Life skills, body image and self-esteem
The influence on sexuality and well-being
Establish class values

- We will be talking about sexuality, gender, pleasure, abuse and safety in these sessions. What will make this class a safe space for everyone to share, express their views and discuss freely?
- How do we want others to behave?
- How will we behave?
Life Skills

The World Health Organization states that, “Life skills education is designed to facilitate the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights.”

In this program, we focus on life skills as a way of enhancing one’s sense of intrapersonal and interpersonal well being, as a way of enhancing one’s self-esteem, conviction in oneself and asserting one’s needs and rights.
Different life skills

WHO recommended 10 life skills

- Self-Awareness
- Empathy
- Coping with Emotions
- Coping with Stress
- Communication
- Interpersonal Skills
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking

Classified into 5 areas:
- Self-awareness and empathy
- Coping with emotions and coping with stress
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Critical thinking and creative thinking
What is self-esteem?

A person’s feelings about one’s own worth, how much one values oneself, likes oneself and accepts oneself.

Self-Esteem impacts

- confidence levels
- sense of agency and ability to assert one’s rights
- belief that one is important and deserves to be respected/treated well
- conviction to pursue one’s ambitions and not give up
- belief in own ability to move things and get things done
What impacts self-esteem?

- Self-esteem varies as we grow up, with a dip in our self-evaluations especially during adolescence when our bodies are changing, our ideas of ourselves are being influenced by what friends and family say about us and how they treat us.
- Changes corresponding to how we ‘match-up’ to what we see and compare ourselves to.
- Cultural norms and expectations also impact how we begin to think of ourselves (beautiful? competent? successful? hard working? lazy?)
- Parenting styles and parental judgements
- Self-awareness - awareness of our strengths, qualities, values
- RTE 2009 prohibits physical punishment and mental harassment to a child due to its effect on children and adolescents.
Attaining a healthier self-esteem

What can we do to have a healthier self-esteem?
Body Image

- Our body image reflects how we feel about our body, the attitudes, feelings and perceptions about one’s physical appearance which are shaped by social and cultural norms of a society who determine what is an ‘ideal’ body shape.
- Society’s standard of an attractive body may not always correspond with our body itself - this causes significant distress when comparisons/observation are made
- Reflection of self-esteem - How you see or picture yourself
What influences body image issues

- The social environment and what is considered desirable or not
- Moral policing of people for their bodies leads to an increase in negative perception of their bodies (e.g. don’t show too much skin, don’t accentuate body parts)
- Parental inputs and role modeling of what is considered appropriate, ‘decent’ or not, what can help ensure socio-economic benefits when their children appear for jobs or marriage, puts pressure to conform to the perceived ideal body
Why is it important to address body-image concerns?
Body-image and mental health

Body image issues have been correlated with self-esteem, depression, and disordered eating behaviours

- APA reported that sexualising of the female body affects the mental and physical health of women and has cognitive and emotional consequences leading to shame, anxiety and self-disgust
- 40% of the LGBTQIA+ community experienced shame due to body image dissatisfaction, as opposed to 18% of cis-het participants
Queer identities and body image dissatisfaction

- Mannerisms, dressing styles, or body expression such as wearing colourful clothes for men or wearing short hair for women that are gender non-conforming often leads to bullying.
- Drag culture has become a powerful source of disrupting existing norms of gender expression.
- Creates a space to alleviate body image concerns, assert self-love and expression.
- Drag shows provide a community that fosters body positivity and a platform to perform their sexuality.
Visual messages from media/culture

These are modern images.

But body image is not a modern issue

Through history, there are instances of body being altered to conform to the accepted norms of a particular society to the extent of mutilation even.

The body is not the goal but a means to achieving the goal.

While we may appreciate someone’s body, whom do we respect?
Beauty is linked to symmetry. Symmetry is one of the marker of genetic health - we feel attracted towards it and call it beautiful.

Extreme asymmetry is often associated with genetic disorders. Most people are not extremely beautiful - but are reasonably healthy.

Eyes too far apart, or set too close together/ other asymmetries, reduce attractiveness
What steps can we take to ensure a healthier way forward?
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CREATING SAFE SPACES

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