

Just the Way YOU Are

A peer led program to promote positive body image for young girls
Available for Elementary Schools in Washington County

Talia Seidman, 12th grade, Smithsburg High School
240-520-3086
taliaeveseidman@gmail.com

In our society, beauty is equated with being extremely thin. Girls quickly learn that if they do not fit this description, they are not beautiful. Many magazines teach girls how to become “beautiful,” by drastically changing who they are. As a result, girls can develop serious body image problems. By the age of ten, over 80% of girls think that they are fat, or fear becoming fat (www.nyc.gov).

Throughout middle and high school, I have heard many of my female peers make negative statements about their bodies. I too, at times, have felt self-conscious about my appearance. More recently, I have been developing a better body image and have become aware of the unrealistic portrayal of women’s bodies in the media. As a member of the Student Academic Leadership Team at Smithsburg High, the Young Women’s Political Leadership Program, and a senior high delegate to the Maryland Leadership Workshop program, I have learned many different ways to be an effective leader and positive role model. In *Just the Way YOU Are*, I utilize these leadership skills to enhance the girls’ experience and enjoyment of the program.

The Program

45-minute presentation for 5th grade girls, which includes:

- A poster activity helping girls differentiate between real beauty and fake beauty portrayed in the media
- A discussion of how these portrayals can lead to negative body image
- An interactive experience—a compliment circle. The girls form a circle and pass a ball with the words “just the way you are” written on it. Each girl compliments the girl next to her, while holding the ball. The compliment circle is repeated twice. The first time, the girls compliment the outer beauty of the girl next to her, and then pass the ball. The second time around the circle, the girls compliment the inner beauty of the girl next to her.

My Goal

By strengthening their body image, young girls will be less susceptible to society’s negative messages and feel more confident in their bodies.