

Empowering girls, families, and their circles of community.

BODY LIBERATION:

Building grit, resilience and community for girls and women

Abstract

“Humans are a varied and divergent bunch with all manner of beliefs, morals, and bodies. Systems of oppression thrive off our inability to make peace with difference and injure the relationship we have with our own bodies.”

Sonya Renee Taylor’s *The Body is Not an Apology*

“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’ve fallen in.”

Bishop Desmond Tutu

As a mental health professional, you are well aware of the body image challenges of youth and adults. For many, appearance is the focus of body dissatisfaction. For others, body esteem may be impacted by chronic or life-limiting health conditions and related body changes. And, while it is beyond the scope of this presentation, we note that for those with marginalized bodies such as individuals with transgender and nonbinary identities, body acceptance is a fraught concept and can be considered an offensive and life-threatening one. The fact is, our society has deep, long-standing roots in diet and ableist culture. Diet culture is a system of beliefs that idolizes thinness and promotes the false notion that thinness equates health. Ableism, as Emily Ladau defines it, “is attitudes, actions, and circumstances that devalue people because they are disabled or perceived as having a disability.” Both have likely had an impact on us and the clients we work with in both obvious and subtle ways.

How can counselor, educators and clinicians bring a Body Liberation perspective to our work and our own lives? In this presentation, Dr. Youngs and Dr. Johnson draw on research and applications from Liberation Psychology, the Health at Every Size movement, and the Body Positivity movement to inform liberating clinical and social justice conversations and therapeutic activities.

Most importantly, Dr. Youngs and Dr. Johnson provide empowering interventions for personal and social justice work around Body Liberation for our clients on this journey. Specifically, the presenters apply the work of the following to support clients’ empowerment:

- Janie Victoria Ward, Professor Emerita at Simmons University
- Sonya Renee Taylor, author and activist
- Christy Harrison, author of Diet-Culture
- Ruth King, DEI and Mindfulness expert
- Cyndie Spiegel, author of Micro-Joys
- Robyn Goldberg, intuitive eating counselor

Empowering girls, families, and their circles of community.

As we work from a Body Liberation stance, we work to not only make a difference in the lives of our clients. We seek to “go upstream,” as Desmond Tutu notes, and change the culture in which body oppression takes place.

Goals and Objectives

Learning Objective 1: Participants will identify 3 socio-cultural factors that impact how girls and women feel about their bodies.

Learning Objective 2: Participants will briefly describe 1 theoretical lens that supports the Body Liberation framework and its related clinical interventions.

Learning Objective 3: Participants will identify 3 interventions that they can apply with clients to foster Body Liberation.

Course Schedule

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome, What you will learn today, Our identity stories
9:15 – 9:30	Experiential Activity for group learning and discussion
9:30 – 9:45	Body Liberation – contributions from Liberation Psychology, Health At Every Size, Body Positivity, and Janie Victoria Ward
9:45 – 10:05	Experiential Activity and application of a Body Liberation approach to the activity
10:05 10:45	Tips and Tools for integrating internal work with empowerment and social justice
10:45 – 11:00	Dialogue about take-aways

References

Comas-Diaz, L & Rivera, E.T. (Ed.) (2020) **Liberation Psychology: Theory, Method, Practice, and Social Justice**. American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Harrison, C (2019) **Anti-Diet: Reclaim your time, money, well-being, and happiness through intuitive eating**. Little Brown and Company, New York, New York.

Ladau, E. (2021). **Demystifying Disability: What to know, what to say, and how to be an ally**. Ten Speed Press, California and New York.