

UNIT 2: THE IMAGE OF PERFECTION

CROSS CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES UNIT 2 TEACHERS' NOTES

THE IMAGE OF PERFECTION

OBJECTIVES

To explore attitudes towards facial perfection and imperfection.
To explore how it might feel to have a genetic condition which affects appearance.

SUGGESTED AGE RANGE

14-16 year olds

CURRICULUM LINKS

For use in PSE, English, Drama, Social/Contemporary Studies etc

SUMMARY OF CONTENT

A newspaper article reveals that sufferers from body dysmorphic disorder feel worthless because they don't look 'perfect'. Students complete an Activity Sheet about what they think constitutes a 'perfect' male or female face and discuss their ideas in pairs. Four mini role plays aim to help students explore feelings around facial imperfection.

TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

It is important to be aware of the fact that some students in the class may themselves have a genetic condition, or be a carrier, or have a relative who is affected. There may also be students in the class with facial birthmarks, scarring, acne, eczema etc. who are self-conscious about their appearance. Sensitivity is required to avoid putting such students under stress.

MATERIALS NEEDED

If you have time, cut out pictures of faces from glossy magazines to stimulate debate about the 'perfect' face.
Photocopies of the following:

Activity Sheet 1 - one copy per student. Activity Sheet 2: The 'perfect' face (one copy per student)

Role plays 1- 4 (one copy per three students of any role play you wish to use, PLUS the Genetic Condition Card which goes with each role play.

Role play 1 plus Genetic Condition Card: Cleft Lip and Palate
Role play 2 plus Genetic Condition Card: Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB)
Role play 3 plus Genetic Condition Card; Psoriatic Arthropathy (PA)
Role play 4 plus Genetic Condition Card: Neurofibromatosis (Nf)

WHAT YOU DO

Explain that today's lesson is about how we look, and about how appearance can affect the way people react to us. Is there such a thing as 'the perfect face'? Who, or what, defines our idea of physical perfection? If nobody is 'perfect', why do we stare at people who have birthmarks or scars on their faces?

If you have cut out photographs of faces from glossy magazines, hold them up or pass them round. Do students think that the people in the photos have 'perfect' looks? What effect do these images have on the people who read these magazines?

Hand out Activity Sheet 1 and go through the article with students. If you wish, you can use the following discussion prompts:

- What is body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)?
- What are some of the signs and symptoms of BDD?

CROSS CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES UNIT 2 TEACHERS' NOTES

- A. What parts of the body do people with BDD worry about most?
- B. What theory does Dr. Veale put forward for why some people develop BDD?
- C. What differences are there between a person suffering from BDD and a person who spends hours getting ready to go out with friends?
- D. Is it 'normal' for people to worry about their appearance?

In the article, the psychiatrist says, 'If they don't look perfect, they feel worthless...' But what does looking perfect actually mean? Hand out Activity Sheet 2 and give each student a few minutes to read it through and complete the drawing. Then ask students to get into threes and work through the discussion questions on the activity sheet together.

Ask students if they know what is responsible for determining our facial features and other physical characteristics (the answer is genes which we inherit from our biological parents). Explain that there are more than 4500 different disorders and conditions caused by faulty genes, and that some of these disorders/conditions can affect how a person looks

- Ask students to think about why having a condition which affects one's skin, face or hands can be difficult to cope with (ask them to think about how they feel, for example, when they have spots which they can't disguise...)
- Would it make things better or worse to know that their condition was inherited and could be treated but not cured? Explain that you are going to ask students to do a mini role play in which they explore how it might feel to have a genetic condition which affects appearance. Set up the role play as follows:

Ask students to stay in their threes. Give one student in each group a role play sheet with Role A on it and the Genetic Condition Card which goes with that role play. Give another student in each group Role B. Give the third student in each group Role C. (N.B. Role A is the most demanding of the three; it requires effective reading skills and the ability to absorb information quickly.)

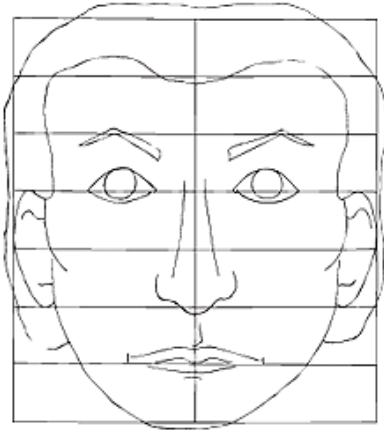
Allow a few minutes for students with Roles A and C to read through the Genetic Condition Card they have been given and for all students to prepare for the role play, then ask students to do the role play in their groups.

Make sure that all students have come out of role by asking them in their groups to say their own name and one thing about themselves (i.e. what they had for breakfast that morning). Then process the role play as a whole class taking care to involve the observers in each group. You may like to use some of the following discussion prompts:

- How did it feel to be asking someone about something as personal as a rash or scars on their face or hands?
- Did anyone respond by telling the other person to 'mind their own business'?
- What did you learn about the different genetic conditions?
- According to Kate, Mark, Stephanie and Sue, how does having a facial deformity, or looking 'different', affect how other people behave towards them?
- How would you want people to treat you if you had an inherited skin condition or a facial deformity?
- Genetic conditions can be passed on to the next generation. What sort of issues might this raise for Kate, Mark, Stephanie and Sue?

ACTIVITY SHEET AND CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 2

THE IMAGE OF PERFECTION



Mediaeval artists believed that the 'perfect' face could be divided into seven — one-seventh for the hair, two-sevenths for the forehead, two-sevenths for the nose, one-seventh for the space between nose and mouth, and the final seventh for the space between mouth and chin.

The ancient Greeks believed that the 'perfect' face could be divided into thirds, with the eyebrows one-third of the way down from the hairline and the mouth one-third of the way up from the point of the chin.

My 'perfect' male/female face

My 'perfect' male/female face

EYES

HAIR

EARS

NOSE

MOUTH

SKIN

CHIN

DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT TO DESCRIBE A MALE 'OR A FEMALE FACE. THEN DRAW YOUR IDEA OF THE 'PERFECT' FACE ABOVE AND/OR WRITE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH FEATURE UNDER THE DIFFERENT HEADINGS:

ACTIVITY SHEET AND CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 2

'UGLY ILLNESS' CAN LEAD TO SUICIDE

by

OUR MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT



What do many bald men, people with large noses and Michael Jackson have in common? One answer could be Body Dysmorphic Disorder or BDD

In London yesterday, Dr. David Veale of the Royal Free Hospital talked about the sad lives of people affected by BDD. He said that sufferers spend most of each day worrying about their appearance. 'People with BDD tend to worry about having too little or too much hair, their nose, the skin of the face, their eyes or their mouth,' he said. 'They sit in front of mirrors trying to hide a small defect which most people wouldn't even notice. If they don't look perfect, they feel worthless, were often depressed and 25% have tried to commit suicide. 'They are so worried about how they look that they become social cripples. They don't go out or have any friends.'

ACTIVITY SHEET AND CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 2: ACTIVITY SHEET 2

THE PERFECT FACE

When you have finished, join up with two other students. Then work through the questions below together:

- Do you know anyone who looks like the people you have drawn/described?
- Do you look like them? Would you like to look like them?
- Do you all have the same idea about what makes a 'perfect' face?
- If it were possible to change some of your physical characteristics (e.g. the shape of your nose, the colour of your eyes, your height or weight etc.) what — if anything - would you change, and why?

ROLEPLAY 1 KATE

Kate is 17 years old and lives in Yorkshire. She was born with a Cleft Lip and Palate.

How do I feel about my Cleft Lip and Palate? Well I don't feel angry. I just feel that I am slightly different to everyone else but that doesn't stop me doing what I want to do. I will never be the same as everyone else so I just get on with my life. At least I can do things and am not disabled in any way.

The worst bit is all the hospital visits. I have to go during school time so I miss a lot of lessons and spend a long time copying up missed work. Also when I walk down the street or go to a public place, people stare at me and make me very self-conscious I think my attitude has changed as I have grown up. I am more aware of people looking at me than when I was younger and I am more cautious when I go to clubs or anywhere new in case anyone says something. I wear normal make-up but I don't try to cover up because there's no point. It's impossible to cover the scars completely and I just seem to make it worse.

ROLES

A ROLE PLAY 1

You are Kate. The information above tells you something about yourself. You can find out more about what it means to have a Cleft Lip and Palate from the Genetic Condition Card you have been given.

You have spent all week helping a new student in your class to find his/her way around the school. You were asked to do this by your form tutor and you've quite enjoyed it in spite of being a bit self-conscious about your face. The new student is very friendly and has asked if you'd like to sit with him/her during lunch today. You are in the school canteen right now.

B ROLEPLAY 1

You have just moved to a new school. The form tutor has asked various people, including a girl called Kate, to help you find your way around during the first week. Kate has been really helpful. You can't help noticing that she has several scars on her face between her mouth and nose. At the end of the week, you find yourself next to her in the dinner queue. You're in the school canteen right now.

You decide to ask Kate about her scars. Role play the conversation you have with her.

C ROLEPLAY 1

You are an observer. Read through the Genetic Condition Card on Cleft Lip and Palate with the person who is role playing Kate (Role A). Then listen carefully to the conversation between Kate and another student in the school canteen. Be prepared to discuss what happened in the role play with the rest of the class afterwards.

ACTIVITY SHEET AND CASE STUDIES FOR STUDENTS UNIT 2: ACTIVITY SHEET 2

ROLEPLAY 2 MARK

Mark (not his real name) is 21 and lives in Hampshire.

He has a mild form of Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB).

At the moment my knees and feet need to be covered all the time because the skin is very weak on them. I have to change the dressings every day which can take up to an hour. My elbows occasionally need to be covered but not all the time. I suppose the most noticeable thing about my EB is the scarring on my hands. My fingers have started to close up so I've got to have an operation soon to open them up again.

I think I've probably mastered the art of not feeling self-conscious in public now. It was difficult when I was younger people used to stare more. But now I've got plenty of friends and I don't see any point in feeling self-conscious. For instance if I'm in a pub playing pool and people notice my hands they'll probably stare a bit. But then that doesn't bother me because if a person with a big birthmark on his face walked into the pub I'd probably stare or have a look too.

If I apply for a job, I won't put it on the form generally. I'll wait till I get to the interview and then once I believe I've sold myself, I'll mention I have a weak skin condition. I keep it as vague as possible because as far as employers are concerned, apart from the scarring on my hands, there's nothing else they need to know.

ROLES

A ROLEPLAY 2

You are Mark. The information above tells you something about yourself.

You can find out more about Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB) from the Genetic Condition Card you have been given. Right now, you are in the pub playing pool. You know most of the people there and are having a good time. There is one person — a friend of a friend — who you don't know and who seems to be staring at your hands rather a lot. You offer to buy him/her a drink.

B ROLEPLAY 2

You are with some friends playing pool in the pub. A young man called Mark is there as well. You notice that his hands are badly scarred and find it difficult not to stare at them. He is very friendly and offers to buy you a drink. You decide to ask him about the scarring on his hands. Role play the conversation you have with him.

C ROLEPLAY 2

You are an observer. Read through the Genetic Condition Card on Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB) with the person who is role playing Mark (Role A). Then listen carefully to the conversation between Mark and another person in the pub. Be prepared to discuss what happened in the role play with the rest of the class afterwards.