

*like a girl*



THE EMPOWERMENT PROJECT.

## **Introduction**

To those who embark upon this program,

Thank you for wanting to improve the present and future lives of the girls in your community. The mission of this program is as follows: empowering the futures of all girls and girl-identifying adolescents through healthy relationships, positive mental health practices, and sexual health education. Through this journey, crafted with passion and care by a diverse group of college female students at the University of Denver with the help of Smart Girls® and SafeZone®, we hope that your entire community will have a trajectory towards long-lasting female youth empowerment. This is the blueprint for a space you can create to address pressing needs in the lives of youth. We encourage you to mold our curriculum and resources to the needs of your community, and continue to increase its reach, sustainability, inclusivity, and holisticness.

From our ambitions to yours,

Best of luck.

Thank you again.

- Lilli, Dajah, Cassidy, Tia, Zoi, and Jackson

## **Some Points to Remember**

### **Inclusivity**

In this program, we welcome all-girl and girl-identifying adolescents, and teens, and college students. Throughout this document, we have referred to the participants as “girls,” but we would like to reiterate this term in efforts of inclusiveness and brevity.

### **Timing**

When creating the lessons, we aimed for 45-60 minutes with the group in total. However, we understand that each program has different limitations and considerations on timing, so the discussions and activities are flexible and should be modified to each implementation.

### **The Importance of Occasional Anonymity**

This curriculum discusses private matters that middle school girls and high school girls may feel uncomfortable inquiring about in the weekly meetings. For these meetings (marked in their activity plans), we recommend setting out a suggestion box where anonymous questions can be asked. Furthermore, to track the progress of the program and the growth of the girls there will be a Pre-Survey and a Post-Survey (see “Conclusion”), and we recommend randomly assigning each girl a color, flower, a number, or a letter to sign her assignments and journal with. This will allow for the tracking of the group and not individuals, but will create a safe atmosphere for each girl to share for herself.

### **Age Recommendations**

The target audience of Project Like a Girl is high school students who identify with the term “girl.” However we believe it would be beneficial to any age girl, and trust that the facilitator can adapt the curriculum to how they see fit. The curriculum is also designed to guide the facilitator, and can therefore be facilitated by any upper-classmen high school student and beyond. We recommend a facilitating team rather than a single individual to offer representation and more diverse experiences. In the case that the facilitating team is a student or group of students, we advise finding a faculty mentor to ensure the facilitating team is well supported and able to manage various difficult topics that may arise.

### **SOY - “Some,” “Others,” “You”**

For some girls, this curriculum will be the first time they are learning about and exploring mental health, intersectionality, sexual health, sexuality, and other important topics. For other girls, who have learned about these ideas in their families, schools, or religions, they may have received messages that may reflect biases, stigmas, misconceptions, or otherwise strong opinions about such important topics. For both of these reasons, girls may ask challenging questions that are difficult to respond to, especially in a group setting. SOY is a useful strategy in answering these multifaceted questions, so that the facilitator is able to answer informatively and neutrally. The strategy shows multiple perspectives by pointing out what some people might do or think, what other people might do or think, and what the participant may do or think. It works like this: If a girl says, “My older sister uses birth control. What can you tell me about that?” you can respond by saying, “**Some** women decide to use birth control to prevent pregnancy. **Other** women practice abstinence. **You** can talk with your family or find other resources to learn more and eventually make a decision that

is right for you.” This framework empowers girls to consider their own values and make their own decisions. It is important for facilitators to use strategies such as these rather than sharing their own individual beliefs and experiences, because the leadership role may encourage girls to make the same choices as facilitators. We would encourage facilitators to reflect on their role as a leader, and prepare for challenging questions that might be asked before every lesson, to respond in a way that will empower girls to make their own decisions.

## Pre-Survey

Assigned Codename: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I understand what it means to feel good about myself. (1: not understanding, 5: full understanding)

1 2 3 4 5

2. I am able to do things as well as others.

a. Strongly Disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

3. I feel like I have many good qualities.

a. Strongly Disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

4. I have a positive attitude toward myself.

a. Strongly Disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

5. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

a. Strongly Disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

6. I am aware of barriers to my self-esteem. (1: not aware, 5: fully aware)

1 2 3 4 5

7. How comfortable are you knowing the differences between assertive, passive, and aggressive behavior? (1: unsure, 5: confident and comfortable defining all three)

1 2 3 4 5

8. How comfortable are you saying "no" to peer pressure? (1: not comfortable, 5: very comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5

9. I feel as though I am under a lot of pressure when making decisions.

- a. Not true for me
- b. Sometimes true
- c. Very true

10. How much do you know about the emotional effects of puberty? (1: not much knowledge, 5: very knowledgeable)

1 2 3 4 5

11. Having a sexually transmitted infection can make it difficult for me to have a baby later in life.

- a. True
- b. False
- c. Not Sure

12. A girl cannot get pregnant if she has sex before her first period.

- a. True
- b. False
- c. Not Sure

13. You cannot get a sexually transmitted infection if you have sex only once.

- a. True
- b. False
- c. Not Sure

14. How "ok" is it for the people you surround yourself with to call you fat, ugly, or some other names?

- a. Never ok

- b. Sometimes ok, if I deserve it
- c. Always ok, if I deserve it

15. How "ok" is it for the people you surround yourself with to threaten to hit or throw something at you?

- a. Never ok
- b. Sometimes ok, if I deserve it
- c. Always ok, if I deserve it

16. How "ok" is it for the people you surround yourself with to slap, kick, or punch you?

- a. Never ok
- b. Sometimes ok, if I deserve it
- c. Always ok, if I deserve it

17. How "ok" is it for the people you surround yourself with to force you to do something sexually that you don't want to do?

- a. Never ok
- b. Sometimes ok, if I deserve it
- c. Always ok, if I deserve it

18. I feel comfortable knowing the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship (1: unsure, 5: I know the difference completely)

1 2 3 4 5

19. I understand the psychological effects of the media and advertisements on me. (1: unsure, 5: I understand the effects very well)

1 2 3 4 5

20. Can you comfortably tell the people at home how you feel?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Kind of

21. Is there someone you feel comfortable talking to about sex?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Kind of

22. I feel comfortable acknowledging my identities and expressing my identities to others.

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Kind of

23. I understand the spectrum of gender and sexual identities and am comfortable talking with a diverse group of people in a careful and thoughtful way (1: not comfortable at all 5: very comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5

## **Curriculum Summary**

### **Lesson 1: Self-Esteem Part 1**

This lesson begins the program by conducting group introductions and creating group norms that will give the program structure and purpose. The lesson then moves into activities to encourage self-love, and begin to define self-esteem.

### **Lesson 2: Self-Esteem Part 2**

This lesson builds upon the ideas in Lesson 1, but the activities and discussions can be re-organized so they are not dependent on being taught consecutively/separately. The activity “Dealing With Downers and Building up with Boosters” introduces the negative impacts on self-esteem, which can originate externally or internally, as well as the positive impacts on self-esteem, which also originate both externally and internally. The rest of the lesson encourages and practices healthy self-esteem and positive self-talk.

### **Lesson 3: Making Decisions**

This lesson is centered around the concept of value-based decision-making, encouraging the group to consider their values and ensure that the decisions they make align with their values. The group will then practice using their values to make decisions in hypothetical situations.

### **Lesson 4: Being Assertive**

This lesson breaks down the differences between Passive, Assertive, and Aggressive behavior, encouraging girls to be assertive, with an emphasis on resisting peer pressure—which builds upon the previous lesson on making healthy decisions. This lesson encourages girls to resist peer pressure when it involves a decision that does not align with their values.

### **Lesson 5: Know Our Minds**

The focus of this lesson is to begin to disrupt the stigmas around both mental health and the physical and emotional changes around puberty. The lesson applies the concepts of stigmas to introduce periods, which will be expanded on in Lesson 6. The goal of this lesson is to model that discussions of periods and traditionally sensitive topics do not have to be negative or shameful especially so that the group. This goal is useful for the discussion of mental health and periods for their own sake, but it is also important for cultivating a group dynamic and space where the girls feel comfortable discussing important topics and being vulnerable with each other.

### **Lesson 6: Staying Safe Like A Girl**

This lesson unpacks sexually transmitted infections, how to prevent them, and how to treat them. At Project Like A Girl, we believe that knowledge is power, and to be empowered women requires knowledge of our bodies and how to care for our bodies. This lesson sets out to provide girls with the knowledge they need to be empowered in their bodies. For this lesson, we advise having resources available to the girls that are specific to your community/city/state, such as where and how girls can anonymously get barrier methods like condoms as well as contraceptives such as birth control. In our program, we utilized an organization called BC4U, which is a branch of Children's Hospital that specializes in sexual education for those under 25 years of age. We recommend using a similar resource, *especially* if the program is being facilitated by peers or college students.

### **Lesson 7: Navigating Relationships**

In this lesson, girls have the opportunity to understand healthy habits and characteristics of relationships that they have in their lives. This includes specifically speaks on romantic relationships; however, familial relationships are mentioned a few times through the lesson. Understanding red flags and how to identify different forms of abuse is at the forefront of this lesson to allow the girls to see the difference between healthy and unhealthy forms of relationships.

### **Lesson 8: Expanding Your Knowledge**

This lesson dives into defining and understanding different concepts in relationship to those who identify as a part of the LGBTQ community. Throughout all of our Project Like A Girl lessons, we strive to as inclusive as possible with all of our lessons, and exposing girls to the LGBTQ community is a critical point in that process. Understanding how to handle difficult conversations with members of the community and showing the same respect that all humans deserve to members of the community will help the girls navigate the world around them. This also gives girls the opportunity to explore their own identifies and have a better comprehension of the preconceived ideas that are placed on the LGBTQ community.

### **Lesson 9: Body Positivity**

Throughout this lesson, girls will be able to identify and understand that they are perfect and accepted just the way that they are. This lesson begins to dive into how the media has placed constraints and created a negative message about bodies and body images. The girls will have the opportunity to understand that the media's negative influence can be seen in every aspect and how they should be reminded that they truly are amazing the way that they are. They will also have the opportunity to write a letter to their future selves.

### **Lesson 10: Navigating the Media**

This lesson continues and elaborates on body positivity in Lesson 9, guiding the girls to understand that the recurring concepts of our self-esteem, values, and decisions are heavily influenced by the media and our societies in general. This lesson encourages girls to love their bodies whether or not in conforms to the unattainable standard of beauty perpetuated by the media, and furthermore to love their whole selves, because their worth is not defined by their appearance. The hope for this lesson is that girls will leave the program ready to challenge the messages they receive in society and love themselves radically and rebelliously.

### **Final Celebration**

The lesson plan, activities, and discussions for this *optional* session are included in "Conclusion." The purpose of the Final Celebration is to connect with

parents/caretakers/mentors in positive and healthy ways, ensuring that the lessons learned from Project Like A Girl are introduced into the family life as well, so the girls will continue to have support after the program culminates. This also presents an opportunity for girls to create and finish a presentation they can share with the group and the parents/caretakers/mentors.

## **How to Use the Curriculum**

The ordering of the curriculum aforementioned and listed on the website under “The Lessons” is how we envisioned the lessons best fitting together. However, we imagine that different facilitators will have different missions in their program, and not all lessons will be necessary for every implementation. We encourage facilitators to use whichever lessons will serve your program best, or to use pick and choose activities and discussions. All the lessons can be taught separately, or in any order. Of course, feel welcome and invited to modify the lessons, discussions, and activities to be more inclusive and holistic.

We hope the curriculum we have cultivated is helpful, inspiring, and empowering for your group! Thank you for visiting Project Like A Girl!