

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL MUSICAL THEATRE TEACHER'S COMPANION

TOTALLY AWESOME



The Story:

This story takes the reader through the journey of a young woman struggling with her self-image and self-esteem.

Loni is a high school student who's neither confident in herself nor in the way others perceive her. She does well in school and has friends, but when it comes to her body she is always getting mixed messages. While everyone is nice to her, she senses that they are leaving something out of the conversation.

She accidentally joins the volleyball team and discovers that she has a natural talent. She leads her team to their best season ever, and is suddenly a star around school. But the attention she gets isn't all good. Spectators and students begin to make rude comments about her body. They call her "The Bull." Her insecurities come to the surface and threaten to derail the championship. With the support of her team she is able for the first time to accept herself, and embrace her body. Her stronger self-image raises her esteem, and she overcomes the rude comments and name calling to lead her team to the championship.

Description of the Lesson:

Body image is closely linked to self-esteem. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, low self-esteem in adolescents can lead to eating disorders, early sexual activity, substance use and suicidal thoughts.¹

In this lesson, students examine how social cues, including media, influence their view of themselves. The lesson will help students take a closer look at prejudices that live above and below the surface. Through literacy-based activities, student-facilitated discussions and educator-led follow-ups, students will not only learn how most people struggle with body image, but how negative comments can have a hurtful, even tragic impact on another's life. Students will come to understand that we are all individuals who deserve respect, and that we should accept our differences, regardless of our shape or size.

Sensitivity Alert: Loni's physical description might make a student uncomfortable. The teacher should be aware of student sensitivities, and replace "the bull" with a description that might not so closely mirror that of a particular student.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Objectives:

1. A greater awareness of the cultural stereotypes regarding body image and their influence on our perception of others.
2. A healthy, supportive and non-judgmental acceptance of body types, and a respect for each other's individuality.
3. Heightening our awareness of, and being sensitive to, how we make others feel about their bodies.

SEL Compliance Checklist

This lesson addresses all five SEL competencies as defined by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning:

- ✓ Self-Management
- ✓ Self-Awareness
- ✓ Social Awareness
- ✓ Relationship Skills
- ✓ Responsible Decision-Making

Literacy Prompts (to facilitate conversation and/or writing):

1. Imagine that you are Loni and describe your feelings as spectators were calling you names and making fun of you. Now, imagine the moment when you finally accepted yourself and how that made you feel?
2. Most teens, especially girls, feel insecure about their bodies. Why do you think this is so?
3. Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied because of his or her weight? If so, what was your reaction to what you saw and heard?
4. "You're not going to be perfect, but the most important thing is not trying to please anybody. It's about loving yourself from the inside out" – Storm Reid
Write a short essay on what this quote means to you.

Anchor Questions (larger, essential questions that guide students to reflect on their learning):

1. What is body image and are there good and bad ones?
2. How can we better accept our bodies and not judge others'?
3. How can we be more sensitive and respectful toward other people?

¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Developing Adolescents." APA: American Psychological Association. Accessed February 24, 2014, <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/develop.pdf>.