

WHY US?
LEFT BEHIND AND DYING



Video Curriculum Modules

**Lesson 10: HIV –
Self-Hatred**

just people vastly, randomly just dying
every day in my neighborhood,

LEARNING WAS NEVER LIKE THIS

Lesson 10: Self-Hatred

Standards:

Health:

1.12.2

1.12.8

2.12.5

8.12.1

8.12.3

Science:

1.2

2.1

8.2

Skills Practiced and

Gained:

1.1—1.7

2.1—2.5

Overview

Self-hate or the questioning of one's value can lead a person to question whether his or her life is worth protecting. For this reason, self-hatred in the African American community has had devastating consequences in the spread of HIV and AIDS. There are many manifestations of self-hatred but the overall result is that many people in the black community do not always take steps to protect themselves against contracting HIV even when they are well aware of the risks. The video module, "*Self-Hatred*," provides a window on manifestations of self-hate and questioning of one's worth in the African American community. There are also examples of ways to deconstruct damaging notions of self-hatred and to construct positive and affirming notions of one's value and worth.

Key Concepts

Deconstructing negative beliefs

Constructing positive affirming beliefs

Impact of negative labels and words on a views of self-worth

Social determinants of health

Impact of self-hatred on the spread of HIV/AIDS in the African American community

Materials for Activities and Educator Background Knowledge

There is one reading, *Reading 10.1*, a Student Resource on Self Esteem (adapted from materials on <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/self-esteem/MH00128> and <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/self-esteem/MH00129>).

There are four handouts—a Student Resource on organizations that highlight the history and accomplishment of various groups and three collections of media images will be used in *Activity 10.1*.



Procedure

Part I

View “*Self-Hatred*” video module. After viewing the module use the following questions to facilitate group discussion or give the questions as prompts for journal entries.

Discussion / Journal Questions

- 1) **W**hat new information did you gather from the video module?
- 2) **H**ow does self-hatred contribute to the high rates of HIV/ AIDS in African and African American communities?
- 3) **W**hat other questions or comments do you have?

Part II

Self-confidence and feelings of acceptance and worth can affect our behaviors. This confidence can come from several places: the relationships and interactions we have; our personalities; and more. And yet, self-confidence can come from subtle messages we receive from the media. In **Activity 10.1**, you examine how messages of worth are communicated subtly through media images.

Activity 10.1

- 1) Use the three collections of media images for his activity.
- 2) Have the students/participants examine the three collections of media images and discuss in small groups. Students/participants should consider:
 - What do you notice?
 - What is the media subtly teaching us about beauty?
 - Should magazines lighten skin tones? Why or why not?
 - If you are a dark-skinned woman in today’s society, what might you think about yourself, your beauty, and your worth?



Part II (continued)

Activity 10.1 (continued)

- 2) Explain that promoting particular standards of beauty is just one way that media can either validate or destroy senses of self-worth and value.
- 3) Have students/participants discuss other blatant or hidden messages of who is the best, the smartest, most successful, etc. Students/participants should consider, for example:
 - Who is represented in history books, and how are they represented?
 - Who is promoted as a trustworthy and competent leader? In government? In other industries? Why?
 - Who are the wealthiest people?
 - etc.

Note: If you are not reflected in these groups, it is easy to start believing that you are not as worthy or capable. It is important, therefore, to have fair representation in these arenas. There ARE important historical figures, leaders, successful people, talented people who are women, people of color, young and old people, people of different abilities, etc. To have these people highlighted in the media and in our educational system is an important step in instilling healthy self-esteem for all.

Part III

Activity 10.2

Now that we have examined how our self esteem could be affected by the messages around us, let's examine how self-esteem affects behavior.

- 1) List, compare and connect risky behaviors and self-sabotaging behaviors discussed in the video module. How are these behaviors linked to shame and self-hatred?
- 2) Have students/participants anonymously fill out the "In Plenty and In Need" chart (see handout labeled *Activity 10.2*).
- 3) After filling out the chart, discuss patterns in responses. Compare and connect responses to behaviors discussed in the video module.



Part III (continued)

Activity 10.2 (continued)

Note: You may want to include additional information – for example, adolescents who are feeling bad about themselves tend to engage in more risky behavior like drug abuse, cutting, unhealthy physical risks, and more. Interestingly, low self-esteem also leads to bullying others. It seems to be a human condition that in times of plenty, we act from the best within ourselves, and in times of need, we act from the worst within ourselves.

4) Ask students/participants to discuss or journal the following:

- From where do you draw your positive self-esteem: who or what makes you feel great about yourself?
- When do feel that you lose or question your self-esteem: who or what makes you feel not so great about yourself?
- Overall, how do you feel about yourself? How is your self-esteem reflected in your actions of self-care or self-sabotage?
- Does understanding the link between self-esteem and health change your thoughts about how you might act? Why or why not?

Closure

After completing the lesson activities, make sure that students/participants do not languish in helplessness, shame, or self-hatred, especially if they are part of a historically marginalized group. The following activities can be positive and affirming. More importantly, the activities provide the opportunity for students/participants to expand their knowledge of the accomplishments and history of one's own people.

- 1) Interview elders or significant adults who have a great sense of pride and history. Ask about challenges that they have overcome; family and community histories that do not show up in history books; and the triumphs of family or other members of the community.
- 2) Access one or more of the organizations devoted to the education, celebration, and the support of various groups to learn more about the challenges, successes, and histories of various groups. (See Resources Handout—*Handout 10.4*).



Reading 10.1

Self-esteem

(adapted from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/self-esteem/MH00128/METHOD=print> and <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/self-esteem/MH00129/METHOD=print>)

Self-esteem is shaped by your thoughts, relationships and experiences. Understand the ranges of self-esteem and the benefits of promoting healthy self-esteem — including mental well-being, assertiveness, resilience and more.

Self-esteem is your overall opinion of yourself — how you honestly feel about your abilities and limitations. When you have healthy self-esteem, you feel good about yourself and see yourself as deserving the respect of others.

Factors that shape and influence self-esteem

Self-esteem begins to form in early childhood. Factors that can influence self-esteem include:

- Your own thoughts and perceptions
- How other people react to you
- Experiences at school, work and in the community
- Illness, disability or injury
- Culture
- Religion
- Role and status in society

Benefits of healthy self-esteem

A healthy self-esteem means you have a balanced, accurate view of yourself. For instance, you have a good opinion of your abilities but recognize your flaws. When you understand your own worth, you invite the respect of others. When you value yourself and have good self-esteem, you feel secure and worthwhile and have generally positive relationships with others. You feel confident about your abilities and tend to do well at school or work. You're also open to learning and feedback, which can help you acquire and master new skills.

With healthy self-esteem you're:

- Assertive in expressing your needs and opinions
- Confident in your ability to make decisions
- Able to form secure and honest relationships — and less likely to stay in unhealthy ones
- Realistic in your expectations and less likely to be overcritical of yourself and others
- More resilient and better able to weather stress and setbacks
- Less likely to experience feelings such as hopelessness, worthlessness, guilt and shame
- Less likely to develop mental health conditions, such as eating disorders, addictions, depression and anxiety

Reading 10.1

If you have low self-esteem, harness the power of your own thoughts and beliefs to change how you feel about yourself. Start with these four steps to a healthier self-esteem.

Step 1: Identify troubling conditions or situations

Think about the conditions or situations that seem to deflate your self-esteem. Common triggers might include:

- An important assignment, presentation, or performance
- A crisis at work, school, or home
- A challenge with a spouse, loved one, co-worker or other close contact
- A change in life circumstances, such as a job loss or going off to college

Step 2: Become aware of thoughts and beliefs

Once you've identified troubling conditions or situations, pay attention to your thoughts about them. This includes your self-talk — what you tell yourself — and your interpretation of what the situation means. Your thoughts and beliefs might be positive, negative or neutral. They might be rational, based on reason or facts, or irrational, based on false ideas.

Step 3: Challenge negative or inaccurate thinking

Your initial thoughts might not be the only possible way to view a situation — so test the accuracy of your thoughts. Ask yourself whether your view is consistent with facts and logic or whether other explanations for the situation might be plausible.

Also pay attention to thought patterns that tend to erode self-esteem:

- All-or-nothing thinking.** You see things as either all good or all bad. For example, "If I don't succeed in this task, I'm a total failure."
- Mental filtering.** You see only negatives and dwell on them, distorting your view of a person or situation. For example, "I made a mistake on that report and now everyone will realize I'm not up to this job."
- Converting positives into negatives.** You reject your achievements and other positive experiences by insisting that they don't count. For example, "I only did well on that test because it was so easy."
- Jumping to negative conclusions.** You reach a negative conclusion when little or no evidence supports it. For example, "My friend hasn't replied to my email, so I must have done something to make her angry."
- Mistaking feelings for facts.** You confuse feelings or beliefs with facts. For example, "I feel like a failure, so I must be a failure."
- Self put-downs.** You undervalue yourself, put yourself down or use self-deprecating humor. This can result from overreacting to a situation, such as making a mistake. For example, "I don't deserve anything better."

Step 4: Adjust your thoughts and beliefs

Now replace negative or inaccurate thoughts with accurate, constructive thoughts. Try these strategies:



Reading 10.1

Use hopeful statements. Treat yourself with kindness and encouragement. Pessimism can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, if you think your presentation isn't going to go well, you might indeed stumble through it. Try telling yourself things such as, "Even though it's tough, I can handle this situation."

Forgive yourself. Everyone makes mistakes — and mistakes aren't permanent reflections on you as a person. They're isolated moments in time. Tell yourself, "I made a mistake, but that doesn't make me a bad person."

Avoid 'should' and 'must' statements. If you find that your thoughts are full of these words, you might be putting unreasonable demands on yourself — or on others. Removing these words from your thoughts can lead to more realistic expectations.

Focus on the positive. Think about the good parts of your life. Remind yourself of things that have gone well recently. Consider the skills you've used to cope with challenging situations.

Re-label upsetting thoughts. You don't need to react negatively to negative thoughts. Instead, think of negative thoughts as signals to try new, healthy patterns. Ask yourself, "What can I think and do to make this less stressful?"

Encourage yourself. Give yourself credit for making positive changes. For example, "My presentation might not have been perfect, but my colleagues asked questions and remained engaged — which means that I accomplished my goal."

These steps might seem awkward at first, but they'll get easier with practice. As you begin to recognize the thoughts and beliefs that are contributing to your low self-esteem, you can actively counter them — which will help you accept your value as a person. As your self-esteem increases, your confidence and sense of well-being are likely to soar.



Activity 10.1

Color handouts work best for *Activity 10.1*. There are three handouts labeled Media Images Collection 1; Media Images Collection 2; and Media Images Collection 3.

The collections are defined as follows:

Handout 10.1

Media Images Collection 1 = Miss America 2001-2011

Handout 10.2

Media Images Collection 2 = Magazine covers for People's 100 Most Beautiful People issues

Handout 10.3

Media Images Collection 3 = Comparisons of real complexions of celebrities and their images in media

Handout 10.1: Media Images Collection 1

Miss America 2001-2011



Why us? Curriculum



Handout 10.1: Media Images Collection 1



Why us? Curriculum

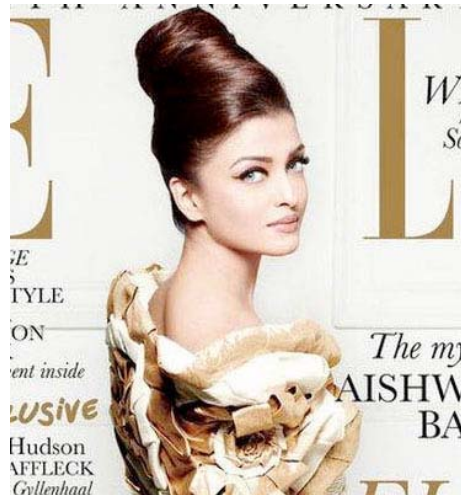


Handout 10.2: Media Images Collection 2



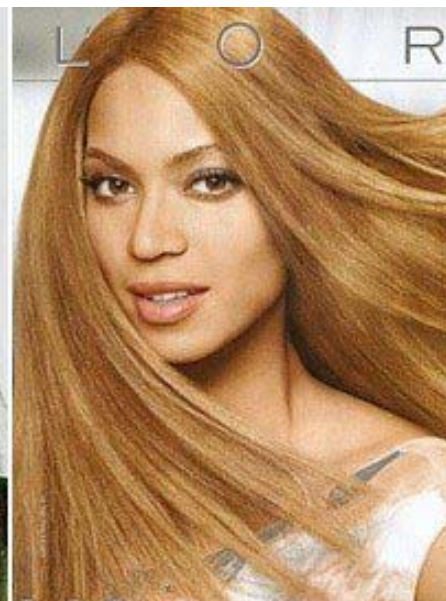
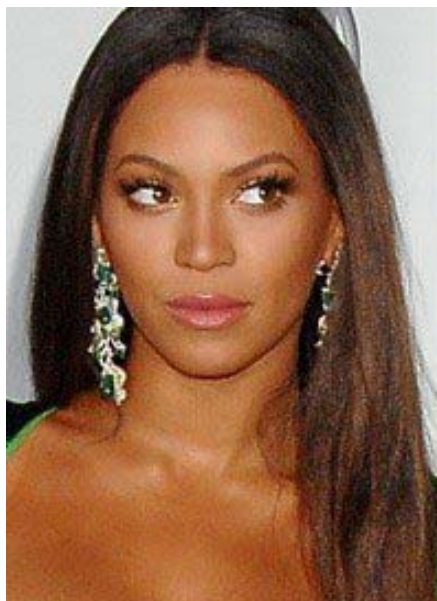
Why us? Curriculum

Handout 10.3: Media Images Collection 3



Why us? Curriculum

Handout 10.3: Media Images Collection 3





Activity 10.2

In Plenty and In Need

When you are feeling great about yourself and things seem to be going really well, what kinds of things do you do with your time? How do you take care of your health?

When you are feeling bad about yourself and the world seemed to be against you, what kinds of things did you do with your time? How do you take care of your health?

Think of a time when you did something wonderful, generous, kind, helpful, etc. What was going on your life at the time? How did you feel about yourself, before and after your actions?

Think of a time when you did something awful, petty, mean, cutting, etc. What was going on your life at the time? How did you feel about yourself, before and after your actions?



Handout 10.4: Resources

Resource Websites for Exploring Heritage, Identity, and History

African Americans

<http://blackhistory.com/>

<http://www.biography.com/blackhistory/>

Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans

<http://www.asian-nation.org/>

Latino and Hispanic Americans

<http://hispanicheritagemonth.gov/>

<http://www.biography.com/hispanic-heritage/index.jsp>

Native Americans

<http://nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/>

<http://www.monah.us/>

This is, obviously, a partial list of resources. However, there is an amazing bounty of resources in libraries and on the web, as well as local, regional, national, and internationally based groups. Please seek the places and resources that resonate for you!

Furthermore, this is a very limited list of identities. People may feel passionate about other aspects of their identity:

Ethnicity (Haitian, Cambodian, Mexican, Cherokee, Irish, etc.)

Religious Affiliation (Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, etc.)

Sexual Orientation (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, etc.)

Gender (Female, Male, Transgender, etc.)

Ability (Blind, Deaf, Dyslexic, etc.)

And More...

There are groups and resources centered around these other identities. Seek them out according to the identities that you hold central. Teachers, Librarians, and Community Centers may be helpful in helping you seek these resources.