doesn't even exist in real life.



**In general, try to have an open attitude and interest towards what's going on with her.**

# Getting started

Write down all the things that are important to you now. This is just the beginning - you will have lots of opportunities to share more about yourself. You may even want to get a journal or a notebook to write down your thoughts and feelings along the way.

## About me

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old

My school is \_\_\_\_\_ I am in year \_\_\_\_\_

## About my body

To me being beautiful means \_\_\_\_\_

Questions I have about my face / hair / legs / chest / body are:

## More about me

My favourite activities are \_\_\_\_\_

When I grow up, I want to be \_\_\_\_\_

I think the two most interesting things about me are \_\_\_\_\_



Children like to fill in quizzes. Their answers can help give you a good idea about their questions, concerns and feelings. The questions your daughter has about growing up can be vast and varied, so don't feel worried or pressured to have to have the 'right' answers. Knowing what's troubling her about her development, gives you a chance to pass on your experience to her, share your stories and tell her things you wish had been passed on to you.

**MOM'S  
SPOT**

Questions I have about growing up are:

- Why am I changing?
- Does everyone change the same way?
- When is it ok to kiss someone?
- Other
- Do I have to diet?
- Is it ok to be excited about growing up?
- What if I don't like my legs / breasts / lips?

About my friends

My best friend's name/s is/are

My best friend/s think/s I am

Something my friends do / say / think that worries me is

Something my friends do / say / think that inspires me is



About my mom

My mom's name is

Today I would describe my relationship with my mom as

Other days I would describe my relationship with my mom as

One thing I get cross with my mom about is

One thing I love about my mom is

# Mom & me

You know the basics about your mom and she probably knows the basics about you. Let's delve a little deeper into who each of you are. Get out your pen, think like a journalist and ask these questions to each other to uncover some news. You'll find out some insightful facts about one another. You can also ask your grandmother and aunts the same questions, make it a real family affair!

## Let's share

**As a warm-up, find something special that both of you can do e.g.**

- Raise one eyebrow
- Flip your tongue over
- Whistle

## Let's talk about:

How to deal with bullies and teasing  
 How I feel about my body  
 What kissing is like  
 How I really feel about getting my period  
 How I really feel about getting a bra

## Mom let me tell you about:

My best friend(s)  
 My school work  
 How I feel about my siblings / aunts /  
 grandparents / teachers / babysitter

## Mom tell me about:

What school was like for you  
 Your best friends from when you  
 were my age  
 How you really got along with your  
 family members



### More things to talk about:

What makes me feel strong

What makes me feel uncomfortable

Sometimes I don't feel good about myself because...

Sometimes I feel great about myself because...



There are lots of meaty topics here, so allow yourself a good uninterrupted hour to do this activity together. Talk about the concerns and questions your daughter has flagged. Some of what you hear may make you feel uncomfortable. Take a deep breath or make yourself a cup of tea so you can pause long enough to notice what it is that's making you feel uncomfortable. Knowing you are having a reaction and then trying to 'put it to one side' temporarily, will help you go back to listening to her. It will enable you to focus on her again and what she needs.

Your daughter needs to get a clear message from you that feelings should be expressed, are not be judged and that whatever her responses and feelings are, they are allowed. By writing, talking or drawing her feelings, even if, at times, they appear confusing, she, like all of us, will feel more comfortable with herself. Knowing that her feelings are acceptable means she won't have to deny them or feel ashamed of them. They are just feelings and it's okay to have them in whatever form they come.

**MOM'S  
SPOT**

# Where I'm from

Every family is different. It is the particular ingredients of your family that makes yours unique. Families are made up of different parts with everyone bringing something special to it.

## Talk about it

How does where you're from influence who you are? This might include religion, region, ethnic group, how old your parents are, what beliefs you share as a family, whether you live with your mom or with your mom and dad and any siblings and step siblings you have.

- Where did my grandma grow up?
- Where did my mom grow up?
- How is our family unique and different?
- What makes me unique and different?
- How do I define beauty?
- How does my family define beauty?
- What are some things I admire in my family members?
- What are some things I admire in others?
- What are some things I admire in myself?
- Which skills do I want to develop?
- What have I learnt about my mother that I didn't know?
- How does that change the relationship I have with her?



Children have to juggle their own family with the wider culture. They are often the ambassadors outside the home of your values, beliefs and ways of doing things.

### MOM'S SPOT

Tell your daughter the ways in which you see her personal traits and attitudes that reflect your family. These can be physical and emotional. Look at her hopes and show her how she is making her personal contribution to shaping the family. Remember they are just feelings.

Listen to how your daughter wants to develop and progress. You can help her imagine herself in these new ways. Try not to judge what she wants but enjoy her desires even if they are at odds with what you are hoping for her. She might want to be a beautician while you see her as a future scientist. Or she might want to be an engineer and you see her as a teacher. She might, like many girls now, just want to be famous. Whatever she dreams of, whatever ideas she has belong to today and will change as she grows. A way you can help build her confidence is to let her know that what she longs for or fancies herself to be, is understandable. It is a way of letting her know that her desires are fine and you support them.



# My world

Media such as magazines, websites, blogs, television shows, music and movies are probably a big part of your life right now. Your mom might feel a bit left out about what you're in to, so pick a magazine (or a TV programme) that you really like and sit down with her. You can show her what it means to you and how it makes you feel.

Talk about it

- **What do the images say about girls and their lives?**
- **Are the images things girls should aspire to? Why? Why not?**
- **What would real girls or real images look like?**
- **In what ways do the characters, stories or images seem realistic?**
- **In what ways do they seem made up?**
- **How do they make you feel about yourself and your life?**



Look at your daughter's favourite TV programmes and magazines together and giggle about any silly and unrealistic images.

Take note of the images and features that she encounters, but don't judge them. Instead, encourage her to explain the impact of these on her.

Think about ways you can counter these images and what the people are doing if you feel uneasy. Educate your daughter about media literacy. Point out that often pictures are digitally transformed. Go to [www.dove.com](http://www.dove.com) and show her the Evolution video. The two of you will be asto-

unded. And you can remind each other, when looking at adverts, that people don't really look like this in real life. Even if your daughter doesn't watch these shows or see these images in your home, she encounters them in her world. You can't get rid of them but you can punch some holes in their pretences.

## MOM'S SPOT

Try to remind your daughter regularly about the digital manipulation of images. Have a laugh with her about the way they extend legs, inflate breasts or darken eyes.



# Changes!

You might have noticed that you are beginning to look different than you did a few years ago. This change in your body is called puberty and it's a part of growing up. How can you deal with the changing you? Talk to your mom about puberty and what's happening to you, or what's likely to happen in the months and years ahead.

Use the figure to point out ways your body is changing. It may seem silly, but it's a good way to talk to your mom about difficult things.

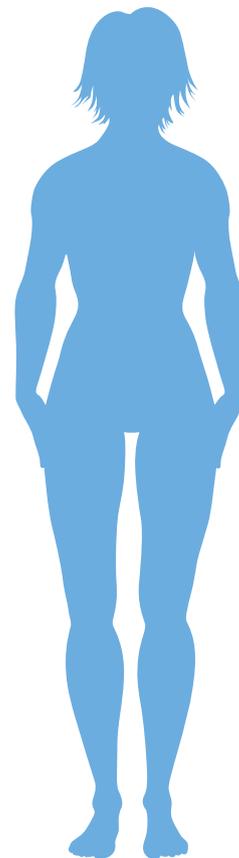
Not sure what's changing?

Have a think about these questions:

- Does your face seem different? How?
- Do your clothes fit differently? Where?
- Have you found hair in new places? Where?
- Have you started to wear a bra?
- Are you now wearing braces?
- If you haven't had any of these changes yet, ask your mom what you should expect



**Still worried or confused? Ask your mom for the help you need. She can direct you to more information. Also, ask your mom what it was like for her when her body was changing. How did she feel?**



# Facts about puberty

Puberty usually happens between the ages of 8 and 14. Some girls have to wait a while, for others it arrives before anyone else. During puberty your body releases special hormones, these are responsible for the good changes that mean you are on your way to being a teenager.

## Are you going through puberty yet?

### ✓ Check the signs of puberty that apply to you:

- You get taller, sometimes taller than the boys in your class
- You see body hair growing in your underarms and in your pubic area
- You may feel moody sometimes
- You may smell differently
- Your breasts begin to grow
- You get your period
- You may get acne
- Your body can get curvy
- Your hips can get fuller
- Your body may widen
- Your body fat usually increases



Sooner or later you might check off all of those things as they are absolutely **NORMAL!** It's nature's way of transforming your body from a young girl to a beautiful young woman. It can be a strange time but it is also very exciting.

Tell your daughter that puberty and turning into a gorgeous teen can be fun. Show enthusiasm for her physical changes. Wonder aloud whether she'll have your breasts, or her aunt's legs, or dad's height, or her sister's teeth, etc. Tell her you're having a special shopping trip to select the products that she will want to be using soon. Share with your daughter what puberty, and waiting for it, was like for you. You can take out the old photo albums of yourself at her age and look at the pictures together.

Are there cultural traditions or physical traits in your family that symbolise beauty? Trace those attributes through the generations to help your daughter's sense of belonging and to give her a broader definition of beauty. Find things about the two of you that are similar. Try to give her a positive image of some of them such as: "I always felt lucky that I had straight / curly hair or I've always enjoyed being petite / tall so I hope you will too..."

**MOM'S  
SPOT**

# Feelings about puberty

Puberty is not just about breasts and hair, or spots and periods. It's what those changes mean to you, how others look at you and what they expect from you. Body changes tell people you are growing up. Sometimes time goes too quickly and sometimes it feels ever so slow. You want to be grown-up enough to kiss and go to parties and know what love is about, but you might also be shy and find it just as much fun to have crushes on people.



**“It is also a time when you have different sorts of feelings for no reason. Sometimes you can be super excited, sometimes you can feel out of sorts.”**

Friends change. You can feel so close and included one moment and then excluded a few weeks later. And your body is changing. You can be ravenous one day and then just eat normally for weeks. Suddenly you appear grown-up and may want breasts, long hair, to wear make-up and be allowed to go out with boys and experiment with things that bigger kids are in to.

Just yesterday, and maybe tomorrow, you'll be snuggling up to your teddy. You might feel quite private around your dad or brothers and that can feel really odd.

There are so many pressures on you that may make you want to fit in and be like your friends, or act like the people in your favourite TV shows. You start having secrets and dreams and thoughts that don't fit. Often nothing feels like it fits: neither your body, nor your clothes. And your ideas can be a jumble. This can be a hard time but it is also exciting because it is the only time when you are both a girl and about to be a 'young lady'.



**One thing to remember:**

You can't stop these changes. Some girls try to stop them by not eating or eating too much. Always talk to your mom if the changes are worrying you. She will find a way to listen sympathetically and help advise you.

# Language decoder

Sometimes it's hard to hear what your mom has to say. At times, it seems like you are speaking two different languages. Mom can be a great comfort but the wrong comment from her can send you into a fit of rage. How can you make sure you are understanding each other?

Look at this chart. How do you feel about the things your mom says?  
 What do you think she really means? Is there a better way to say these things?

Mom says...	I may feel...	Mom might mean...
I am so proud of you!	I'm not sure I can trust what you're saying.	I noticed you've been working hard.
Is that what you are wearing?	You don't like my style. You don't trust my judgment. You are trying to control me.	I am not sure that is the best choice.
Is that what you are eating?	You think I am too fat or too skinny.	Your nutrition is important to me.
You are beautiful.	You have to say that, you're my mom. You can't see my flaws.	You are beautiful, inside and out, just as you are.
You don't have to do what everyone else is doing.	I don't want to be left out.	I know that sometimes you want to do what your friends are doing. Slow down and make sure it's what <i>you</i> want to do too!



**“Here is your chance to practice talking and listening to your mom. She’s been there. She knows what it’s like.”**

Now write down some of the things your mom says to you.  
How do they make you feel? Ask her what she really means.

One thing my mom says is:

How I feel when she says that:

What she really means:

One thing my mom says is:

How I feel when she says that:

What she really means:

Some things I would like my mum to stop saying or to say in another way are:

Strengths my mom sees in me:

Strengths I think I have:

Strengths I wish I could have:



**Remember: Moms have your best interests in mind, even if you don't always hear it. Ask her to identify three strengths she sees in you. Having her do this now might help you understand where she's coming from. Do you agree with these strengths that she sees? Are there other strengths you would like to develop? Talk to her.**

Remember what it was like when you were sensitive and prickly, and you were trying to work out who you were while your mood changed rapidly. Your daughter doesn't know whether to believe what you say or not. She wants to, but she's looking to other role models now and she can seem dismissive. Consequently she doesn't necessarily hear what you say in the way that you intend it. She expects you to judge her the way she might be judging herself.

If you are offering her a compliment, be as specific as you can. This makes it easier for her to hear it and not brush you off. So, instead of saying "I am so proud of you", name the activity that you want to acknowledge and reinforce in your daughter.

Try the following approaches to compliments: "I am really impressed with the way you stuck with that maths problem / swimming lesson. You showed real commitment." Or "I noticed you talking patiently to grandma when she kept asking the same thing over and over again. That shows care and respect."

If you want to offer some criticism, then signal it. This makes things a little easier. For example: "This might be something you won't like me saying... but, I think it can come across rude, if you..."

**MOM'S  
SPOT**



# Tricky topics

For girls and adults, some parts of life are like an obstacle course. New challenges come up every day. If your mother doesn't know the realities of your daily life, she can't give you the best support. Use this activity to be honest about the challenges you face. That will help you and your mom work together towards solutions.

Talk about three things that can be difficult every day. They can be simple, tricky, or silly (see some example scenarios below).

Now ask your mom to listen very carefully as you give her a picture about

- a) **what happens**
- b) **how you react to it**
- c) **how your friends react to it and**
- d) **how it makes you feel.**

Afterwards, listen to her response. She may have suggestions to make situations like these easier for you and others around you.



Some scenarios might be:

- **Being teased**
- **Confronting a bully**
- **Handling peer pressure**
- **Talking to a boy**
- **Being unprepared for school**
- **Changing for gym or sports**
- **Feeling uneasy about pressure to kiss someone**
- **Not being sure about how you look**
- **Wanting to change your body**
- **Thoughts about plastic surgery**
- **Not having the latest outfit or gadget**
- **Puberty surprises**

# Being safe

Sometimes you can find yourself in a place or a situation that just doesn't feel good. It can be embarrassing or scary to ask your mom to help you. No matter what you might think, your mom wants you to be safe and happy, even if you've broken the rules. Always try to ask for help, that way, you can talk over your worries about tough situations, and possible solutions, before they arise or get dangerous.

Come up with a real or made-up situation, concerning you or a friend, that you would normally be too shy or scared about to share with your mother.

For example:

- Someone in your class has been shoplifting
- A friend wants me to start smoking with her
- You felt like cheating in class
- You've noticed that a friend has stopped eating
- You've been offered drugs



Ask your mom to think of a time when she kept a secret in order to avoid disappointing her parents. How did it make her feel?

Sometimes it's important to have a private codeword that identifies a situation needs a special kind of conversation. (The American and Russian leaders used to be connected by

a special Red Phone Hotline that would only be used for the most important and urgent messages to each other.)

Create a private code with your mom. This safety plan can help you and your parents deal with tricky situations.

## Example 1:

**You asked to stay at a friend's house, but now you want to come home and you don't want your friend to feel bad.**

Call your mom and say your code word (It could be something like "How's grandma?")

Your mom will recognize the code and then try and help you tell her what's wrong, e.g.: she might ask "Aren't you having fun; do you want to come home?" She'll find a way to make that possible if you say "yes" and then you can talk to her later about why you didn't feel comfortable.

## Example 2:

**Maybe you told your mom you were staying in but your friends convinced you to go out. You don't feel comfortable but you know you broke the rules. Call your mom and say your code word, she will come and get you. She might be a little angry that you broke the rules, but she'll care more about your safety.**

To start off the conversation when you are alone with her you can say, "I'm sorry that I did this mom, but I feel relieved that I can come to you for help in a difficult spot." Then you can talk about what happened and maybe she can suggest ways of dealing with a situation like this in a way that makes you comfortable.

Here are some issues that might require a codeword.

Can you think of others?

- Doing badly at school
- Attending a party where there are drugs or alcohol
- Being touched inappropriately
- Eating too much, eating too little
- Being teased or harassed by a bully
- Practicing unhealthy eating behaviours
- Being hurt by a family member or friend



Making a plan together:

- What is the procedure you follow if you are in an unsafe situation?
- Who do you go to as a “safe” person if you are worried that you can’t talk to your mom? Can you talk to your friend’s mother?
- Have a signal that tells your mom that you are ok but don’t want to talk.
- Have a different signal that tells your mom that it is urgent you talk.
- Work out the grace period between making a bad decision and facing the repercussions of that choice
- Write out the rules for your codewords together and keep it in a handy place.
- What could happen when girls can’t turn to their mothers?

Rules about codes

When the code is in effect, you should both agree to:

- Put safety first
- Listen, not blame
- Communicate in a positive way
- Come up with solutions and consequences together
- Understand that making mistakes is part of growing up
- Identify emergency contacts - people and numbers that can help

You’ve opened the door of communication with your mom. Now keep it going! You can rely on your mom in all different sorts of situations. Remember, she’s been there. She can be a great ally. She can also be a lot of fun and very wise.

The private code should be taken seriously and if the two of you commit to it early on, it can help you both avoid a lot of misunderstandings.

If your daughter uses the code, praise her for asking for help. Listen to her. It might be difficult and you might well have to put your own panic aside, but if you don’t act calmly and lovingly it may be hard for

her to approach you again.

You can be firm later on, at first you need to listen and understand why she might have done whatever she has done. You can then think about how to prevent similar situations in the future. Make sure you let her know that you are pleased she came to you.

**MOM’S  
SPOT**

# My hopes

Sometimes you need a quiet moment to reflect on all the changes and activities in your life. Use this space to consider who you are, or use your journal. Write down your thoughts about what you've learnt so far about yourself and about your mother.

Think about it!

What makes me unique and different?

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Who are my role models?

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Why?

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Who are my Best Friends Forever (BFF)?

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Why?

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What do I want to be?

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What skills do I want to develop?

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**Take a moment to look at the things that make you, you. Write down one goal for yourself during this time of change. Try to make it as specific as possible. Maybe you want to spend more time with Mom, or maybe you want to learn more about puberty. Share the goal with your mom. Then come up with a plan on how to reach that goal.**



One thing I would like to explore or be is:

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To do this I could:

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One step I can take now is:

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Listen to what your daughter wants to develop. Help her with imagining herself in these new ways. Ask her what she wants to be known for – characteristics, qualities and / or skills. Try not to judge what she wants but enjoy her desires. It might be fun to create a photo journal or scrapbook to document this period of change. Start collecting pictures that describe your changing selves. Refer to it over time to see how much each of you has developed. The scrapbook can also be a space to mark your daughter's special moments, achievements, and dreams. Be creative – the scrapbook can be as unique as the two of you are.

**MOM'S  
SPOT**

# Dove Self-Esteem Project Global Advisory Board

The DSEP Advisory Board is a collection of people who feel passionate about strengthening body confidence. They guide the development of DSEP resources to benefit millions of young people. To demonstrate their passion for this important work, members have kindly given some of their time for free. We are grateful that so many wonderful people are happy to work in this way.

## DSEP Global Advisory Board members include:



**Dr. Ann Kearney-Cooke**  
USA, psychologist, workshop leader, author of *Change Your Mind, Change Your Body*



**Dr. Lucrecia Ramirez**  
Colombia, psychiatrist and challenging fashion-show organiser



**Dr. Carla Rice**  
Canada, Professor of women's studies and consulting clinician at the Women's College Health Sciences Centre in Toronto



**Mirjam Bekker-Stoop**  
Netherlands, cause-related photographic exhibition producer



**Catherine Barry**  
Ireland, short story writer and novelist including *'Skin Deep'*, a novel on breast enlargement



**Dr. Nancy Etcoff**  
USA, psychologist, Harvard faculty member, author of *Survival of the Prettiest – The Science of Beauty*



**Chiho Kusaka**  
Japan, TV presenter and self-esteem trainer and career counselor, particularly for young girls



**Rankin**  
UK, 'A'-list fashion photographer, joint creator of *Dazed & Confused* magazine, film director and broadcaster



**Jessica Weiner**  
USA, international self-esteem trainer and author. Appears regularly on TV and is a contributing editor for *Seventeen Magazine*



**Sarah Lang**  
USA, World Championship medalist speed skater, school workshop leader



**Kaisu Fagan**  
UK, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, *Girlguiding UK Magazine*



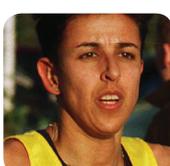
**Dr. Susie Orbach**  
UK, psychoanalyst, author of *'Fat is a Feminist Issue'* and *'Bodies'*, convenor of [www.any-body.org](http://www.any-body.org)



**Karishma Chugani**  
Morocco, fashion designer working on a range of garments that embrace diversity in size and beauty



**Wiam Al-Ashgar**  
Saudi Arabia, Clinical Dietician, works in education on healthy diets

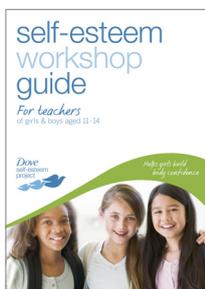


**Zara Hyde-Peters**  
UK, former international athlete and UK Sport Board Member, CEO of British Triathlon

# Meet the family – further resources

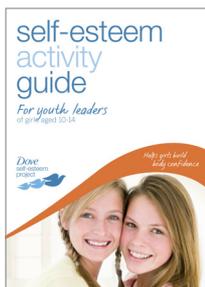
The Dove Self-Esteem Project aims to help the next generation develop body confidence, so that they can achieve their full potential in life.

As part of this, we have created this workshop guide within a range of body confidence and self-esteem educational tools. You can find other resources at [www.dove.com](http://www.dove.com)



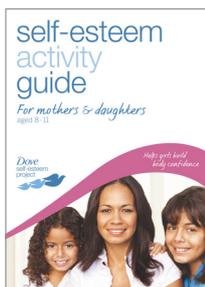
## **Dove Self-Esteem Workshop Guide** for Teachers of girls and boys 11-14

A comprehensive set of materials to lead a 90 minute in-class session on body confidence and self-esteem, plus follow-up exercises. This resource is to be used in conjunction with poster and a Powerpoint presentation.



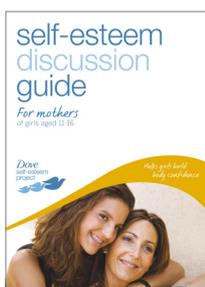
## **Dove Self-Esteem Activity Guide** for Youth Leaders of girls aged 10-14

A printed toolkit with sufficient material for up to 18 fun sessions on body confidence and self-esteem. Suitable for Girl Guides / Girl Scouts, after School Clubs and other youth groups for girls.



## **Dove Self-Esteem Activity Guide** for Mothers & Daughters aged 8-11

An activity booklet for use in the home to help mothers and daughters in their conversations about body confidence and self-esteem



## **Dove Self-Esteem Discussion Guide** for Mothers of girls aged 11-16

A useful question and answer booklet to support mothers in tackling sensitive body confidence issues with their older daughters

# Other resources and inspiration

There are many sources of useful stimulus and support materials to help you in your body confidence interventions. Here is a selection that you might choose to use.

## Films

'[Freaky Friday](#)' (2003) (USA:PG) An overworked mother and her daughter find it hard to get along. When they switch bodies, each is forced to adapt to the other's life for one freaky Friday. Stars: Jamie Lee Curtis and Lindsay Lohan

'[The Sisterhood Of The Travelling Pants](#)' (2005) (USA:PG) Follows four teenage girls during a summer in which each goes through a crucial life experience that affects their self-esteem. They succeed due to their loyal support of each other, symbolised by a pair of jeans (the „Travelling Pants“) that they take turns to wear. Stars: America Ferrera.

'[Shrek](#)' (2001) (USA:PG) A great family film. A green ogre sets out to rehome the fairytale creatures that have been placed in his swamp by the scheming Lord Farquaad. On his journey, he has to rescue Princess Fiona who has surprising issues with her appearance... Features the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy and Cameron Diaz.

## Documentaries

'[America The Beautiful](#)' (2007) (Edited version USA:PG-13) Tackles America's obsession with beauty. It mainly chronicles a 12 year old model becoming a grown-up in the fashion industry, but also touches on plastic surgery, celebrity worship, airbrushed advertising and human insecurities.

'[Beauty Mark](#)' (2008) Presents an alarming, infuriating and at times humorous look at the forces that shape our perceptions of beauty, as seen through the eyes of psychotherapist and former world-class triathlete Diane Israel. She tells her own story while interviewing other champion athletes, body builders, fashion models and inner-city teens about their experiences relating to self-image.

## Books

**'Survival of the Prettiest, the Science of Beauty'** (1999) by Dr. Nancy Etcoff, Director, Program in Aesthetics and Well Being, Department of Psychiatry, Harvard.  
Why do gentlemen prefer blondes? Why do women paint their lips red? Why do men strive for V-shaped torsos? What is beauty?

**'Bodies'** (2009) by Dr Susie Orbach, UK  
Some 30 years after the publication of 'Fat Is A Feminist Issue', this book argues that the way we view our bodies has become the mirror of how we view ourselves, raising fundamental questions about how we arrived here.

**'Skin Deep'** (2004) by Catherine Barry, Ireland  
A novel about a young woman who believes that, if only she was beautiful and sexy, she would find the happiness she desperately craves. Can you really achieve happiness by going under the knife?

**'Life Doesn't Begin 5 Pounds From Now'** (2006) by Jessica Weiner, USA  
A step by step guide to decoding the Language of Fat and loving your body today. By changing your thoughts, language and actions, you can appreciate your body more.

**'Real Gorgeous'** (1996) by Kaz Cooke, Australia  
Full of cartoons and no-nonsense information about cosmetics, health and self-esteem for women aged 11 to 111. It includes "the truth about press ups, push-ups bras and the great cellulite scam."

## Organisations that actively promote body confidence

### Girl Scouts / Girl Guides

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is a worldwide Movement providing non-formal education where girls and young women develop leadership, self-esteem and other life skills through self-development, challenge and adventure. The World Association brings together organisations in 145 countries across the globe and you can find yours at [www.wagggsworld.org/en/world](http://www.wagggsworld.org/en/world)

### Eating Disorders charities

Low body confidence can increase the risk of developing eating disorders. Eating disorders charities believe that prevention is better than cure and so campaign to improve people's feelings about body image. beat, the leading UK charity for people with eating disorders and their families, have an excellent directory of support websites from around the world at [www.b-eat.co.uk/Links/Overseasorganisations](http://www.b-eat.co.uk/Links/Overseasorganisations)

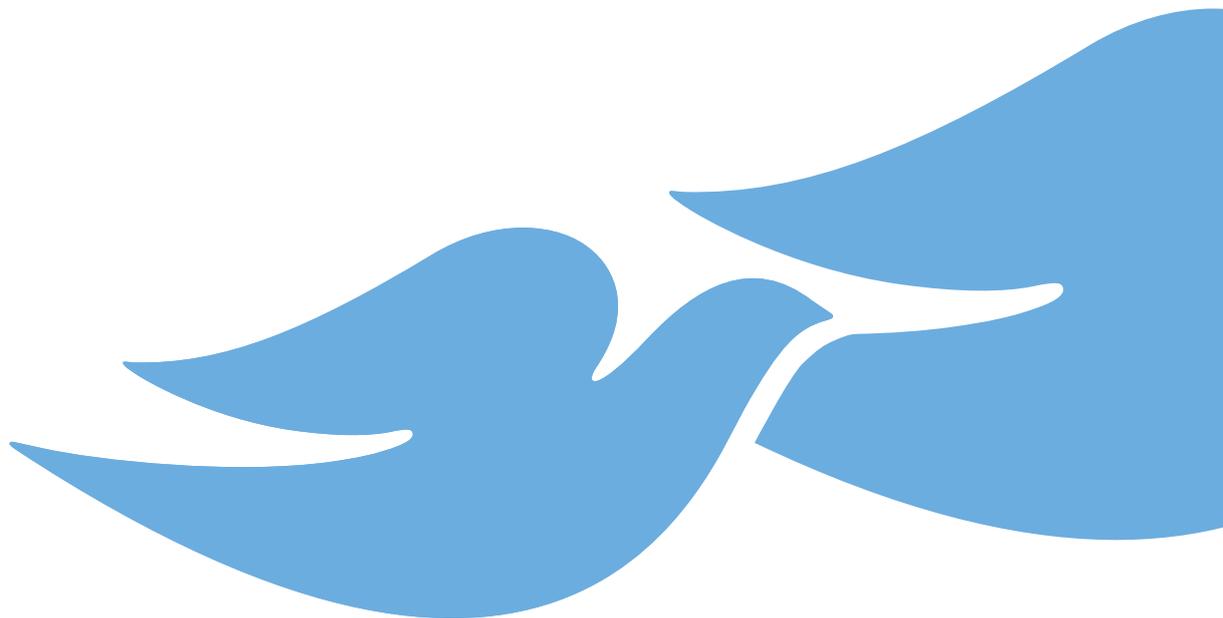
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Image of Nancy Etcoff courtesy of Al Carlay.

This Dove Self-Esteem Activity Guide has been adapted, with permission, from an original resource developed by Randell Bynum (a former youth social worker), Tonya Leslie (a former educator and author of numerous books for children) and the Girl Scouts of the USA. Further input has come from Martin Staniforth, Lisa Clark and the Dove Self-Esteem Project Advisory Board (see page 28).



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