

Session 1: Body and Health

Body and health closely interact with each other. When describing the state of a body health is an inevitable and important factor. Aspects such as

- mental/emotional and physical well-being;
- life satisfaction and quality of life;
- interaction;
- body awareness;
- nutrition and eating habits;
- physical activity;
- health awareness;
- accidents;
- bullying;
- risk behaviour

find themselves in these two existential aspects of life.

Gender perspectives in this area have been investigated by social science health research since the 1990s. As a preliminary result it should be said that the appreciation and the importance of gender is also linked to and is illustrated by the body. The body may thus be compared to a socio-cultural “wax tablet” and is a carrier of meaning and stands for the production of difference. The biological body and the social body interweave noticeably.

Another finding is the fact that there are sex differences in the frequency of various diseases as well as in life expectancy, and subsequently a question of links between health and gender.

The following collection of materials targeting at “Body and Health” offers five activities with boys (and girls):

1. A Healthy Diet in Europe

The activity “A Healthy Diet in Europe” will demonstrate in which way nutrition habits, body awareness and health risks are related to one another. This didactic unit intends to make boys reflect their eating habits and to help them understand possible risks.

2. Only Little Boys Drink Lemonade

The unit “Only Little Boys Drink Lemonade” has been designed to point out correlations between deviant behaviour, unhealthy nutrition habits (in this case alcohol abuse) and the inability to maintain one’s position in a group.

The unit aims at questioning the self-image of boys; a further focus is on discussing conflict strategies and strategies of coming to terms with one’s life.

3. Relaxation with Boys

The activity “Relaxation with Boys” puts the focus of attention on the divergence between “activity – passivity”, “control – devotion” and “acceleration-deceleration”. Traditionally boys are often encouraged to be active and quick as these characteristics are supposed to be well-known and accepted masculine attributes. Boys rarely experience what “deceleration” and “relaxation” may mean to them – physically and emotionally.

In this unit exercises and tools for implementation will be presented.

4. What is a man - what is masculinity?

The practical unit "What is a man - what is masculinity?" refers to the different male body practices. The socio-cultural dimension of the "shaping of the body surface" with its gender-related effects will be discussed. At the same time this unit targets at an extension or reflection of feasible concepts of masculinity (pluralism model) and discusses the elaboration of boys' own representations of masculinity.

5. Health – What is health? Conceptions of health for children

The activity "Health - what is health? Conceptions of health for children" discusses didactic approaches to subjective and objective meanings of the term "health"; the construction of an individual frame of reference for the boys' own behaving will be made a subject of discussion. Besides the food pyramid exercises for "aerobic training" will be suggested.