

Life-size Barbie™ and GI Joe™

Body Image Messages Activity



Objective:

Explore unrealistic images of perfection seen in children's toys.

Age:

9 to 12 years.

Length:

Approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Supplies and Materials:

- Variety of supplies that can be used for making life-size models. Suggestions include the following:
 - balloons, fabric, trash bags, newspapers, construction paper, crepe paper, hangers, wire, wire cutters, string, tape measures, scissors, glue, tape, marker
- Reality and Make-Believe* handout – one per person.

Special Considerations:

Reading Difficulties: Groups will work together so less-skilled readers can still work on the models with some direction.

Gender: Separate boys and girls for this activity. Have the girls make the female models and the boys make the male models.

Activity Directions:

- Begin with the following information.

We are bombarded with messages about what is supposed to be ideal in terms of the size or shape of our bodies. Messages about body size and shape are found everywhere. What are some you can think of? (*television, magazines, shopping malls, friends, radio, etc.*)

A source of messages about body sizes that we don't always think of is toys. What do you think about a Barbie™ or G.I. Joe™?

- Distribute the *Reality and Make-Believe* handout.

3. Compare Barbie™ and G.I. Joe™ with an average-sized person and a typical model.

Note these interesting items:

- * the change in G.I. Joe™ over time while Barbie™ has not changed
- * Barbie™ is much taller than G.I. Joe™
- * the difference between the average female and the typical female model is much greater than the difference between the average male and typical male model

4. Divide into four groups. Instruct participants to create life-size models of these body shapes. Have them make Barbie™, the average female, G.I. Joe™, and the average male. Set a time limit and provide a variety of materials (*listed above*).

5. When complete, have groups share their creations. Discuss realistic body shapes and sizes versus false and sometimes impossible-to-achieve body shapes and sizes.

Take Home Tidbit

Take home slip says the following:

“Ask me about the life-size models we made during the WIN Kids Fun Day.”



Source: Wardlaw, Mary Kay. *As If*. WIN Kids Lesson. Wellness IN the Rockies, University of Wyoming. 2002.

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