



Girl Guides
of Canada
Guides
du Canada

Be You Backgrounder



nedic

National Eating Disorder Information Centre

GGC gratefully acknowledges the National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC) in the development of Be You and its predecessor, the Love Yourself Challenge.



Introduction

Everywhere they go, girls are bombarded with images and expectations of who they should be and what they should look like. The Girl Guides of Canada–Guides du Canada Be You Challenge has been designed to help girls develop their self-esteem and self-acceptance in order to embrace their uniqueness and their personal brand of beauty.

Body image and self-esteem are closely tied together and in this digital age, it is difficult for girls to discern the difference between images that show real women and those that are photo shopped to appear perfect. This focus on appearance can often push girls to exhibit unhealthy behaviours in order to achieve unobtainable ideals. Celebrities who are caught on film without their make-up are often judged by the media and society, even though they are more likely to better reflect what the rest of us see when we look in the mirror. Social media, in particular, has placed an unprecedented focus on “likes” especially through the rise of selfie culture and the pursuit of taking the perfect selfie to earn the title of #flawless.

The Be You Challenge seeks to help girls become more aware of the way they perceive themselves and others with a focus on three main themes:

- Media and Society: “Be You–nique” in the face of pressures to conform
- Self-Acceptance: “Be You–rself” by making choices that help them to be true to themselves
- Healthy Lifestyle: “Be true to You” by taking care of yourself inside and out

This Challenge explores the importance of promoting self-care as a step towards self-acceptance. One way that girls can change their perspective is to help them shift their focus away from their appearance. When girls become preoccupied with their appearance, their self-esteem becomes linked to how they look as opposed to what they can do. Shifting this focus from appearance to ability is key to building a strong self-concept for girls

and young women. Body size is not an indicator of what we are capable of doing and, in fact, body dissatisfaction causes women and girls to avoid certain activities and hide their bodies. By practicing body acceptance, girls are encouraged to accept not only their bodies but how others’ bodies look, too. When girls see and hear those they look up to in their lives model body acceptance they are able to move beyond this focus they become kinder and more inclusive of those around them.

The Be You Challenge aims to help girls to see that self-acceptance and self-worth are not tied to their appearance but to their actions and the good they give to the world. The activities for each branch have been designed to:

- Address pressure from peers, the media, society and family about appearance
- Analyze messages from the media and society
- Celebrate and spread messages about inner beauty and self-acceptance
- Acknowledge the choices girls have in their lives and help them to make positive choices
- Think more positively
- Identify the need for a holistic approach to lifestyle with a focus on the balance between rest, activity, and nutrition

As a society, perceptions of beauty continue to change and body positivity and self-acceptance continues to grow as the conversation gains momentum in the digital sphere.

When you finish the Be You Challenge, please share your feedback in a short survey!

You can complete it on the National website or use this link goo.gl/v9XED2.



SPECIAL NOTE TO GUIDERS: You may face your own challenges with the content in Be You. Women, are bombarded by society with messages about appearance, perfection, and conformity. As a result, this can create personal experiences or biases. By keeping this in mind, the girls will benefit and learn from your wisdom and experiences with these messages. Be sure you are modelling self-talk, and being body-positive yourself for their benefit.

Many women and girls are unhappy with their bodies and in the digital age it is too easy to create comparisons that are detrimental to one's self-esteem and feeling of self-worth. It is incredibly important to be aware of this and if the girls start a conversation with comparison, or using deprecating language, redirect them to focus on celebrating their differences and looking for diversity.

Core Program Connections

Completion of this challenge can help girls' complete programming in the following areas:

Sparks

- Keeper: Being Me (Who Am I?)
- Keeper: Going Outside (Outside Active Games, Nature Walk)
- Keeper: Being Healthy

Brownies

- Key to Me - #1, #4
- Key to My Community - #6
- Key to Active Living - #1, #2, #3, #6
- Key to Me Special Thoughts Interest Badge
- Key to I Can Special Interest Badge
- Key to Active Living Food Power Interest Badge and Special Interest Badge

Guides

- Discovering You Program Area—Discover What's Important to You Module #1; Stay Fit and Healthy Module #2 and #5 and #6
- Beyond You Program Area—Explore the Outdoors and Nature Module #6; Try New Things #3 and #6; Learn about Environment Module #4
- Being Healthy—Feeling Good Interest Badge, Fitness Fun Interest Badge, Healthy Eating Interest Badge
- Fun in the Outdoors—Outdoor Adventures Interest Badge, Outdoors in the City Interest Badge
- Personal Growth—High on Life Interest Badge
- Science & Technology—Body Works Interest Badge,
- Design Your Own Interest Badge

Pathfinders

- Let's Take it Outside Program Area-Outdoor Know-How; Up Close and Personal with Nature
- Girl Stuff Program Area – Focus on Friendships, Media and Image; Relationships, Values, and Choices;
- Living Well Program Area – We Are What We Eat; Active Living; Let Go and Chill Out; Be Glad You're You

Rangers

- Community Connections - #26
- Environment, Outdoors and Camping - #7, #24
- Healthy Living - #1, 8, 20, 21, 23, 33
- Leadership and Management - #26



Using this Challenge

Activities have been created specifically for each branch taking into consideration the age, maturity and developmental level of the girls. As with all Guiding programs, it is important to remember that the activities, scenarios, discussion questions and instructions provided are only suggestions. When you are facilitating activities, make adaptations and changes to the activities as appropriate for your unit. You can change, modify, or add to each activity as you see fit to provide the girls with a meaningful and engaging experience.

For all branches, girls should be included in the planning of the activities they will complete within the Challenge. Girls could also be responsible for finding additional resources or contacting guest speakers, depending on the activities. They may facilitate an actual activity with others in the unit; however, due to the nature of the material covered, you should facilitate all openings, closings and discussion during the activity. Guiders provide all girls, including Pathfinders and Rangers, with a neutral sounding board that comes from their experience and wisdom on this subject.

Social Media Safety

Because girls have to be at least 13 years old to use Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the social media activities in this Challenge are intended to be used with girls who are 13 and older. Please ensure that parents and guardians are aware that their girls may be posting their experiences to social media during or after this meeting. A few things to keep in mind before sharing any images, videos, or comments:

- Make sure you have permission from everyone in the photo/video you want to use before you post it. This is included in the IR.1 forms signed for the girls if it is the Guider who is posting. Some girls may not want to be included so please respect their choice to not have something posted online.
- Things that are posted online live forever, so make sure that all posts are in keeping with the GGC Code of Conduct.

- Remind the girls to turn off the location services on their devices before posting images from meetings. Also do not share personal information of any of the girls including full name, address, email or phone numbers.
- When posting photos/videos, identify the whole unit rather than individuals (e.g. Girl Guides of Canada, 17th Vancouver Pathfinder Unit). If you do need to identify individuals, use only their first names.

Social media is a great way for girls to share their body positive messages. However, because social media skirts between the personal and public, give girls the choice whether they post something to their accounts. Girls will have different levels of comfort about what they share with their followers and they may not be ready to put themselves “out there” with the artwork or imagery they have created. If they express any comments about being uncomfortable about posting body positive commentary or raw images, use that as an opportunity to let them talk about some of the pressures they experience while cultivating their online presence. Remind the girls that the meeting is a safe space to share their thoughts and experiences, thus their privacy will always be respected.

If social media is being used in the meeting, remember to use the GGC Instagram or Twitter tags so the Guiding community can see what you are doing!

Don't forget to share what you are doing in the Be You Challenge by telling us about your participation in the program and sharing photos with us on social media using **#BeYou** and the following tags:



Girl Guides of Canada @girlguidesofcan @girlguidesofcanada



Key Terms

The following terms may be addressed in the Challenge or come up in questions from girls. This is a short list of terminology that may help you.

BODY IMAGE – one’s beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes towards one’s body and body parts. It encompasses feelings about one’s physical attributes, such as weight, shape, height, facial features, colour, stage of physical maturation, as well as abilities. One’s body image can influence their self-esteem.

BODY SHAMING – the practice of making critical, potentially humiliating comments about a person’s body size or weight. Making inappropriate negative statements and having negative attitudes toward another person’s weight or size. It can also be considered discrimination.

CYBERBULLYING – Using electronic means to harass, ridicule, degrade, or intimidate others. It can take many forms, including sending abusive email or text messages; spreading nasty rumours; taking an embarrassing photograph of someone they may or may not know and sending it to others; impersonating someone in a way that damages their reputation; or deliberately excluding someone from an online activity.

HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE (HAES) – an approach to health that considers physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, and focuses on health-enhancing attitudes and behaviours rather than weight. Individuals are encouraged to be kind to themselves, eat well, and engage in enjoyable physical activity, regardless of their body size. HAES recognizes that healthy bodies exist in many shapes and sizes.

LIFESTYLE – refers to a particular way of living, and encompasses behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs.

SELF-ESTEEM – the opinion one has of oneself and the degree to which one likes or approves of oneself in general. Self-esteem affects how individuals take care of themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Facts to Consider

- You can’t tell if someone has an eating disorder simply by looking at them.
- Eating disorders affect people of all ages, sizes, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities.
- Eating disorders are now the third most common chronic illness in adolescent girls¹.
- Children as young as age 6 are aware of dieting and by age 7, one in five children will have engaged in some kind of dieting behaviour. (Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003)
- In 2016, there were approximately 166,000 YouTube videos posted of girls and teens asking “Am I Pretty or Ugly?” The comment sections of these videos are filled with replies from the YouTube community.
- According to research conducted by the Canadian Women’s Foundation²:
 - In sixth grade, 36% of girls say that they are self-confident. By tenth grade, this drops to 14%.
 - In one study, they found that 50% of girls wished that they were someone else.
 - 90% of girls think that the fashion industry and media put pressure on them to be thin.
 - Only 36% of girls look up to their parents as their primary role models and very few reported looking up to professionals such as scientists or writers.
 - Research has found that 60% of women who say they are “very confident” had a mentor in their youth.

¹ Whitaker, A. *An Epidemiological Study of Anorectic and Bulimic Symptoms in Adolescent Girls: Implications for Pediatricians.* *Pediatric Annals*: November 1992 - Volume 21 · Issue 11: 752-759

² The Canadian Women’s Foundation is an organization focusing on building gender equality to address social and economic problems facing girls and women. Additional research can be found at <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-girls>



SPECIAL NOTE TO GUIDERS: EATING DISORDERS

Disordered Eating – refers to a range of problematic eating behaviours, including dieting, fasting in order to lose weight, compulsive eating, self-induced vomiting, and misusing substances such as diet pills, laxatives, or steroids.

BINGE EATING – characterized by the consumption of an unusually large amount of food during a relatively short period of time while feeling out of control over what and how much is eaten and when to stop.

PURGING – refers to recurring behaviours that follow bingeing, which are meant to “purge” the body of food and prevent weight gain. These behaviours can include excessive exercise, fasting or severe restriction, self-induced vomiting, and misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or enemas.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA – involves an intense fear of gaining weight or being seen as fat. This fear drives the affected individual to engage in dangerous behaviours as a means of losing weight, or maintaining a weight that is too low for the individual to be healthy. Typical behaviours include severely restricting food intake, exercising compulsively, and purging by self-induced vomiting or misusing laxatives.

BULIMIA NERVOSA – involves binge eating, which is characterized by the consumption of an unusually large amount of food within a relatively short period of time, followed by purging to rid the body of food and prevent weight gain. Common purging behaviours include excessive exercise, fasting or severe food restriction, self-induced vomiting, and laxative abuse.

BINGE EATING DISORDER – is characterized by compulsive over-eating episodes that are not followed by compensatory or purging behaviours. It is important to note that binge eating is not the same as overeating, which can be described as consuming more food than one’s body needs at a given time and is an occasional behaviour for most people.

ORTHOREXIA – an obsession with eating “correctly.” The affected individual feels compelled to restrict their intake to foods they deem healthy, natural, or pure. They experience emotional satisfaction when they achieve this eating pattern and intense distress when unable to do so.

AVOIDANT/RESTRICTIVE FOOD INTAKE DISORDER (ARFID) – is a syndrome typically only seen in young children and involves avoiding foods of certain colours or textures due to a fear of eating these foods. The affected individual’s diet becomes so limited that their body’s energy and nutrient needs are consistently not being met, leading to serious health issues.

For information on what to do if a girl discloses she has an eating disorder or if you have concerns about the well-being of a girl in your unit, see section B in the appendix (page 7)



Health at Every Size

The Health at Every Size (HAES) movement has been gaining momentum. HAES is about respect by being kind to yourself and practicing self-compassion. Research has found that weight is not the foundation for health or healthiness, but it is actually the activity level of the person that is. Lack of activity is the major cause of many health issues tied to weight. Getting girls moving and discussing ways for them to have more activity in their lives is the first step to health. The HAES movement promotes respect for all individuals, regardless of their weight. It is important that girls understand that they cannot determine someone's overall health and wellness just by looking at their outward appearance or weight.

If you would like more information on the HAES movement, check out:

- <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/what-health-every-size>
- <http://www.lindabacon.org/haesbook/>

Mindfulness and Connecting with the Natural World

At every branch, the girls are given opportunities to experience mindfulness. The Greater Good Centre at Berkley University describes mindfulness as “maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.”³ You will be giving the girls opportunities to describe what is happening at a given point in time as a response to a prompt or an activity. By introducing the girls to mindfulness through reflection, the girls will be encouraged to participate fully.

Each branch also offers the opportunity for girls to go outside and experience nature and be mindful in the outside world. Some benefits of taking time outside include:

- Long distance focus: Because girls spend much of their days inside a classroom they do not have

³ http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg_live/science_meaningful_life_videos/speaker/jon_kabat-zinn/what_is_mindfulness/

the chance to stretch their distance vision. It is important that their eyes spend time every day looking into a distance of greater than 20 m.

- Green spaces promote relaxation.
- Fresh air can help you feel more alert.
- Students who spend time outside with nature have higher short-term memory.
- Even just looking at nature during the course of the day can improve concentration.
- Just being outside is an easy way to be more active during the day.
- Looking at the complicated designs in nature – such as a pine cone or the shapes of the waves on the shore – increases the mind's ability to process the world.



Look for the **OUTDOOR** icon throughout this Challenge This icon identifies activities that can easily be done outdoors with little or no modifications.

For other ways to engage with nature, you can check out the following links for suggestions and resources from the David Suzuki Foundation to help engage with nature:

- <http://30x30.davidsuzuki.org/>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/david-suzuki/nature-calms-brain-heals-body_b_9674740.html
- <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/blogs/queen-of-green/2016/04/how-to-get-to-know-nature/>

Conclusion

As you and the girls are working through the Be You Challenge, have fun embracing the awesomeness that comes with self-acceptance and positivity! You may not feel like you have any control over society or the media, but in the digital age messages spread like wildfire and changes in perception and attitude are possible and are happening. The Be You Challenges is designed to help the girls take those first steps towards self-acceptance, confidence, and courage. Be who you are, be you-nique, be you-rself, and be true to you in all you do!



Appendices

A. Additional resources for Guiders

- Body-image books for girls: www.amightygirl.com/blog?p-10912
- Research-based information on body image for parents, teachers, and other caring adults: www.teachbodyimage.org

Media

- MediaSmarts www.mediasmarts.ca

Bullying

- PREVNet www.prevnet.ca

Emotional and physical health (body image, self-esteem, eating disorders)

- NEDIC www.nedic.ca
- AboutKidsHealth www.aboutkidshealth.ca
- Adios Barbie www.adiosbarbie.com (may also be suitable for older girls)

Resources to pass on to girls

- Kids Help Phone www.kidshelpphone.ca
- New Moon Girls www.newmoon.ca

Eating disorders are very complicated.

For more information, call the NEDIC helpline at:
416-340-4156 (in the GTA)

Toll-free at 1-866-NEDIC-20 (1-866-633-4220) or
check out our website at www.NEDIC.ca
to learn more

B. What to do if a girl reveals she has disordered eating

If a girl discloses that she has an eating disorder use the guidelines suggested in the “Girl Protection” document: From time to time, you may become aware of mental health issues affecting a girl you are working with, including eating disorders. It is only natural that you may be troubled and confused about how to deal with these situations.

It is important to remember two basic principles: First, the girl is a part of a family and her parents or guardians are to be considered as the most appropriate people to deal with these issues unless there is a risk that she is in need of protection.

Second, it is important to realize that you are not an expert in dealing with these types of complex issues nor is it your role to deal with them. However, you still have a role to play in assisting and protecting girls in these situations.

You can also direct the parents or guardians to contact NEDIC or check the Canada-wide service provider database at www.NEDIC.ca to find appropriate treatment options and support.

We have a moral and ethical responsibility to talk to the parents or guardians of girls who are doing something out of the norm in terms of behaviour. If you are concerned that a girl may have signs of disordered eating or other mental health issues, contact her parents or guardians and discuss the details of your concerns. It is to be assumed that the parents or guardians will take the correct and appropriate action.

If parents or guardians deny there is an issue or fail to ensure the girl receives help, it may be necessary to involve a child protection agency.