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# **Just Look at Yourself: Empowerment for Middle School Girls**

*Leader's Guide*

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# Introduction

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*Just Look at Yourself* was developed in response to a need to empower young women. It is intended to be used by school counselors, teachers, scout leaders, and anyone who has the ability to gather groups of girls to address issues of self-esteem and personal power.

The *Just Look at Yourself* workshop has been proven to be effective. As the medium used for controlled studies in two separate master's theses, *Just Look at Yourself* increased the self-esteem of the participants, with 95 percent of participants stating that they wished they had a class like this at school.

The workshop consists of eight one-hour sessions and is designed to fit within a nine-week quarter at school. Each session is enhanced with discussion and role-play scenes, giving participants the opportunity to practice making positive choices.

A unique aspect of *Just Look at Yourself* is the student journal writing. Each week, students are given journal-writing pages to fill out at home. These are intended to guide them in reflecting on the coming week's topic before the group meets again. Hopefully, the participants will make a habit of journal writing and use it as a tool to help navigate their teen years.

The PowerPoint presentations that accompany the program are intended for use with larger groups. The parent presentation is designed to educate parents about the topics discussed in *Just Look at Yourself*. Parents who are involved and aware of what their daughters are learning and going through can better assist them with the issues they face. The PowerPoint gives an overview of female adolescent development and offers suggestions for helping girls through this transition. When smaller groups are not possible, the student PowerPoints can be used to present the material from the eight-week workshop in two sessions.

If you are working with young women in groups, I thank you and applaud you. I hope you find this curriculum helpful, empowering, and a resource that makes your work easier.

Blessings,

*Victoria McGee*

# **Just Look at Yourself**

**Empowerment for  
Middle School Girls**

Parent Presentation

Opening slide

# Understanding Adolescent Girls



- ❖ Physical and emotional changes
- ❖ Parents both pulled in and pushed away

- Adolescence brings changes in both the physical and emotional states of girls.
- Parents sometimes walk a fine line between being pulled in and pushed away.

Though confusing and difficult, this process is normal.

# Living in Two Worlds



- ❖ One foot in childhood, the other in adulthood
- ❖ A difficult transition

- Adolescent girls (from age 11 up) live in two worlds: they have one foot in childhood and the other in the adult world.
- Learning how to navigate the adult world while giving up the things of childhood is a difficult transition.



## Feeling Like Two Different People

- ❖ Feeling like one person at school and another person at home
- ❖ “Trying on” different looks and groups of friends



- In addition, many girls report feeling like one person at school and another person at home.
- As a girl develops her outer personality, away from her family, she may “try on” different looks and different groups of friends as she seeks to find a place where she can be comfortable with her true self.

## Drop in Self-Esteem



- ❖ Growing self-doubt
- ❖ What is to blame?

- Once-confident tomboys become girls filled with self-doubt.
- So what is to blame for this drop in self-esteem? Let's go over some of the main factors.

# 1. Physical Changes

- ❖ Hormones
- ❖ Growth spurts
- ❖ Body hair, odor, acne
- ❖ Coordination
- ❖ Menarche



Physical changes:

- Hormonal fluctuations
- Growth spurts
- Body hair, odor, and acne
- Decreased coordination
- Menarche (The average age is 12½. The reasons for earlier menarche are thought to be environmental, with societal influences also playing a role.)

All of these physical factors affect self-esteem by producing a lack of confidence. Once-carefree and active girls are confronted with growing pains, menstrual cramps, and unpredictable awkwardness.