Real Attractive

**Introduction:** Poor health habits affect students physically, but they also affect students emotionally and mentally. Poor body image can lead to eating disorders, drug and alcohol use, and other negative behaviors. In this lesson, students will learn how the media contributes to the epidemic of poor body image and eating disorders among young people and how unrealistic this is. They will also learn about the mental, physical, and social benefits of healthy dietary and fitness habits.

**Grade Level and Subject:** Sixth Grade Health and Language Arts

**TEKS:**
- Health: 1a, 1d, 1f,
- Language Arts: 23d, 24a

**Materials:** Used magazines (preferably fashion, teen, or entertainment magazines), construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, computers with internet access

**Resources:** Health textbook, pamphlets on eating disorders

**Websites:**
- [http://www.edreferral.com/body_image.htm](http://www.edreferral.com/body_image.htm)
  - Click on “Body Image: Your Body, Yourself.” This is a great article with lots of information, as well as a quiz students can take to see if they have a positive or negative body image. It is a little long for sixth graders, but teachers may be able to use it to create a handout manageable for this age group.

**Activity:** Divide students into groups of three. Distribute several magazines, a piece of construction paper, a glue stick, and a pair of scissors to each group. Instruct students to choose pictures of attractive people from the magazines; cut them out, and create a collage on the construction paper. When students are finished, have them write on a piece of paper what makes these people attractive. Have each group share their collage and paper with the class. Note how the groups used the same criteria to judge attractiveness. Have each group share the collage and paper with the class. Note how the groups used the same criteria to judge attractiveness. When all groups are done, write the criteria on the board. Use the following questions to facilitate a discussion.

- Do you know, or think you may ever meet, any of the people on your collage?
- Do we all agree that these things listed on the board are necessary for someone to be attractive?
- Since only .03 percent of people meet these criteria, does that mean that the other 99.97 percent of us are not attractive?
• Does it make sense that the .03 percent of people who have access to personal dieticians, trainers, and photographers and spend all of their time focused on themselves should set the standard for the rest of us?

• Are they better people than we are?

• Do you think they are happier because they are so-called “attractive”?

• Do so-called “attractive” people—like movie stars, athletes, singers, and models—have problems like divorce, eating disorders, or drug problems? Give some examples.

• How can this be if they are so happy?

• Is it possible for everyone to look like them? Do we all have the same body?

• Is it just as unhealthy to be underweight as overweight? How so?

At this point in the discussion, have students log on to the second website and read about eating disorders. When students have finished, have them discuss the article.

• What is an eating disorder? What are some causes? Some effects?

• How are eating disorders dangerous?

• What are some of the warning signs?

• How can these disorders be prevented?

• How do our peers influence how we feel about our body image?

• Is it more important to be healthy or so-called “attractive”?

• What are the qualities of the people that you like to be around the most?

Explain to students that the physical and emotional changes of puberty make it difficult for young people to accept themselves based on the false criteria that the media provides. Write “Fake Attractive” above the list on the board. Next to it, begin a list titled “Real Attractive.” Write “healthy” as the first entry, and explain that this refers to both physical and emotional health. Ask students to suggest examples of emotional health (i.e., happy with self, empathetic). Ask if a girl has to be thin or a boy tall to be attractive? Ask for other suggestions such as friendliness, honesty, kindness, etc. Point out that many of the happiest people are not necessarily deemed attractive according to the fake list. Being mentally fit is just as important as being physically fit. Point out that practicing healthy and realistic dietary and fitness habits can help students be one of the “Real Attractive” people that most people like to be with because when you feel good about yourself, other people feel good about you too!

**Evaluation:** Evaluate based on participation in discussion and completion of collage.