Empowering girls through improving body confidence and self-esteem

Dove & the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts



free being me

Activity guide for Leaders and Volunteers

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This guide will help you and your group get the most out of the *Free Being Me* experience. It outlines the background to the programme and gives you the tools to help you deliver it successfully. Share this guide with everyone who will help deliver *Free Being Me* so they can facilitate the activities with confidence.

Welcome to *Free Being Me!*

I am thrilled to welcome you to this exciting, major educational programme.

Strong body confidence is an important step towards building self-esteem, empowering the leaders of tomorrow.

But in societies all over the world, children and young people list the way they look among their top concerns. They feel under pressure to change their appearance to fit in with society's narrow image of beauty, which is presented in the media and idealised by their peers.

Global research shows that low body confidence holds young people back from reaching their full potential, with over 60 per cent of girls avoiding activities they love because they feel bad about their looks1. This includes important life activities like trying out for teams and clubs, putting their hand up in the classroom, dancing and swimming, going to parties and even giving an opinion. When girls choose not to participate fully in this way, they are missing out on opportunities to grow and develop their capabilities in other ways, and we as a society miss out.

Free Being Me addresses this issue directly, helping you to support your group to become more body confident, and not let concerns about their appearance hold them back from becoming active, responsible and confident citizens of the world. Body confidence helps children and young people build the foundations they need to become role models and leaders in their communities.

Young people all over the world have told us they are excited to talk about body confidence and eager to learn and discuss more about this topic that directly affects them and their friends. This programme has been developed especially for them by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, alongside the Dove Self-Esteem Project and body confidence experts. The activities have been informed by world-leading research in body confidence, so you can be sure that the benefits of completing this badge programme are real and long-lasting. In fact, programmes using the techniques in *Free Being Me* have shown 60 per cent of participants feel significantly more body confident at least three years later. This guide will give you all the tools you need to deliver the programme.

By guiding your group through the *Free Being Me* programme, you are personally enabling girls from both within and outside guiding and scouting to strengthen their body confidence, build their self-esteem and take every opportunity to realise their full potential in life.

With your help, *Free Being Me* will change a generation.



Nadine El Achy
World Board Chair



Steve Miles
Senior Vice President, Dove

[1] An Effectiveness Trial of a Selected Dissonance-Based Eating Disorder Prevention Program for Female High School Students: Long-Term Effects, 2011, Eric Stice, Paul Rohde, Heather Shaw, and Jeff Gau

Dove and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts working together to empower young people

What is Dove?

Dove is a leading personal care brand with a long-standing commitment to improving the body confidence and self-esteem of women. Dove's Self-Esteem Project has been developed to make real change in the way girls – as the next generation of women – perceive and embrace beauty, raising their self-esteem to help them realise their full potential in life. The project has carried out extensive research into self-esteem and has already reached 13 million young people with self-esteem education.

What is the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)?

With ten million members across 145 countries, the World Association is the largest voluntary movement dedicated to girls and young women. Our Mission is to enable girls and young women to develop their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world. Through our Member Organizations and by working directly with young people, we deliver high quality non-formal education and international opportunities that provide dynamic, values-based training in life skills, leadership and citizenship.

Our collaboration

The World Association and Dove are working together because we share the vision of a world free from appearance-related anxiety for girls. We want to empower girls to reach their full potential, and not be held back by low body confidence. This is not new! Dove and national Girl Guide and Girl Scout organizations have worked together for over a decade to help build girls' self-esteem. This collaboration helps us take this work to the next level.

Free Being Me has been designed to help us realise our vision. It is based on the latest research into how to increase young people's body confidence through fun, non-formal educational activities. We aim to reach 3.5 million girls by 2016. By running this programme with your group and reaching out to others with the Take Action project, you will be part of a worldwide movement to bring about a positive and lasting change in the body confidence and self-esteem of a generation.

There is a badge available for those in your group once they've completed the activities and their Take Action project. Awarding the badge is a great way to recognise achievement, and will help show how many people have been taking part in *Free Being Me*, all over the world! The badges are available at www.wagggs-shop.org

Don't forget!
Tell us about your Free Being Me experience via the survey on **www.free-being-me.com**.

Body Confidence

What is it?

When we have body confidence, we accept, and are happy with, how we look and what our bodies can do.

How does it affect children and young people?

People with body confidence generally don't think too much about how they look. They are instead busy using their body for things that make them happy, like sports, being with friends or engaging in positive activities like Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting. Body confidence is also linked to high self-esteem. Young people who are body confident have better relationships with their friends and family, and are more confident at school and in voicing their own opinion.

Children with low body confidence worry a lot about what they look like. This can prevent them from wearing clothes they like and from doing things that involve showing their bodies in public (swimming, dancing, etc.) even if they would enjoy them. It even prevents some from engaging in important activities like going to school or a doctor's appointment or expressing themselves by offering their own opinions. In a World Association study[2] of women and girls from 70 countries, 45 per cent of respondents said that they think girls are held back from taking on leadership positions because they are not confident in the way they look .

A global issue

Lack of body confidence is a global issue. Despite an amazing diversity in looks and cultures around the world, many girls feel unsure about their bodies and lack body confidence. Only 11 per cent of girls would use the word 'beautiful' to describe themselves[3].

Increasing globalisation means that there is less worldwide diversity of beauty standards today. At the same time beauty is seen as important and about 'perfecting' oneself and technologies such as airbrushing push unrealistic beauty ideals.

By developing self-esteem and leadership skills, *Free Being Me* empowers children and young people to recognise and challenge these global beauty pressures and become more body confident. Through your leadership of the *Free Being Me* programme, you and your group are helping to create a body confidence revolution that will improve the lives of 3.5 million girls around the world.

Body confidence and leadership

Developing leadership skills is an important part of being a Girl Guide or Girl Scout – and body confidence is an important step to becoming a good leader. To empower other people, you need to feel empowered! To share your vision, and take the risk of opening up your beliefs to other people, you need confidence to speak out and express your ideas. With self-esteem and body confidence, a developing leader feels comfortable with putting themselves and their opinions forward, and is on the road to making a real difference in the world.

For more detailed information on the topic of body confidence visit:

www.free-being-me.com
selfesteem.dove.com

[2] World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts International Day of the Girl Survey, October 2013, www.wagggs.org/en/grab/24566/2/2idg-survey-2013-en-web.pdf

[3] Dove, The Real Truth About Beauty: Revisited, 2011

What is *Free Being Me?*

Unique and fun

Free Being Me is a one-of-a-kind programme! Through fun and interactive activities, *Free Being Me* shows young people that body confidence and self-esteem comes from valuing their bodies, standing up to social pressures, and supporting others to become more body confident! Participants taking part in *Free Being Me* will learn leadership skills and feel empowered to make a difference in their local and global communities.

Especially for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

To ensure that *Free Being Me* is loved by leaders and participants, and has the greatest impact on the body confidence and self-esteem of young people around the world, it has been co-created by the World Association, the Dove Self-Esteem Project and body confidence experts especially for the Girl Guide and Girl Scout Movement.

It uses non-formal educational methods and reflects the World Association's values of respect for self and others, taking responsibility for yourself, working with others and making a difference to your community.
See page 19 for more information on how *Free Being Me* uses the Girl Guide and Girl Scout Method.

Based on world-leading research and expertise

We have worked closely with world-leading experts in body confidence education to ensure that *Free Being Me* has a real and lasting impact on girls' body confidence. This includes working with The Body Project Collaborative, a team of researchers and psychologists led by Dr Eric Stice, Professor Carolyn Becker and leading body image researcher Dr Phillippa Diedrichs, representing the Global Advisory Board of the Dove Self-Esteem Project. *Free Being Me* is grounded in more than decade of research and on-the-ground experience of improving girls' body confidence in a fun and interactive way.

Based on the World Association's expert knowledge of how young people develop, as well as body confidence research, we have developed two versions of the programme: one for 7-10 year olds and one for 11-14 year olds. Read more about how the two versions are different on page 13. The two programmes work together to build on young people's body confidence as they progress through Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting.

Activities that make a lasting difference

Studies by *The Body Project* and other leading researchers have shown taking part in activities like those in *Free Being Me* has a lasting impact on girls' well-being. In fact, one study found that up to three years later:

- 60 % of girls have significantly improved body confidence.
- 78 % of girls feel more confident and capable at school.
- 71 % of girls have better relationships with their peers.
- 53 % of girls get on better with their families.

Skills-based

Throughout *Free Being Me*, girls develop the skills they need to resist pressures to conform to society's pressures around appearance, and to come up with creative ways to promote body confidence messages in their community. At the start of each session is a planner which shows the skills participants will develop in that session's activities.

A badge programme



To earn the *Free Being Me* badge, each member of your group should:

- Complete the five-session programme, including the 'Personal Challenge' activities in-between sessions.
- Plan and run a Take Action project to make a real difference to others, by reaching out to at least two other girls with an activity lasting an hour (or more!) that passes on the body confidence messages and skills learned.

To buy your badges, go to **www.wagggs-shop.org**.

[4] An Effectiveness Trial of a Selected Dissonance-Based Eating Disorder Prevention Program for Female High School Students: Long-Term Effects , 2011, Eric Stice, Paul Rohde, Heather Shaw, and Jeff Gau

How does *Free Being Me* work?

The main messages

Free Being Me works to improve body confidence by creating a safe space where participants are in the lead, challenging their society's very specific ideal of what is beautiful or attractive. In *Free Being Me* we call this narrowly defined ideal the 'Image Myth'.

Your *Free Being Me* journey will take your group through these three main points:

- Your society's current beauty standard is narrowly defined (there is a long and very specific list of features the 'perfect look' should have) and impossible to achieve, that is why we call it the Image Myth.
- Trying to look like the Image Myth is not worthwhile – there are lots of negative consequences for individuals and their communities, including costs for their health, friendships, school life, and society more broadly.
- Focusing on what we like about our bodies and what they can do, on our personalities, and on how changing our own language and actions will improve our body confidence and the body confidence of those around us.

The Image Myth

Every day, children and young people get sent the message that if they want to be successful in life, they need to look a certain way. Although this socially defined 'ideal look' varies around the world (for instance, in some countries the ideal for girls is tanned, thin, toned and busty; while in others it is petite with fair skin), globally girls and women, as well as boys and men, feel a strong pressure from media, friends and family to try to achieve their society's version of this look.

In *Free Being Me* we call society's 'ideal look' the Image Myth. It is called a myth because it is impossible to achieve. After all, even photos of celebrities and supermodels are digitally altered and retouched! In reality there are lots of ways to be beautiful (some to do with appearance and some not), and we can be happy and love the way we look without trying to look like the Image Myth.

We know from research around the world that girls are more likely to experience low body confidence if they follow the Image Myth. *Free Being Me* is all about participants recognising the Image Myth then making a stand against it, creating their own solutions to help them and their friends challenge and resist it.

Feeling free of the pressure to look like the Image Myth gives girls the freedom to embrace their bodies as they are, and value them for what they can do and achieve. The world becomes a very different place, where girls are empowered to enjoy life and to appreciate and take care of their bodies through eating well and exercising because it makes them feel good.

Did you know?

- Models go through hours of makeup before a photoshoot and their pictures are altered afterwards on the computer to make the models look 'even more perfect'. It takes hairdressers, stylists, lighting people, dress-makers, make-up artists, assistant camera-men, wind machines and much more to achieve that 'oh so natural' look.
- Actors who play superheroes in movies build up their muscles with training routines and supplements that can damage their health in the long term.
- Many models lack body confidence and go to extreme lengths to look the way they do.

How does *Free Being Me* work?

(continued)



The learning journey

Free Being Me will take your group on a journey, encouraging them to speak out against the Image Myth and in turn become more body confident through four simple steps:

1. **Identify the Image Myth:** Participants define the Image Myth themselves, reflecting their society and understanding of the issue, so they can see its relevance to their own lives.

2. **Understand the costs of trying to look like the Image Myth:** Understanding that the Image Myth is impossible to achieve and has lots of costs attached empowers participants to break free and challenge its influence in their lives.

3. **Learn to speak out against and challenge the Image Myth:** Most of the activities in *Free Being Me* focus on this step. This opportunity to speak out against the Image Myth is what makes the biggest difference to body confidence, when participants speak out to express the alternative to the Image Myth, highlight how crazy it is to let the Image Myth make us unhappy, and share their determination to be free to be themselves.

4. **Inspire others to challenge the Image Myth:** By planning and running their Take Action project, participants will both challenge the Image Myth for themselves and share this message with others, spreading their own body confidence revolution.

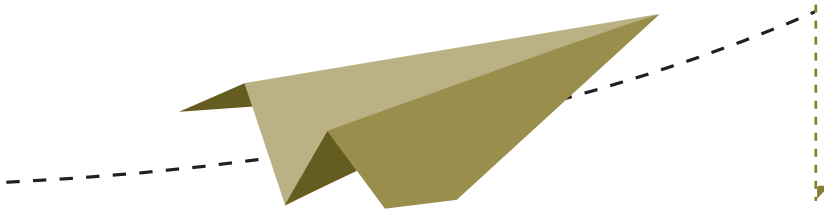
Speaking out: The key ingredient for *Free Being Me* success

Speaking out against the Image Myth in the safe space of your group is the key to improving participants' body confidence. *Free Being Me* empowers participants to take the lead, coming up with their own words, actions and ideas challenging the Image Myth. When participants speak out and act against the Image Myth, they are taking back control of their ideas about appearance, and that's one of the first steps towards becoming body confident.

Your role

As a leader, your role is to guide and encourage each individual to take part, and challenge the Image Myth for themselves. The more they make their voices heard, the more confidence they will gain in themselves and in spreading the body confidence message. The activity pack supports you with the tools to do this.

It is also important to make sure the focus of all discussions is on challenging the Image Myth, and that no space is given for comments that support it. Thinking or talking positively about the Image Myth reinforces it, and the pressures it brings. If you hear positive comments about the Image Myth, challenge participants to think back to the costs of the Image Myth and why it makes no sense to work hard to follow it.



The Activity Packs

We have designed the *Free Being Me* activity packs for 7-10 and 11-14 year olds in a way that will make your experience of delivering the programme inspiring, fun and simple. We've worked with experts to integrate the most tried and tested approaches for improving body confidence into *Free Being Me*. Therefore, if you use the tools we've provided in the activity packs and follow the tips in this Guide, you can be confident that you are going to are going to make a real difference to your group's body confidence.

Small groups

The key ingredient to the success of *Free Being Me* is giving every participant lots of opportunities to speak out against the Image Myth. This is much easier to manage and more fun and comfortable for participants if they are in small groups.

To best support the small groups and to ensure each participant has their chance to speak out, there should be one adult leader supporting each small group (up to about eight participants). We therefore encourage you to ask other leaders, peer educators and adult helpers to assist you. So that your helpers are prepared, make sure everyone who will be helping you out reads the guide and the activity packs.

The *Free Being Me* journey

Free Being Me is a five-session journey. The first four sessions equip participants with the knowledge and skills they need to challenge the Image Myth. The fifth session puts this learning into practice, planning a Take Action project, which groups implement after the session. Because the learning experience develops between activities, and from one session to the next, **it's important to deliver all five sessions in order**. Breaks between sessions create a space for the learning to sink in, and to engage in the more reflective Personal Challenges.

If you are short of time and cannot run all the activities, we have marked essential activities with a star symbol in the activity packs. To have the best chance to raising the body confidence of your group, you should run at least those activities.

Session format

Each session of *Free Being Me* has three key elements:

1) Take Part Pledge

At the beginning of each session, participants are asked to speak out to show they are committed to taking part and having fun during *Free Being Me*. This is great way to focus participants on engaging with the whole session. Be creative and have fun with this, as long as participants have the chance to speak out!

2) Challenging the Image Myth and valuing ourselves

Most of each session consists of activities that provide participants with the space they need to challenge the Image Myth with their own words and actions. To help them realise their full potential, the sessions also include activities that move participants towards valuing and accepting their bodies and their unique qualities.

3) Personal Challenges

At the end of every session, participants are given a Personal Challenge to complete before the next session. These are a great chance for participants to reflect on what they have learned, and use their learning in a different environment. Explain each Personal Challenge clearly, and let parents know how they can support their children to complete the Personal Challenges.

star: shows this is an essential activity to ensure *Free Being Me* has a positive impact on your group's body confidence

time: an idea of how many minutes to allow for the activity. Depending on your group size and number of leaders available, you may need to allow more or less time

Session four

Share: Mirror Mirror Personal Challenge ★

15 min

outcome: what participants will learn by completing the activity

Outcome

By sharing their Mirror Mirror challenge, participants raise their body-confidence by practicing saying out loud the things they like about themselves.

at a glance: a quick summary of what happens in the activity

At a glance

Participants play a grouping game to share their Mirror Mirror ideas.

what you'll need: equipment and resources you'll need ready to deliver the activity

You will need

Participants' completed Mirror Mirror hand-outs.

support prompts: examples of how to communicate the key messages in each activity

What to do

Well done to everyone for doing your Mirror Mirror activity and thinking about the things you like about yourselves and your bodies. Now we're going to share these with each other!

Remember that thinking positively about your bodies is really important. It takes practice, but reminding yourself about the things you like about yourself and your body is a great way to help beat the Image Myth.

Play a grouping game. Ask everyone to move quickly around the meeting place.
The aim is for participants to get into groups as quickly as possible when they hear a leader shout out a number – for instance, a leader shouts 'three!' and everyone gets into groups of three people.

In these groups, participants should share one of the things they like about themselves from their list. Say it as "I like my..."

Each time new groups are formed, before they start sharing, tell them what you would like them to share – something they like about...

- 1. their personality
- 2. their bodies
- 3. what they can do with their body.

Have at least three rounds of grouping, so everyone can share at least one of each.
The grouping game sometimes leaves people remaining once the groups are formed – their job is to run to any group, and say their favourite thing first!

Participants should just say what they like – they don't need to give reasons why!

Well done, it's great to hear so many positive things from you!

talk about: questions to help participants reflect on their experience and recognise what they have learned

Questions

- How did it feel to be positive about yourself?
- Why is it good to practice thinking about and saying what you like about yourself?

Tips:

- If you work with a co-educational group, it may work best for the boys and girls to group together. Ensure everyone is positive and supportive of each other, recognising it's not always an easy activity

Tips: some pointers to help you reach the activity outcome

Support prompts

To provide you with support and the correct tools to help your group challenge the Image Myth and break free from its influence, and therefore boost their body confidence, you will see that many activities include some 'support prompts'. These are shown in bold, blue text in the Activity Packs.

The support prompts show what you might say to communicate *Free Being Me*'s key messages. They will help you understand what needs to be communicated, and suggest how to make the message clear to your group. You can read the support prompts aloud as they are, or paraphrase them once you understand the message being delivered.

Experience suggests that sessions run most smoothly if you have a pre-meeting with your co-leaders and assistants to try out some of the activities and practice paraphrasing the key messages.

Take Action project

At the end of *Free Being Me*, your group has the chance to share the *Free Being Me* message by planning and implementing a Take Action project. We want to spread the body confidence message as far as we can! To gain the *Free Being Me* badge, and make a real impact, each participant's Take Action project should:

- Reach out to two other people their age who haven't taken part in *Free Being Me*.
- Give a meaningful insight into what your group has learned. Encourage participants to become body confidence role models, share what they have discovered about the Image Myth and challenge it with their peers and community.
- Be hands on and fun!

Encourage participants to be creative and take ownership of their Take Action project. They can use and adapt the ideas in Session Five, or come up with their own to really test their skills! Participants can develop both individual and group Take Action projects. With a group Take Action project, the group should still aim to reach two more of their peers per group member.

Share your Take Action Projects to create a worldwide body confidence revolution!



Visit **www.free-being-me.com** to share your group's amazing actions and be inspired by others from around the world.

Practical Advice

Time needed

This programme is made up of five sessions lasting 60 to 75 minutes each, plus the time spent on Take Action projects, which is flexible. *Free Being Me* will have the biggest impact on your group's body confidence if you use all the activities in the order shown. Don't forget to plan some time for preparation with co-leaders too, in advance of running the programme.

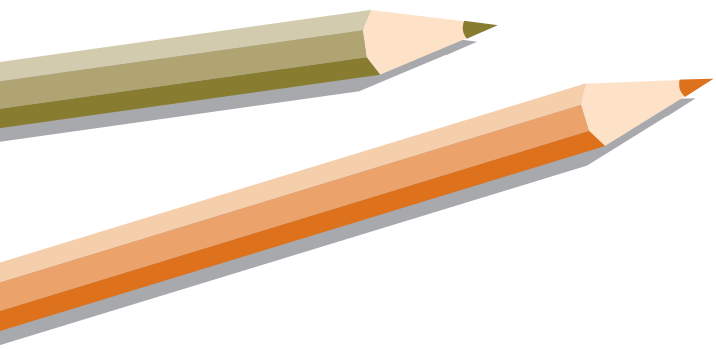
Informing and involving parents

To bring parents along on the *Free Being Me* journey with their children, it's a good idea to let them know what you'll be doing, and why. Parents can support the Personal Challenges between sessions, and even support one of your sessions. Keeping the conversation going at home can really help contribute to the success of *Free Being Me*. There is a sample letter on page 20 you can adapt to send or email to parents.

Equipment and facilities

Free Being Me has been designed for use in a wide variety of settings, including regular weekly group meetings and camps, and in a wide variety of countries. Most of the activities require very simple materials – paper, pens, etc. – or no materials at all. Some optional activities have been included that require the use of a computer or an internet connection, for showing videos, etc. These are useful additions, but these are not essential.





Things to remember when using *Free Being Me*

Leaders and body confidence issues

The level of confidence we have in our appearance changes throughout our lives, and we know that the issue of low body confidence does not disappear when we grow up! You don't need to have really high body confidence to run and enjoy *Free Being Me* with your group. It's really important though, that you do your best not to talk about any negative feelings you have, or have had, about your appearance, because *Free Being Me* is about giving participants the space away from the Image Myth so they can develop the confidence to challenge it.

If you really get involved in the activities yourself, leading *Free Being Me* can be incredibly rewarding for you personally as well for the participants. Leaders have told us that they enjoy running the sessions and experience a boost in body confidence themselves! Support each other as a leadership team, sharing your thoughts and feelings together.

Visit **www.free-being-me.com** for more support including the opportunity to take part in a body confidence e-learning programme for adults, designed by the body confidence experts who helped create *Free Being Me*.

Including everyone

We would like to reach as many children as possible worldwide with the positive message of *Free Being Me*. It's important to consider the different needs of those in your group before you start. Especially if leaders aren't used to working with the ages or different abilities you have in your group, here are some things to consider:

7-10 year olds...

- will be at different stages of their awareness and understanding of issues like body confidence, self-esteem and the media.
- often have a wide difference in experience and knowledge from youngest to the oldest participants.
- will be increasingly conscious of how others see them, and worry how this affects their ability to make friends and fit in.
- will be beginning to learn about how their bodies are going to change and growing up, and some may be worrying about whether they are 'normal' – this is a great opportunity to reassure girls they are great the way they are!

Free Being Me for 7-10 year olds: building the foundations for body confidence

- Research has shown that by the age of seven, nearly all children have some understanding that the people around them are trying to look a certain way, and that this look is promoted in society. For example in the UK, one in four seven year old girls has tried dieting to lose weight[5].

However, they may not have started relating this pressure to their own lives. *Free Being Me* has carefully tailored its messages to be appropriate to this age group. Although the programme goals are the same as for 11-14 year olds, the key messages focus on creating a strong foundation of body confidence that will empower younger children to challenge the Image Myth as they encounter it while growing up.

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[5] Reflections on Body Image: Report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image 2012

Things to remember when using *Free Being Me*

(continued)

It also prepares them to experience the 11-14 year old programme as part of the next stage of their Girl Guide/Girl Scout experience.

The main difference you will see is that the 7-10 programme does not mention the Image Myth. This prevents younger children placing too much focus on the socially constructed idea of beauty. Instead, the key messages for 7-10 year olds are:

- "There isn't just one way to look beautiful."
- "What's inside us matters just as much as what we look like."
- "It's important to be yourself. We are all different, and that makes us special."
- "People don't decide if they like you or not just based on what you look like."
- "It's important to appreciate what our bodies can do, as well as what they look like."

11-14 year olds...

- Probably already have the image myth clear in their minds, although this might not be the case for all (especially the younger ones) – if you are concerned that the activities don't fit everyone in your group, you can use some of the activities from the 7-10 year olds programme with your younger participants. Or you can group your younger participants and your older participants separately for certain parts of the programme.

- Have probably experienced the pressure of the Image Myth for themselves, and may struggle to be positive about certain aspects of their appearance. Once participants have recognised the costs of following the Image Myth, they may judge those who pursue it. Emphasise that *Free Being Me* challenges the promotion of the Image Myth by society, and pursuing it is a trap many of us fall into to one degree or another. Encourage your group to take a positive and supportive approach by promoting the alternative.



Things to remember when using *Free Being Me*

(continued)

Creating a safe learning space

Trust and a sense of security are really important for the success of all Girl Guide and Girl Scout activities, including *Free Being Me*. Some of the issues addressed during the programme might be sensitive for some participants. Girls also need to feel free to speak out during activities to have a real impact on their body confidence. These tips will help you to create a safe space during the programme.

a. Setting group guidelines and using them

In the first session, your group will set up or review some group guidelines. This works best if ideas are generated by the participants themselves and are agreed upon by everyone involved. Some examples of group guidelines are included in the activity packs.

b. Creating a time out zone

Make an area available in your meeting space for participants to go if they need to step out of an activity to take a break. Everyone should feel they are taking part through choice. Monitor the space and ensure anyone using the space is supported by a leader if they need it.

Ability

It's important that everyone has the chance to do their best to participate in *Free Being Me*. Your group members will be at different stages of their development, and you should take any special needs into account.

Many activities in *Free Being Me* are physically active and require concentrating for a short period of time, using skills such as reading, writing and drawing. You know best what the members of your group can manage. Where possible, try to find ways to empower all participants to speak out, such as helping with reading and writing, facilitating conversations and encouraging older participants to support younger participants and anyone with special needs. Adapt any activity you feel will not work for your group, while keeping to the main points as closely as you can.

Culture and background

Your participants might come from a variety of cultural, socio-economic and religious backgrounds. This will have an effect on how each individual participant deals with certain issues, including their own bodies. For some children talking about their bodies in public (even among friends and peers) will be challenging.

Being aware of intercultural differences will help you prepare to adapt activities to ensure the inclusion of all children in your group. If you are unsure, consult participants' families, as you may find that what you're planning will not be a problem at all!

Frequently asked questions



What if I am running a camp or holiday?

Is it possible to do this programme in different Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting settings?

Free Being Me is designed to be run in a variety of settings. Ideally, it is run in five sessions, including Personal Challenges to be completed in-between sessions, with a Take Action project afterwards. But, if you are running this programme in a camp setting, you should build in time for the Personal Challenges during breaks. For example, you could run one session per day over four days or two sessions per day over two half-days. Don't cover all the material in one full day, and make sure that at least core material (shown with a star in the activity packs) is used.

What if the participants ask difficult questions?

Examples of some questions you may hear:
"Are the people who follow the image myth bad?"
"What's wrong with taking care of myself, wanting to wear make-up, fashionable clothes, and to look nice?"
"I'm thin and like myself the way I am – does this mean I have to put on weight?"
"My sports coach told me it's healthy to work hard to train up my muscles – why are you telling me it isn't?"

Free Being Me promotes a positive alternative to the Image Myth, where you celebrate your body for what it can do. It forms part of the wider Girl Scouting and Girl Guiding programme promoting healthy lifestyles; exercising and being outdoors for fun and to build skills, and eating a balanced tasty diet to stay well and enjoy new things.

There is no one shape or look to be achieved. It is important to promote balanced diet and exercise for good health and wellbeing, rather than to achieve a certain appearance.

Free Being Me promotes diversity and choice, self-acceptance and a non-judgemental approach to others. Using make-up, following fashion and working hard to train can be fun and a way to express yourself – it's important that you are doing it because you want to, and not because you feel you should. Skills like media literacy learned from *Free Being Me* empower children to feel free to be themselves, make their own decisions and to help others do the same.

What if some participants don't want to speak up?

Speaking out is a very important part of *Free Being Me*. So, supporting participants to speak out is a key role for the leader. Here are some tips for encouraging active participation:

- Ask open questions that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" to encourage participants to express their opinions. For example, don't ask, "Did you enjoy that activity?", but rather, "How did you think this activity can be helpful to young girls?"
- Remind everyone of the ground rules they have established about listening to each other and taking turns to speak.
- Emphasise that every participant has something to contribute to the activity.
- In a friendly and positive manner, ask everyone to report or share experiences.

Frequently asked questions
(continued)



What if the participants are teasing each other?

Children often tease each other as a way of getting over insecurity or embarrassment. It is possible that discussing body issues will cause embarrassment leading to teasing.

Don't ignore teasing. Confront the situation. You may need to interrupt an activity but be thoughtful of the feelings of everyone involved – you may decide to confront the teasing in a group, or take those involved to one side. Make clear exactly what part of the behaviour was not acceptable and why. It can help to remind the participants of the group guidelines they agreed to respect.

What if a disclosure takes place?

Your safe space may give participants experiencing problems related to body confidence and self-esteem the courage to tell you what's happening in their lives. For example, children might disclose that they are being bullied or have been bullying others, have eating disorders, or that they are experiencing some problems at home in their families. Disclosure is a 'cry for help' and it is really important to be supportive.

- Do not interrupt or try to stop the participant, unless they are in a group and you'd like to suggest you continue the conversation together.
- Hear the participant through as far as they are willing to go – remember, it is not your role to cross-examine them.
- Record the conversation afterwards, but do not investigate the facts yourself.
  Do not keep secrets if the child is in danger and needs help. Explain that you may not be able to keep this a secret and why, and who you will pass the information to. Remember, confidentiality is important, and you should tell only people who need to know (this does not always include parents).
- If you feel the participant is in immediate danger, take immediate action, eg call a national child protection agency or the police.
- If you feel the participant needs further help and aren't sure what to do next, consult with a senior leader in your organization and national child protection authorities/charities.
- If the participant has shared a difficult situation with you that you don't feel needs to be taken further, tell another leader what happened, and follow up with the participant to ensure they are ok.

If the disclosure has been made in a group, ensure the group remembers their agreement to be supportive and kind to others – not to gossip about the person, but to be good listeners and good friends. Remind participants that anything private shared within the group should remain confidential. Reassure them that the participant will be taken care of, and that they can talk to you if they are worried about anything.

How *Free Being Me* uses the Girl Guide and Girl Scout Method

Learning in small groups

Learning is often more fun and engaging when it takes place in small groups. Many young people feel more comfortable to express themselves in a small group environment. Small groups of mixed-age participants encourages older participants to be positive role models and challenges participants to take ownership of activities, support each other and make their own decisions. It encourages participants to practise working in a diverse team; a valuable life skill. Learning in small groups is both a key part of the Girl Guide and Girl Scout method and improves the impact of *Free Being Me*.

My path, my pace

We all learn in different ways. The World Association's programmes use a range of activities to engage with different learning styles. Care for the individual is central to enabling every Girl Guide and Girl Scout to do their best to participate in activities. By encouraging peer groups to support each other, and creating spaces for individuals to contribute to activities in different ways, every Girl Guide/Girl Scout participating in *Free Being Me* should have the opportunity to learn in their own way, and every different achievement is celebrated.

Learning by doing

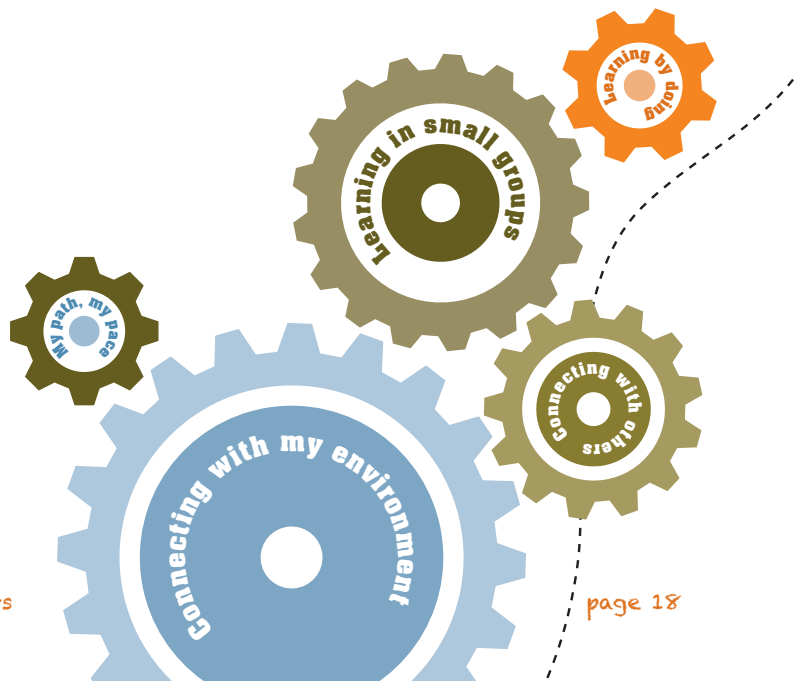
People learn best when they feel motivated. Learning by doing enables participants to connect their experiences to their own lives and empowers them to act. That's why the World Association promotes learning in a hands-on way through challenges, experiences, games, projects and experiments. *Free Being Me* takes a 'learning by doing' approach, offering participants the opportunity to engage directly with the material by creating their own media, discussing their own questions and ideas and developing real projects and actions to help themselves and their friends feel more body confident.

Connecting with others

Free Being Me encourages participants to connect with each other and with their peers to explore how they can make a positive impact on the body confidence and self-esteem of others. During the programme, participants do this primarily with each other's support, but they are also guided by older peer or adult leaders. *Free Being Me* is designed to use the potential of role models to further support the development of leadership. It does this by connecting people of different ages, genders, cultural and social backgrounds to work together to build participants' skills.

Connecting with my environment

We learn a lot from the world around us, and the World Association's programmes promote learning experiences that take this into account. The World Association's activities encourage participants to reflect on what it means to be a global citizen by taking a stand on issues they care about and by translating that motivation into community-based projects. *Free Being Me* addresses the fact that people of all kinds and all over the world feel pressured to look a certain way because society says that is important. By understanding this and speaking out against it, the participants take responsibility for their lives and the impact they can have on those around them.



Glossary



Body confidence:

Body confidence refers to how someone feels about the way they look. When we have body confidence, we accept, and are happy with, how we look and what our bodies can do. Having high body confidence is one factor that can raise self-esteem.

Self-esteem:

A feeling of self-respect and self-worth. Someone with high self-esteem believes in themselves, and in their worth as a person. Having high self-esteem helps people reach their full potential, not held back by a lack of belief in themselves or their abilities. As Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, we develop self-esteem in girls, empowering them to follow their dreams, to serve their communities and make a difference in the world.

Image Myth:

The narrow definition of a society's ideal of what is beautiful or attractive. The Image Myth is encouraged and talked about in the media and by friends and family around us. It is a myth because it is a concept so narrow, with such a long list of characteristics, it's impossible for anyone to achieve. Even models perceived to look 'perfect' are typically digitally airbrushed to make them look more 'perfect'!

Activity pack:

These are the sets of activities that are part of *Free Being Me*. There are two activity packs; one for 11-14 year olds and one for 7-10 year olds.

Support prompt:

this is a support feature of the activity packs, where text is shown in **bold,** **blue,** *italic*. It gives leaders help to deliver the really key messages of the activities. It's a great idea to read these, then put them in your own words once you understand the message, to make it relevant to your group.

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Go to **www.free-being-me.com** for more support, ideas and inspiration for you and your group, and to feed back your thoughts on *Free Being Me* in our global survey.

Parent letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

Our Girl Guide/Girl Scout group is about to start an exciting new activity programme called *Free Being Me*. This unique programme uses fun activities to empower children and young people to be more body confident, stand up to social pressures, connect with Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world and make a difference in their local communities.

Global research shows that low body confidence holds young people back from reaching their full potential, with over 60 per cent of girls avoiding activities they love because they feel bad about their looks1. This includes important life activities like giving an opinion, dancing and swimming, going to parties, and putting their hand up in the classroom. A global study by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts with women and girls from 70 countries found that at least 45 per cent believe that girls and women are held back from taking on leadership positions because they lack confidence in the way they look.

Free Being Me has been co-created especially for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts by the World Association, the Dove Self Esteem Project and body confidence experts. The activities have been informed by world-leading research in body confidence, which shows that 60 per cent of girls who take part in this type of non-formal education programme feel significantly more body confident at least three years later. Feedback from thousands of girls around the world has also shown that they are excited to talk and learn about body confidence.

More than three million girls worldwide will take part in *Free Being Me*, and our national Association has committed to supporting this worldwide campaign to make a lasting positive difference to the body confidence of its members.

Free Being Me is a five-session journey. The first four sessions equip participants with the knowledge and skills they need to be more body confident. The fifth session applies this learning to planning a Take Action project, which we will run after the session. Our Take Action project needs to reach as many young people as possible with these important messages!

Between each session, your child will bring home a sheet asking them to complete a Personal Challenge. This will have been explained during the session, and all the instructions are also on their sheet. We have summarised the Personal Challenges below.

We would really appreciate your support to ensure *Free Being Me* has the best possible impact for our group. If you would like to learn more, or if you are interested in volunteering to help out during the programme or with the Take Action project, please get in touch with one of our leaders.

If you are interested in finding out more about the project, go to **www.free-being-me.com**.

Thank you for your support,

Leaders of X group

Personal Challenges 11-14 version

Each session, your child will have a fun Personal Challenge to do between the sessions.

The Personal Challenges work best when your child comes up with their own ideas and completes the challenge independently. However, they may value your encouragement and support. It's also really valuable for them to talk to you about what they are learning from *Free Being Me*. After each session, please encourage them to discuss their Personal Challenge with you.

Please remind your child to bring their Personal Challenge with them to the next *Free Being Me* session, as it will be used in an activity.

The Personal Challenges often encourage your child to express a challenge to the 'Image Myth'. The Image Myth is what society tells us the 'perfect-looking' girl or woman should look like. It's a myth, because it's actually impossible for anyone to look like this in reality, as even celebrities and models are digitally altered before appearing in many media images. Practising challenging the Image Myth will build your child's self-confidence and resilience, enabling them to reject the Image Myth and stop it from influencing their lives. Instead, they can concentrate on enjoying a healthy and happy life where they are comfortable with their appearance, and take good care of their bodies.



The four Personal Challenges your child will bring home are:

1 Media Detectives

Your child has been asked to find an example of the Image Myth. This activity asks your child to 'expose' the Image Myth by attaching their example to the sheet provided, and completing some sentences about why they don't agree with the Image Myth.

2 Friendship Note

This Personal Challenge asks your child to write a short note to a friend at Girl Guides/Girl Scouts, explaining why trying to look like the Image Myth has downsides and how they can fight the pressure to look like the Image Myth.

3 Mirror Mirror

This Personal Challenge encourages your child to look in the mirror to celebrate the positive things they love about themselves, instead of a place to criticise themselves. They will write a list of features they like about themselves, then practise repeating them while standing in front of a mirror.

4 Spread the Word

Your child has been asked to share one or more positive messages that challenge the Image Myth with other people. This could be family, friends or their local community. The more people they share their message with, the more inspired they will feel. They will come home with a pledge card with "one thing I will do to challenge the Image Myth for me" and "one thing I'll do to challenge the Image Myth for others".

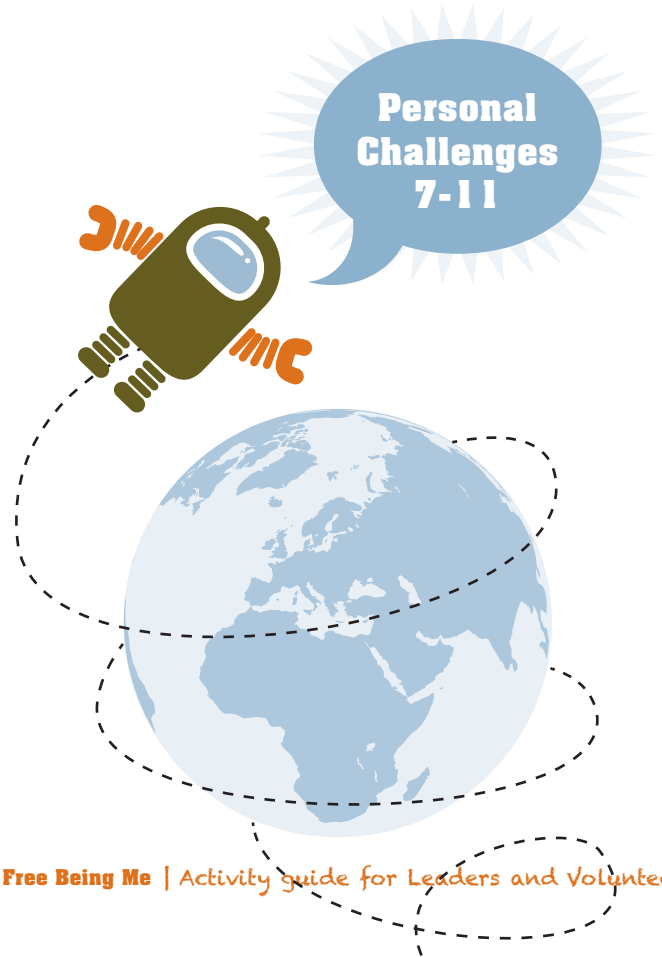
Personal Challenges 7-10 version

Each session, your child will have a fun Personal Challenge to do between the sessions.

The Personal Challenges work best when your child comes up with their own ideas and completes the challenge independently. However, they may value your encouragement and support. It's also really valuable for them to talk to you about what they are learning from *Free Being Me*. After each session, please encourage them to discuss their Personal Challenge with you.

Please remind your child to bring their Personal Challenge with them to the next *Free Being Me* session, as it will be used in an activity.

The Personal Challenges focus on empowering your child to understand that there is no such thing as one way to be beautiful, and what is inside them matters more than what they look like. These activities develop their resilience to help them challenge societal pressures as they grow up.



The four Personal Challenges your child will bring home are:

1 Real Role Models

This activity asks participants to identify a real life role model; someone they know personally, who they really like and find inspiring. This could be a friend or family member. They have been asked to find a photograph, or create a drawing, of this person to share with the group in the next session. They have been given a sheet with some half-written sentences to complete.

2 I Like Me Fortune Teller

Your child will bring home a fortune teller template. They should write eight things they like about themselves into the boxes as shown on the template, and may decorate their fortune teller as much as they like. Why not play with your child, and ask them to read out their "I like" statements? Practising saying positive things about themselves helps build their body confidence.

3 You're My Star

After session three, your child will come home with a positive message written on a star. They have been challenged to share their message as widely as possible. It would be great if you are able to support your child to share their star message safely and widely.

4 *Free Being Me* Pledge

Your child will bring a pledge card home at the end of session four, in which they will have committed to doing two actions; one to grow their own body confidence, and one to empower others to feel more body confident. They may be able to implement these actions independently, or may appreciate some support.