

Book Review: The Body Project: Promoting Body Acceptance and Preventing Eating Disorders

Contributed by Michelle Estile

Book review of *The Body Project*, by E. Stice and K. Presnell, reviewed by Michelle Estile.

Stice, E., & Presnell, K. (2007). *The Body Project: Promoting Body Acceptance and Preventing Eating Disorders. Facilitator Guide and Workbook*. New York: Oxford University Press. Facilitator Guide—152 pages, \$35, paperback. Workbook—32 pages, \$45, ten-copy set.

From peer-reviewed studies to tabloid speculations about celebrities' weight loss, it is clear that knowledge about eating disorders abounds. On television, young women with eating disorders are tragically portrayed between commercials for diet supplements and ice cream. It is easy to forget that people in early or "sub-threshold" stages of eating disorders may seem normal by cultural standards.

Authors Eric Stice and Katherine Presnell examine the role of the "thin ideal" in the development and prevention of eating disorders. They combine their interests and research in eating disorder risk factors, prevention, and treatment to create *The Body Project*, part of the *Programs That Work* series. Whereas many treatment oriented books focus on psychoeducation for actively eating disordered clients, *The Body Project* is aimed more toward prevention. The program is targeted toward adolescent girls and young women to reflect their prevalence in the population of clients diagnosed with eating disorders.

The facilitator guide includes two major sections. Part 1 contains detailed directions for leading the four-session *Body Project*. The objectives are to "reduce risk for current and future eating pathology and symptoms" and to "reduce risk factors for eating pathology." The intervention is based on introducing cognitive dissonance within a group setting to critique the "thin ideal" of being "ultraslender, whatever the cost." {mosgoogle right}

The authors are thorough. Social work researchers, educators, and practitioners interested in evidence-based practice will appreciate the efficacy trial summaries. The comprehensive and practical instructions on implementing the program will benefit social work students and novice group leaders. Each session chapter spells out the materials needed, time frames for each activity, and a suggested script for delivering the content. The group interventions are both creative and interactive, including role-plays, affirmations, discussion, and homework exercises. There is even a chapter on implementation that covers administrative concerns, such as recruitment, retention, and group leader training.

In Part 2, the *Healthy Weight* intervention is described as an elective, four-session intervention promoting healthy lifestyle changes to achieve a healthy weight and body acceptance. The concept of "energy balance" is used as an alternative to dieting. Whereas dieting means "time-limited constraints on caloric intake" to counteract overeating, energy balance focuses on smaller, more sustained changes for a lifestyle that balances caloric intake and output. Although the *Healthy Weight* program is presented as an adjunct, it is as detailed and organized as the *Body Project*. It could also create behavioral, lifestyle reinforcement to the cognitive shifts made in the *Body Project*.

The workbook for participants includes all the exercises assigned in the facilitator guide. Its pages are attractively designed with space for completing the homework exercises. One minor criticism would be that the workbook is not broken up into sections as is the facilitator guide. This might be helpful, however, if time constraints demand revising the order or length of activities.

Overall, *The Body Project* manages to be both accessible and comprehensive. It would be useful for practitioners in any stage of their career who are interested in eating disorder prevention.

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