

# How Do You See Me?

A Lesson Plan from *Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*  
Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

## NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 12th grade, students will be able to:

**PD.12.INF.1** – Analyze how friends, family, media, society and culture can influence self concept and body image.

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 11  
Lesson 1

**TIME:** 50 Minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Flipchart sheets prepared as indicated
- Flipchart markers, one per student
- Making tape
- Whiteboard and markers
- Pens or pencils in case students do not have their own
- Extra sheets of 8 ½ x 11 paper in case students do not have a notebook with them

## ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

**Note to the Teacher:** This lesson can yield very rich, at times intense, discussions. This is part of the activity, and can be quite powerful. Try to tolerate the intensity of the discussions as they come up, while paying attention to the students who may be quieter during the activity.

- Prepare sheets of flipchart paper with one of the following headings on each:
  - Blonde-haired, blue-eyed cheerleader
  - Teen dressed in tight, revealing clothing
  - Teen dressed in traditional Muslim clothing
  - Teen wearing baggy clothes, earrings, sunglasses
  - Captain of the basketball team
  - Overweight teen with multiple piercings and tattoos
  - Quiet teen with plain clothing who is a really good student
- Before students arrive, post the flipchart sheets around the room with the bottom half of each folded in half taped up over the headers so they are not revealed.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe at least two preconceived notions about particular categories of students. [Knowledge, Affect]
2. Explain at least two connections between negative self-image and sexual decision-making. [Knowledge]
3. Write at least one positive, affirming message for students who may be feeling poorly about who they are. [Skill, Affect]

## A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

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### PROCEDURE:

**STEP 1:** Say: “Try to picture your day today thus far. You got to school by walking, or maybe you took a train or a bus or got a ride from someone. You passed all sorts of people on your way, some of whom you didn’t know, some of whom you did. Try to picture the people you passed this morning. Try to picture the students you saw when you first got to school. How were they dressed? What did they look like? If you can remember, how did you react in your head when you saw them?”

It’s natural to make assumptions about people based on what we see. Sometimes our assumptions will be accurate and sometimes they won’t be. Sometimes assumptions help us learn things about other people, and sometimes they sell those people short.”

Go over to one of the flipchart sheets and say, “Around the room are descriptions of different students that may be at school.” Take down the folded up half of the sheet to reveal one of the categories. Say, “Each student will get a marker. I’m going to ask you to think about the student described on each sheet. What do you think other people say about each of these students? Think of an example or two. Then use a marker and write those down on the flipchart sheet. Just be sure to write small as other students will need to add their own ideas after yours.”

Say, “Some of the things you might imagine people would say about each of these students may not be particularly respectful – for the purposes of this activity, I’m going to ask you to write it anyway, even though we have groundrules about only using respectful language in class.”

Tell students that the only groundrule they do have for this lesson is that they may not speak while they go around the room and write the characteristics. Answer any questions, then ask students to come up and get a marker. As they do that, walk over to the remaining flipchart sheets and unfold them, revealing the headers on each sheet. As students get started, remind them that they need to do the activity in silence.

***Note to the Teacher:** Depending upon what’s generated on the lists, some students may react audibly – they might laugh, or say something, or gasp. Gently remind them when that happens to try to stay quiet as they do the work.*

Give students about 5 minutes in which to move around the room and complete their brainstorming. (9 minutes)

**STEP 2:** After about 5 minutes, ask students to stop where they are, return their markers to you and return to their seats. Going around the room, ask for volunteers to read what is on each sheet. Once you have gone through all the sheets, ask, “What was it like to do that? To create the lists, and then hear them read aloud. What was [add in student responses] about it?”

***Note to the Teacher:** Responses to the activity can range from apathy to sympathy to empathy at actually being represented on the sheets.*

Ask, “What do you notice about what is up on the lists?”

***Note to the Teacher:** Go around the room and reflect on the sheets; a good deal of discussion will happen at this point. Once it has come to a lull, move to the next question.*

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Say, “Please don’t answer this next question aloud, just think about it in your own heads. But look around the room again at the headings. As you re-read them, ask yourself, what gender did you assume each of these people to be? How did you come to that assumption? What about race or ethnicity, what did you assume? Why?” (17 minutes)

**STEP 3:** Ask, “Where do we get these messages from – the idea that a person who is described in this way [indicate a header] is thought to be this way [indicated the brainstormed list]?” Probe for: The media, family, other friends, etc.

Ask, “Do you think there is pressure to fit into any of these categories? Which, and why? Why not?”

Ask, “When you read the lists, what do you see that has anything to do with sexuality?” After a few responses, ask, “How could these have an impact on a person’s sexual decision-making?” (A person who doesn’t feel good about themselves or their appearance may have sex before they want to or with someone they shouldn’t in order to feel better; someone who does not feel important may be so grateful to have someone interested in them they might not practice safer sex, someone who has such an inflated sense of their own importance that they feel entitled to sex, etc.)

Ask, “If someone were here right now who represented someone on one of these sheets, how do you think they would feel reading all these?” (Responses will depend on what is generated on each list, but there tends to be more negative reactions than positive). (9 minutes)

**STEP 4:** Ask students to take out a sheet of paper and something to write with. Say, “I’d like you to imagine these students are in the room right now. What would you want to say to them? You may wish to just keep one or two of them in mind. Don’t put your name on the paper, but write down what you’d say. What would you want to hear if any of these were you? I’ll give you about three minutes to write something down.”

After about 3 minutes, collect what the students wrote, mix them up, and then redistribute them to the class. Go around the room and ask each student to read aloud what is on their sheet, not disclosing whether they coincidentally received their own. (7 minutes)

**STEP 5:** Once everyone has gone, ask students, “What did you hear conveyed in the sentiments shared? What are we hoping to communicate to students who are made to feel a certain way because of how they look or what they do?” [Answers will depend on individual student responses].

Say, “By the time students are your age, they’ve gotten a lot of messages about how they are supposed to look and behave; about what they’re supposed to be interested in, and whether and how to express themselves. Some of these messages are positive and empowering, and will serve you all well throughout your lives. Others, however, are limiting and will make you question yourself.

Try to remember, always, that you have the right to express yourselves in ways that resonate with who you are –no one else has the right to judge you for how you present yourself or whether or how you choose to be in a relationship. No matter your appearance, your grades, your gender, your sexual orientation, your body size, etc. you are ALL worthy of love. Each of you is special for exactly who you are.”

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### **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:**

This lesson is primarily an affective lesson; as a result the lesson as a whole fulfills all of the learning objectives. Teachers will have to assess impact during the class session.

### **HOMEWORK:**

None.

*This lesson is based on an activity attributed to Konnie McCaffree, PhD.*