DIGITAL HEALTH and GENDER GUIDE

How to help young people challenge gender norms about health in a digital world

María José Camacho-Miñano and Emma Rich

(Coordinators)

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Instituto de las MUJERES

Funded by the Women's Institute of the Spanish Governing Body of Equality.

Spanish National calls of grants for postgraduate courses in
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Contents

THE DIGITAL HEALTH AND GENDER GUIDE

Digital Health and Gender is an educational resource aimed at supporting teaching and learning around gender and digital technologies for healthy lifestyles in Primary (ages 10-11) and Secondary Education (ages 12-16). It can be used in schools and other educative contexts, such as youth centres, clubs and by a range of communities.

Developed by a team of researchers from six Universities (Bath, Complutense, Edinburgh, Bolognia, Alcalá, Vigo) and three countries (Spain, UK, Italy), the Guide covers a range of contemporary gendered issues related to learning about health through digital technologies. These include a broad range of issues, from pressures on social media associated with body ideals, the role of health influencers, to self-tracking devices and digital data. The Guide is intended to help teachers, educators and young people to navigate the complex terrain of digital health and gender.

Designed for flexible use across lessons, subjects and contexts, a range of key findings, guidelines and activities are provided.

INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended for adults interested in learning and co-creating knowledge with young people about the gendered dimensions of digital health. Digital health refers to the incredible number of digital devices, apps, social media platforms and websites that help people learn about, measure and monitor their health and health behaviours (e.g., nutrition, physical activity, psychological well-being, etc.). Young people are avid users of these technologies, that can be useful to acquire health knowledge and healthy lifestyles. However, digital health technologies are far from gender-neutral, as they produce powerful gendered messages that might limit young people's choices and restrict the development of their health and identities.

Therefore, raising awareness within the educational community about the opportunities and risks of digital health remains a pressing issue. This includes the way in which digital technologies focused on promoting healthy lifestyles are used by young people, as well as their impact on their health, well-being and gender identities. We hope this guide will help teachers, educators and young people develop critical understandings of how their negotiations and experiences in these digital spaces contribute to their understandings of gender.

The **Digital Health and Gender Guide** is an educational resource designed to promote a critical approach to digital health technologies among young people, which helps them adopt health knowledge and practices in empowered, inclusive and equitable ways. The aim of the guide is to develop teaching strategies and activities about the gender dimensions of digital health, reinforcing expertise among teachers and other educators working with young people to help them navigate the complex landscape of digital health technologies. The guide focuses on challenging gender-related norms, values and inequalities and promotes learning about equity and social justice among young people.

The **Digital Health and Gender Guide** activities can be applied in a variety of ways. Designed for schools, the guide can be also used, adapted and refined in different ways to meet the needs of the diversity of children and young people, in different situations and circumstances. Therefore, this guide can be extensively

used in different settings such as schools, youth centres, clubs and by a range of communities and stakeholders.

The guide is based on both our previous experience as university teachers and researchers and it is informed by contemporary research. We have developed some activities in our training courses and research with in-service and pre-service teachers, and the activities in this guide are informed by the latest knowledge in research.

The guide has been developed as an output funded by the **Women's Institute of the Spanish Governing Body of Equality.** Throughout 2021, we worked together to develop a seminar for school teachers entitled *"Digital health in teacher training: Exploring gender and interdisciplinary perspectives"* which was organized with the collaboration of the Institute of Feminist Research of the Complutense University of Madrid. As part of this seminar, we hosted a scientific conference with the international colleagues from the UNA Europa project[1] in which we were collaborating. The insights from this collaboration have been translated into this practice-based teaching and learning guide.

The guide begins by outlining why it is necessary to adopt a gender perspective on digital health technologies, the objectives of the guide, and key findings from our previous research in the field. Based on this expert knowledge, we then present some guidelines to support teachers (or other adults, such as coaches, health professionals, youth educators) and other stakeholders interested in digital health and gender. This will be followed by some methodological tips and examples of detailed activities that illustrate what teaching and learning that promote digital health adopting a gender approach looks like.

We hope that the **Digital Health and Gender Guide** will promote learning that benefits young people in ways that help them feel better prepared to think critically about gender as they use digital health technologies.

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1   UNA Europa seed funding project SF2019002 entitled "An interdisciplinary, international and collaborative research approach to developing critical digital health pedagogies for teachers of physical education" (www.DigihealthPE.com).
Research team: María José Camacho-Miñano (Principal Investigator), Emma Rich, Shirley Gray, Kristiina Kumpulainen, Sarah MacIsaac, Antonio Maturo.

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1. DIGITAL HEALTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE: WHY A GENDER APPROACH?

In recent years, with the inclusion of digital technologies in the health field, we are witnessing a 'digital health revolution', which is particularly powerful in the area of promoting healthy lifestyles. Ranging from websites and online forums to the most recent technologies such as apps, social media or wearable devices (e.g., smartwatches), these digital technologies are oriented towards the development of healthy habits: physical activity, healthy diet, psychological wellbeing, etc.

These digital health technologies play an educational role in how young people learn about and understand their bodies, health, physical fitness, and wellbeing. This form of learning frequently occurs informally, although there has also been a growing use of these technologies in schools and other formal educative contexts. Even in schools, these digital technologies are often applied without a critical understanding of the broader social and cultural contexts that shape individual's health knowledge and behaviours.

Adopting a critical approach, in this guide we focused on how these digital technologies are far from neutral but convey powerful and normative **gendered messages** in the specific ways of understanding healthy behaviours, bodies, identities, and even the data generated by digital technologies themselves.

How are digital health technologies gendered?

Previous research in digital health supports this affirmation. Specifically, messages that circulate through digital health technologies (e.g., on social media, apps) are gendered in a number of key ways.

Gendered body ideals
Digital health technologies promote gendered body ideals and health as a commodity. For example, social media messages about fitness display thin and toned female bodies and muscular masculine bodies, while apps of diet promote sexualized ideas of the female 'healthy' body (Maturo & Moretti, 2018). Commercial health technologies play a powerful role in the gendered marketing and messaging young people are exposed to. These messages are infused with

moral implications which encourage young people to work on their bodies as the 'right' choice. In this context, many young people are negatively influenced by the unrealistic gendered expectations of 'perfect fit bodies' and 'perfect lifestyles' circulating in these technologies.

Burdens of individual responsibility

The massive growth in digital health technologies has been accompanied by a shift towards empowering individuals as 'informed' and 'consumers'. Whilst this may bring about opportunities for increased health knowledge, there are concerns that this places too much responsibility and burden on young people for their health. This approach also brings the risk of blaming the individuals, encouraging them to understand and relate to their bodies and health as something always to be improved or fixed. There is a need to give more attention to the wider social determinants and influences of health and digital engagement.

Quantification of the health and the body

Many health apps and digital devices have the capacity for monitoring and self-tracking, providing an understanding of the self through numbers (e.g., heart rate, step taken, calories consumed), something that can be problematic in different ways (Lupton, 2016; Rich & Miah, 2014).

First, through these practices of tracking, monitoring and regulating their bodies and behaviours, young people are increasingly encouraged to engage in self-surveillance and think about their bodies as something to work on. Moreover, self-monitoring and control of the body in this way is carried out using normative body models as a reference. Additionally, data are conceived as something objective, neutral, more legitimate, and therefore more valuable than other sources such as our bodily sensations, the vitalities of our lives and the experiences of our own bodies. Ignoring our living contexts in this way reinforces risks and inequalities.

The very functioning of technologies must be considered: algorithms and their associated human practices (e.g., *likes* on social media) prioritise messages that teach young people which bodies and practices have social value (Camacho-Miñano *et al*, 2019; Rich, 2019). Thus, gender stereotypes are reinforced by our own uses, through which digital health technologies channel our vision of reality.

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How do young people use digital health technologies in a gendered way?

There is a great variance in what and how young people are using digital technologies for health. Research confirms that young people frequently use a broad range of health-related digital devices and platforms, and they have experiences **which are** *both* **positive and problematic** (Rich *et al.*, 2020; Rich & Lupton, 2022). Participants report a range of benefits when they use these technologies such as obtaining useful information about healthy diet, exercise or body image. At the same time, they can be vulnerable to their risks, such as increased self-monitoring and surveillance of the body, extreme diet or exercise behaviours.

Trying to meet gendered expectations, in general many boys tend to use digital health technologies to develop muscularity whilst girls have concerns over body weight and sometimes develop obsessive practices of using technologies for dieting, weight loss and being toned (Camacho-Miñano *et al.*, 2019; Rich *et al.*, 2020). This is not to suggest that these are inherent differences within boys and girls. Rather, dominant ways of thinking about the body remain demarcated along binary notions of gender. However, young people are far from being a homogenous group as there are **differences and inequalities** not only based on gender, but also on other attributes such as sexuality, social class, age, disability and ethnicity.

Gender is often performed in relation to gendered norms which are reduced to 'binary' categories of boy/girl. However, this guide does not conceive gender within this binarism, and instead envisions gender as a non-binary spectrum. It is important to recognize the experiences, rights and opportunities of transgender and nonbinary individuals. Moreover, far from homogenous experiences, boys and girls experience multiple masculinities and femininities as gender is always intersected by experiences of other factors such as ethnicity, sexuality, social class. Therefore, young people's engagements with online technologies are complex, with much diversity around what they engage with, how they engage with it and the resulting effects.

Moreover, young people have difficulties in assessing the credibility of information from a multitude of digital sources and also claim the help of trusted adults to negotiate the tensions and contradictions around these technologies (Goodyear & Armour, 2018; Lupton, 2018; Rich *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, the complexities of young people's learning about health and healthy lifestyles behaviours through digital technologies provide a strong justification to the need to prepare teachers and educators to help them to navigate this complex terrain of digital health and gender.

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2. OBJECTIVES of THE GUIDE

The **Digital Health and Gender Guide** has been designed to achieve the following objectives:

☀ To raise awareness in the educational community about the ways in which digital technologies focused on promoting healthy lifestyles are used by young people, as well as their impact on health, well-being and gender identities.

☀ To increase the understanding of the gendered messages conveyed by and through digital technologies about the body and health, adopting a critical approach to challenge normative ideas and values.

☀ To provide a set of educative guidelines about digital health and gender to be applied in educational settings (schools, youth centres, clubs, teacher training centres, etc.) and by a range of communities and stakeholders.

☀ To prepare school teachers and educators on the gender dimension of digital health, helping them:

☀ To understand digital technologies not as neutral but as conveyers of gendered messages and spaces through which young people learn about gender, health and their own identities.

☀ To co-create educational strategies and activities about the gender dimension of digital health, helping young people to understand the complexities of these technologies, as well as their own capacities to negotiate and even influence them.

☀ To critically reflect on their role and responsibility to help young people to critically understand digital health technologies.

3. KEY FINDINGS

Through our collaboration in the seminar *"Digital health in teacher training: Exploring gender and interdisciplinary perspectives"* [2], the project team worked together to develop a set of key conclusions on the area of digital health and gender which are informed by our latest knowledge in research.

- **Gender norms and stereotypes** about body and health behaviours on digital health significantly impact on young people's gendered identities, as they define the "healthy" subject linked to particular ideas around weight, body shape and gender. They prescribe a masculine ideal linked to muscle development "for boys" and a feminine ideal as slim and toned as appropriate "for girls". Research reveals that many young people find it difficult to resist these body pressures, which can affect their health, health choices, gendered identities and well-being (Camacho-Miñano *et al.*, 2019; Rich *et al.*, 2020b).

- These gendered representations of the "ideal healthy body" construct young people as a homogeneous group of young girls or boys, eroding the **multiple identities of young people** that emerge in the intersection of gender with different ethnicities, sexualities, bodies or disabilities. Moreover, these may overlook more complex experiences of transgender and nonbinary individuals. The idealized conceptions about the body and health are also separated from the complexities of everyday life and the social determinants of health.

- Many young people are well aware of how social media and digital technologies influence their health behaviour in gendered ways, but find it difficult to adopt "critical" behaviours or resist social norms; for many it is even difficult to opt out of always "being on" social media. **Social pressures from peers** make it hard for young people to "be" different, and when they do, they suffer consequences: social exclusion, bullying and being labelled as fat, ugly or lazy are the risks for those who challenge gender,

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[2] Funded by the Women's Institute of the Spanish Governing Body of Equality. Spanish National calls of grants for postgraduate courses in gender studies and university activities related to equality opportunities between women and men. (Reference: 7/6ACT/2020, Coordinator: Camacho-Miñano, M.J.)

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health and body norms, both *online* and *offline*. The educational sphere has a responsibility to intervene in these digitised learnings that circulate in parallel to formal education.

🌟 Our research reveals how even though young people may critically evaluate these ideal representations this might not change the desire to want to achieve the perfect body (Camacho-Miñano *et al.*, 2019; Rich, Lewis, & Miah 2020). Moreover, traditional digital literacy approaches do not necessarily lead to the capacity to resist these desires (Ni Shuilleabhain *et al.*, 2021). The key point here is that these digital technologies help to generate these desires (eg., *likes*) that are reproduced through the algoritmic function of social media. Therefore, it is paramount to develop broader critical approaches beyond the mind, mobilising the **feelings (or affects)** through the body.

🌟 There is a challenge in **educating young women** to negotiate contemporary messages of body, health and fitness that circulate through social media and other digital health technologies within the broader cultural context that pressure them to be and behave in a narrowed feminine way. Our current culture instructs and regulates young women's bodies and health through a language of choice, empowerment and health, yet at the same time, physical exercise and other apparently healthy habits are conceived as disciplined work to achieve the ideal body and be 'successful' women.

🌟 The **culture of influencers and celebrities** that circulates on social networks has a significant impact on young people, generating unrealistic expectations of body perfection and privileged lifestyles (e.g., brands, fashion, etc.) on the basis of which young people compare and value themselves (MacIsaac *et al.*, 2018). Social media influencers develop advertising campaigns with commercial aims, frequently in a hidden way and reproducing gendered stereotypes. It is necessary to make visible the commercial interests and consumerism that maintain this influencer culture of fame and apparent social success.

🌟 Specifically, **health influencers**, who are self-described specialists in different areas of health promotion (e.g., fitness, dieting, yoga) and who have a large number of followers on social media have an enormous impact over young people. They define the healthy body in a very restricted way (body ideal), commodifying youthful beauty and intimacy to make themselves relatable. They "sell" the need to transform oneself, not only on a bodily level, but also

on a psychological one (e.g., "be confident", "you can do everything"). All of this forms a set of strategies that disseminate the idea of a deficient subject in need of continuous improvement through the 'consumption of health'.

⭐ **Technologies for self-monitoring** (such as fitness bands or smart watches) encourage adopting norms and practices to achieve ideal "healthy" gendered bodies and behaviours. These technologies provide numerical or quantified data about oneself as an "objective" or "true" knowledge. These data reinforce the idea of a neutral subject in need of continuous improvement of health behaviours in order to be considered a responsible healthy citizen. This can be motivating for some people, but it eventually increases the surveillance and anxiety on the effort to achieve an "ideal" state of health.

⭐ The functioning of digital health technologies, such as the **power of algorithmics** and their affordances, are designed to provide content tailored to individual's profile and uses (e.g. shares, *likes*). This functioning restricts young people's choices and can reinforce particular views of health as more valid knowledge than others.

⭐ Online and offline spaces, formal and informal contexts and learnings influence each other in **complex and entangled ways.** For example, young people are very aware of the value of their bodies as symbols of social status both online and offline among peers. This is not exempt from risks, especially for females and minority young people who may receive more criticism online for being different. This complexity needs to be acknowledged and explored in critical ways to empower all young people.

⭐ Despite the power of the above influences, **young people are not passive learners but active participants** within a complex digital world. They can reproduce the risks and inequalities of digital health, but can also challenge their normative gendered messages and therefore become advocates for diversity, equality and social justice. This endeavor justifies the critical approach to digital health and gender adopted in this resource. The activities are therefore designed to enable teachers and students learn together and co-produce knowledge.

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4. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The following recommendations and guidelines provide key principles and features to address the gender dimensions when teaching young people about digital health technologies in a critical way.

For teachers and educators

✹ There is an urgent need to help young people to question the dominant representations of the ideal "healthy" bodies "for men" and "for women" and the "healthy" behaviours, frequently quantified as "objective" data through numbers (step taken, heart rate, etc). These ideas convey the need of continuous improvement of the body and health behaviours as 'work', something that place too much responsibility and burden on young people for their health. They have to understand their **health as a process** contextualised in the complexity of their own lives instead of an ideal goal.

✹ Additionally, there is a need to give more attention to how social contexts and inequalities shape digital health technology uses and health behaviours among young people. Gender intersects with social class, ethnicity, sexuality or disability, generating a **multiplicity of femininities and masculinities** which have to be respected and heard through critical education.

✹ The role of **health influencers** needs to be critically questioned. In particular, it should be made visible how they define the healthy body in a narrow way conforming the gendered body ideals, how they commodify youthful beauty and how they promote the need to transform oneself to be "healthier" and "happier". They try to convey their messages trying to be "as your close friend" who wants to "help you" to overcome your faults or problems through the consumerism of the "healthy" services and products they advertise.

✹ How to help young people to examine these dominant gendered representations of the ideal "healthy" bodies and "healthy" behaviours should be a critical issue for schools. To challenge these instrumental approaches that are ironically disembodied, young people can be encouraged to experience their bodies in positive ways, with attention drawn towards **what the body can do, how the body feels and the experiences that the body enables.** Here,

young people can learn to value their bodies intrinsically and not just for how the body looks.

🌟 Therefore, critical knowledge has to move beyond language and talking about ideas to an **embodied learning** that mobilises the whole learner (body and mind), including their desires and feelings (or affects). In learning experiences where movement is central (e.g., Physical Education), there can be significant opportunities to generate bodily sensations and emotions that help to destabilise the desires to attain the idealized health and body. There is also potential to identify dominant gender norms and to experience moving the body in ways that defy or challenge gendered expectations.

🌟 **Creative artistic practices** (drawings, collages, free writing, photography, filmmaking, etc.) are also exciting ways of bringing the body more centrally into the learning process, as they facilitate new and diverse ways of expressions to critically investigate issues of digital health and gender. These practices bring people together through diverse languages that connects with their interests, interpersonal links and experiences of cooperation and collaboration, which have positive effects over the health and wellbeing of the people. These creative approaches enable young people and educators to co-produce new knowledge and understandings to challenge the value of certain "bodies" and "healthy behaviours" in our digitalized society.

🌟 Therefore, digital health can be explored critically through **interdisciplinary approaches** in schools and other educative contexts, integrating diverse learning areas such as digital technologies, movements, arts, languages, etc. These broader activities can be a motivating way for students and teachers to explore together new boundaries and ways of knowing and feeling different about digital health and their multiple gendered identities.

🌟 We have to recognize that social media platforms can be also spaces where possibilities for **diverse gender and sexual expression can exist for young people.** This opens new opportunities for developing a critical approach to digital health technologies among the diversity of young people which helps them to adopt health knowledge and practices in empowered, inclusive and equitable ways. Therefore, they have to be provided with learning opportunities to understand their own capacity to produce new ways of doing and being on social media, as well as their responsibility about the type of messages and interactions they generate online.

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⭐ **Developing positive social relationships** and trust is very important if young people are to be supported to critically educate themselves about digital health and gender. Young people need to have a voice and feel that they are in a safe space to question and publicly examine dominant norms. This includes developing a positive relationship with their teachers, but also with each other. Developing these relationships takes time and is not something that can be achieved in isolated or 'one-off' lessons.

⭐ **Images** are very present in our daily lives. Photographs in the mass media and social media incorporate biased messages about the body, health, gender and the practice of physical and sporting activity. We look more than we read, but sometimes we are not aware of the information conveyed in photographs. It is necessary to become visually literate in order to learn to critique visual messages.

⭐ **Visual narrative enquiry** is a process of exploration and understanding of experience where photographs, together with other formats of expression such as memes, videos or GIFs, allow self-exploration of one's own life and social context, contributing to personal and collective development. This enquiry can be an educational strategy that, transferred to the digital spaces frequented by young people, can help them to develop a critical view of the visual resources they consume, produce and share.

⭐ **Humour**, such as that generated by **memes**, has the capacity to put us in contact with uncomfortable issues through irony, exaggeration or parody, allowing us to self-examine, rethink and criticise stereotypes. For this reason, it can be an ally in educational proposals for critical thinking (eg., activity nº 4 of this guide), understanding that laughing can be a physical and emotional experience that powerfully inspires change, connects people, and invites them to understand and question a socially constructed reality.

⭐ **Teachers** are also constrained by the curricula, their conceptions of learning and their own values around health. These factors influence the way they conceptualise health as measurable, quantifiable and necessary for effective learning. This way of thinking is also present in their lives through the media, fitness and sport cultures and peers, and is reinforced and reproduced through their own use of social media and digital health technologies.

🌟 Teachers need to **become more aware of their own understanding** of health and healthy behaviours, by being able to critically reflect on how and why they engage in digital health. Any educational programme aimed at developing students' critical understanding and capacity for resilience and change needs to start by developing teachers' critical understanding. We need to encourage teachers to pay attention to their own thinking and behaviour and start to be more reflective by asking questions such as: What do they do? Why do they do it? How does it make them feel? What are the consequences? What are the alternatives?

Educational policy

🌟 Critical enquiry and learning about health and digital health must be developed **across the whole school** rather than being constrained in stand-alone 'literacy' curriculum. This also implies that all educative agents, such as teachers, parents and school leaders have to be involved. These learnings need to be approached explicitly, considering that what young people experience is more powerful than what they are told or what they talk about in an abstract way.

🌟 It is crucial to develop **critical teacher literacy training on gender-sensitive digital health** to help promote positive, safe and beneficial experiences for all learners, with an inclusive approach that addresses possible social, gender and body shape inequalities. Here, our understanding of gender has to be expanded beyond binaries categories of "boys and girls" or "masculinity and femininity". We have to embrace the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities that emerge in the intersection of gender with different ethnicities, sexualities, bodies or disabilities. In this way, it is possible to understand how young people and ourselves are "doing gender" in our everyday lives, which is the first step in challenging gender norms and ideals.

🌟 This critical training on digital health with a gender perspective must be implemented through **educational policies** by the staff responsible for both ongoing and initial training. In this sense, the development of resources and training actions that address this training need is crucial.

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5. METHODOLOGICAL TIPS

The resource is designed to be adapted to the specific educational context and the diversity of young learners. The activities do not need to be taught in a linear order, and it is intended that teachers can dip in and out of the topics as appropriate, through a continuous process of learning rather than one isolated lesson. Some of the activities comprising movement elements might be appropriate for PE or drama classes, while others can be adapted to arts or digital technology lessons. The activities can be developed in schools and other educational settings (e.g., youth centres or clubs).

Below are some key methodological suggestions to consider when developing these activities with and for young people.

☀ Adopt a **student-centered** approach. Students are the protagonists of their learning, thus it is important to encourage meaningful learning, active participation and flexibility according to the needs of the group and the diversity of learning experiences.

☀ Generate an **atmosphere of debate and respect** throughout the group. It will be important to create a climate in which we make sure that everyone intervenes and can express their opinion, taking turns to speak is respected and an active listening is carried out. Provide different means of communication (e.g., drawing, writing, moving, speaking) to address the needs and capacities of diverse learners, being inclusive to young people with disabilities.

☀ Take seriously the **sensitive issues**. Some activities may involve issues that are difficult for young people to navigate (e.g., around their own body or sexuality), which can generate a range of affective responses. Therefore, it is important to adopt an ethical approach, listening to their voices and empowering them. Try to avoid discussions that overexpose them and promote deeper discussions about their own feelings and experiences only when the level of trust and respect is appropriate. Develop an ethic of care with and among young people, providing opportunities to collaborate and value relationships. Additionally, offer debriefing sessions and follow-ups, and signpost relevant support services available in their schools and communities.

★ Encourage a **critical approach.** Critical thinking is a process without closed answers. Thus, we should encourage learners to question the norms that are often taken for granted about digital technology, health and gender. This questioning of the dominant constructions of reality is the basis for helping young people undertake transformative processes both personally and socially, as they are also actively shaping these knowledges through the content they produce. In this way, new empowered, inclusive and equitable opportunities emerge.

★ Provide **multiple learning possibilities.** Learning critically about the gender dimension of digital health is not a one-fixed solution to a problem, so it cannot be a simple transfer of knowledge. On the contrary, this learning is influenced by complex relations among bodies, identities, digital technologies, images, data, wider social contexts, etc. Therefore, engagement in learning should provide multiple perspectives oriented to create diverse responses, which consider the diversity of young people.

★ Try to **bring the body and how it feels more centrally** in the processes of learning critically about digital health. Research on learning increasingly recognises the importance of embodiment. Rather than viewing the body and mind as 'separate', this approach emphasizes their interaction. Try to mobilise an approach to learning that signals the importance of the body and feelings (or affects). To do so, include activities that foreground the body (movement, affects, senses, emotions), such as moving and doing with digital devices through creative practices like dance or art-based activities.

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6. ETHICS SECTION
KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE

We recognise that digital health technologies and social media more generally are increasingly important part of young people's everyday lives, and the activities in this guide are designed to encourage collaborative learning through engagement with these technologies. However, it is crucial that all those involved in these activities are aware of associated risks, particularly those concerning safeguarding. For the activities described in this digital guide, student safety is the most important factor and measures will need to be put in place. The purpose of this ethical guide is to encourage good practice, keep staff and students safe and promote the safe use of technology.

It is important to consider these guidelines of best practice before undertaking any of the activities in this digital health guide. Please read the points below and adapt the activities in accordance with your school policy. There may also be district/local authority guidelines. If you use this guide in other educational contexts (e.g., youth centres or clubs), you have to consider the specific policy of your organisation.

Internet and social media policies in schools

★ Your school policy may have its own behaviour, acceptable use and data protection policy on internet, including social media use and mobile phone. This will incorporate regulations about appropriate use to protect staff, students and parents/caregivers from various risks that can arise as a result of using these technologies. Adaptation of the activities included in this guide will therefore depend upon the relevant policies that have been set up in your school.

★ Before undertaking any of the activities, the first thing to do is to locate and review the relevant local authority and/or school guidelines on acceptable use of the internet, mobile phone and social media.

★ If guidelines don't exist, this is a good opportunity to contact the relevant administrators/tech leads/safeguarding contact to ask for something to be established.

★ Ensure that students are familiar with the relevant code or policies so that they act responsibly and safely. This may include a local social media guideline or acceptable internet use policy.

★ It is essential that all those involved follow all the relevant rules for school and class use of technology.

★ Read the terms of use of the social media platform carefully before accessing and/or using them. For example, you have to ensure that students use social networks for which they have the minimum age required.

★ It is essential the development of an approach that encourages students to work collaboratively but safely in all activities.

Using online safe spaces

There are plenty of existing online education tools and platforms schools use for teaching and learning. Many of these replicate the way people communicate and share online. These may provide safer alternatives. Rather than using social media, consider using alternative educative online spaces, such as Padlet. This will provide a space for students to practice activities, participate in conversations and connect, enabling sharing between students and teachers.

If you use social media, set up alternative accounts for activities.

⭐ Rather than asking students to use their own social media accounts, we would recommend that separate social media accounts are set up for use in class. These accounts can also be set up as 'protected' or 'private' so that only those who follow the account can access the posts. We recommend the teachers also set up separate account for use in the activities.

⭐ Protect passwords and when setting up accounts for the activities, remind students not to use the same password as they would for their own private accounts.

⭐ Create an opt out/opt in form for consent from parents/caregivers. Make a list of students whose parents and caregivers have opted their child out of the activities.

Some other specific issues that will need to be considered to ensure that all involved are kept safe

Accounts settings. Your school may already have guidelines on relevant device and account settings. Check the privacy settings all social media accounts. This is a good opportunity for students to learn about privacy settings. Keep a regular check on these as they may be automatically changed or updated via platforms without staff/student realising.
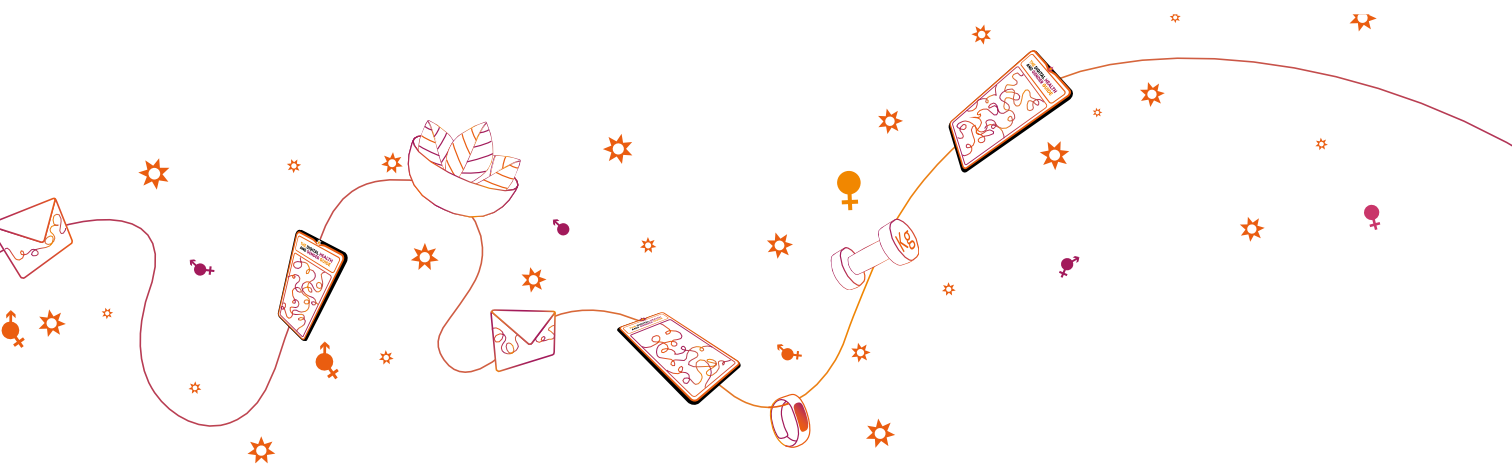
Deleting social media. Be mindful of digital footprints even if this is within classroom only technology. Consider regularly deleting or archiving the media produced through these activities.

Turn off geo, GPS or location tagging for photos on relevant devices. Also have a look at the settings and location permissions on individual apps to ensure relevant location settings are turned off/restricted.

Remove any personal or biographical information on accounts. This should also include any details that might identify the location of your school. If using files, make sure that name or title given to a file (e.g. a photograph) doesn't disclose any personal information such as a student's name (e.g. JoBloggs_01.JPG).

Keep a check on any scams or spams that might be sent to accounts.

Encourage students to reflect on what they are posting:

🌟 Is there anything in the post that identifies students?

🌟 Do students have permission to share particular posts/images?

🌟 It may be helpful to set up a checklist before sharing any media. Look at what is being recorded and check for everything that is visible in that media:

   ☀ Faces and names – Unless there is explicit permission for these to be shared, make sure faces and names are obscured.

   ☀ Addresses, phone numbers and names should not appear.

   ☀ Any identifying information should be removed.

Any content or online activity which raises safeguarding concerns. Follow the school policy on reporting to relevant safeguarding contact in the organisation. Report these as soon as identified and take urgent steps to support and protect the young person. Various organisations have guidelines for social media and online safety (e.g., National Education Union (NEU) – Social media and online safety: https://neu.org.uk/advice/social-media-and-online-safety).

7. ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

Are posts about health and social media gendered?

By María José Camacho-Miñano and Ana Rey-Cao

Educative level	Secondary school Primary Education (5 and 6 year)
Learning areas	Physical Education Interdisciplinary (e.g., Arts Education, Physical Education, Languages, Digital technology)

Objectives

- To understand how social media messages around health, fitness and the body reproduce gender norms, ideas and values and impact on their own identities.
- To experience how these social media messages make them feel.

Short description

Students will select posts on social media, in the form of images and/or texts, that send young people messages about their bodies, health and physical activity. Then they will try to represent these images with their bodies, trying to embody them; that is, they will corporeally adopt the images and focus their attention on how this makes them feel.

Reasons to be considered a good practice

- This activity will help young people to critically reflect on the normative gender ideals that dominate social media. This process of questioning assumed "truths" around health, bodies and gender is facilitated through the embodiment of images.
- This experience mobilizes meaningful emotions and sensations, rather than prioritizing the rational dimension of critical thinking.
- The proposal provides alternatives to think differently about their own bodies, in a more holistic and personal way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

Social media can be a source of inspiration to become physically active but it often incorporates hidden messages that can be a source of surveillance, anxiety or body shaming. This often occurs when students compare their own bodies with the body ideals promoted by fitness influencers and exercise mainly for physical appearance reasons that reproduce gender norms: slim and toned women and muscular men. These body ideals also promote constant work on body parts, which means that exercise for fun, enjoyment or wellbeing can remain on the sidelines.

Part 1. Discussion with the class group

A. Some questions to start with:

✸ Who follows any fitness influencer on social media?

✸ Who has done any exercise or fitness routine using social media?

✸ For what purpose?

✸ What are the benefits of using these social media accounts for physical activity?

✸ Do you think there are any risks involved in this practice? Which ones?

✸ Do you think there are differences between female and male fitness influencers? If so, which ones?

B. Are the posts about physical activity and health on social media gendered?

Part 2. Look for social media posts

Divide the class into two (or more) groups. Each group will look for different social media posts that send messages 'for boys' and/or 'for girls' about health, the body and physical activity. Please, consider the recommendations of the ethics section (pages 23-26) for the development of this activity.

The group will reflect on the posts answering to these questions:

★ Are there common characteristics in the images of female fitness influencers?, are there common characteristics in the images of male fitness influencers?, how do they dress?, what are their facial expressions?, what are their postures?, what do their bodies look like?

★ What messages are sent to 'girls' about their bodies?, and to 'boys'?

After this reflection, each group will select the three most representative posts of the messages sent to 'girls' and the three most representative posts of the messages sent to 'boys' about their bodies and physical activity.

Part 3. Embodiment of the posts

Project the posts selected by each group (or print them out and distribute them on the floor).

Each person will reproduce the images or what the post suggests by embodying the image. This will be done according to the following guidelines:

★ **Look/read.** What activity are they doing or suggesting in the post?

★ **Play/embody.** Put your body in the position suggested by the image or post. Adopt a static posture, attempting to embody the social media image. Focus on the face and reproduce the facial expression.

★ **Feel/think.** How do you feel? What are the embodied feelings?

After the embodiment of the six posts or images proposed by each group, a sharing of the experience will take place.

Part 4. Group discussion

Next, there will be a discussion based on these questions:

✸ Do embodied feelings have gender? What is the gender of each feeling? For example, are feminine bodies weak or strong, and are masculine bodies weak or strong?

✸ What messages are sent to 'girls' about their bodies? and what about the messages to 'boys'?

✸ How do these messages make young people feel?

✸ In what ways are these messages helpful? harmful?

✸ Are there hidden messages?, are there interests?, do they contribute to unequal power relations between men and women?, what sustains them?, why?

Activity 2.

Hacking social media to create alternative messages

By Ana Rey-Cao and María José Camacho-Miñano

Educative level	Secondary school Primary Education (5 and 6 year)
Learning areas	Physical Education Interdisciplinary (Arts Education, Physical Education)

Objectives

- To question taken-for-granted "truths" about bodies, health and gender.
- Produce alternative critical discourses to stereotypical and harmful messages about the body, fitness and health on social media.

Short description

In this proposal, students will produce alternative images to those normally promoted by fitness accounts (as discussed in the previous activity). In this way, they will discover opportunities to question taken-for-granted "truths" about bodies, health and gender.

Reasons to be considered a good practice

- The starting point to challenge the stereotypical messages that circulate on social network is an analysis of their own reality.
- It empowers students by making them aware of their capacity to produce alternative content on social networks.
- It encourages reflection on personal and social responsibility regarding the types of messages and interactions we generate on social media networks.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

Social media has brought a key change in our forms of communication as makes it possible for everyone to take an active role in the generation of content and messages. It is important that students are aware of their power and responsibility in generating content that breaks down gender stereotypes and promotes wellbeing, healthy physical activity and eating habits, and a positive relationship with their own bodies and other people.

Part 1. Create alternative messages

Divide the class into small groups. Ask your students to use their prior learning (activity 1) to create alternative messages to those that promote body, fitness and health stereotypes on social media which are often harmful and/or have hidden agendas. Help them articulate positive messages for young people that promote diversity and personal and social well-being.

Ask them to decide together on the form they will use: what hashtags, images, text messages, etc.

Part 2. Sharing the messages

Each group will share the messages created. You can negotiate with the group on how they want to present and share these messages. It is interesting that they are involved in disseminating these messages in their own online environment. Please, consider the ethical issues out-lined in the section "Ethics issues - Keeping everyone safe", pag. 23-26. There can be a wide variety of situations in schools regarding the use of social media by students in the classroom; each teacher, depending on the context, will negotiate how to do this.

Part 3. Embodying and feeling the messages

To expand this activity, you can suggest them to embody these messages, that is, to physically adopt them with their own bodies, while focusing their attention on how they feel. This approach allows them to understand these messages not only with their thoughts but also experientially through their bodies (a more detailed explanation is provided in the activity 1, part 3).

Part 4. Group discussion

Large group discussion on the process and results of the activity.

✴ Do we have any possibilities to become agents of positive change on social media? Which ones?

✴ How do social media potentially enable people to challenge these gendered messages about health and bodies?

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Activity 3.

"Moving" with the health and fitness content of social media to disrupt normative messages about gender, bodies and health

By Sarah MacIsaac and Shirley Gray

Educative level	Secondary school Primary Education (5 and 6 year)
Learning areas	Physical Education

Objectives

- To analyze what draws us towards engaging with particular health and fitness content on social media.
- To explore the messages, both explicit and implicit, within health and fitness content on social media in relation to gendered body ideals and practices.
- To question how our engagement with health and fitness content on social media makes us feel.
- To uncover opportunities for disrupting taken-for-granted knowledge around gender, health and bodies using social media and movement as a medium to do this.

Short description

In this activity, learners will search for 'workout' videos on a social media platform of their choice. This can be any type of video which guides them to engage in a health or fitness related activity. They will then discuss what has drawn them to engaging with this content; what are the affects (the intense emotions) such engagement may generate and the gendered ways of thinking (discourse) that are both explicit and implicit in this content. Following discussion, learners are directed towards creating their own video in which movement is used to communicate advice for people to consider when searching for, and engaging with, health and fitness content on social media.

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- It helps learners to develop self-awareness around why they choose to engage with particular messages, influencers and practices on social media.
- It encourages learners to work collaboratively to examine the messages they are exposed to when engaging with this content and to explore the possible affects this has on them.
- It guides learners to actively come up with advice for both themselves and others.
- There is a focus on movement as a way to investigate and communicate the issues explored.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

Many of the fitness activities we engage in come from online or social media sources. This content can provide useful information and be motivating, but can also lead to risks, such as excessive body monitoring or extreme diet or exercise behaviours. How do we decide which content is most appropriate for us?

Part 1. Search on social media platforms

Working in pairs (or small group), the students will have five minutes to search on social media platforms such as YouTube or Instagram, to find a 10-minute fitness workout that each student with a partner can take part in. This needs to be a workout that requires no or minimum equipment. They have to choose a video which is similar to the sort of content that they would be drawn towards in their everyday life. Please, consider the ethical issues on social media use in class addressed in pages 23-26.

Part 2. Do the workout videos

Once they have agreed on a video, they will have 10 minutes to complete the workout.

Part 3. Paired discussion

After completing the workout, each student will discuss with the partner (or group):

✳ Why did you choose this video?

✳ Can you identify something positive about your experience of doing this workout?

✳ Can you identify something negative about your experience of doing this workout?

✳ In what ways did this activity reproduce gendered norms and practices around the body?

✳ In what ways did this video challenge gendered norms and practices around the body?

Ask the students or groups to share the main points of the discussion with the other pairs.

Part 5. Create a TikTok video

Once they have listened to each other's experiences, each pair/group will create a TikTok video (or just a video) that aims to give three pieces of advice when searching for (and engaging in) fitness videos online. The video should involve some form of movement or fitness activity to highlight these three pieces of advice.

Activity 4

Cyberartivism: memes around health and gender

By Marta Arévalo and Ana Hernández Gándara

Educative level	Secondary school
Learning areas	Any subject that allows to investigate and reflect on the messages conveyed by images: Physical Education, Art Education, Natural Sciences, Digital Technology, etc.

Objectives

- To develop a critical view of the gender norms about the body, health and healthy behaviours (diet, physical exercise, etc.) that prevail on social media and other digital spaces.
- To create memes that critically challenge these gendered ideas and values through humour.
- To become aware of their capacity and responsibility in creating content that challenges normative messages on social media and contributes to change through digital activism.

Short description

Students will select images and texts (from the Internet or any social network) about messages focused on health, body and healthy habits (e.g., physical exercise, nutrition) and which have a gendered dimension. For example, publications that associate a woman's success in life with her appearance and messages that associate a 'perfect' body (e.g., thin woman) with a healthy body. Once selected, students will analyze and transform the messages through the creation of a meme that uses humour as a strategy to question or challenge normative ideas.

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Reasons to be considered a good practice

- It uses an audiovisual resource, the meme, which is closely related to the everyday practices of young people in the digital environment, proposing it as a tool to question the normative discourses of health and gender.
- Humour makes it possible to question prevailing ideas, beliefs, and social constructions on social networks, transforming them through strategies such as exaggeration, irony, parody or absurdity.
- It promotes the generation of alternative messages on social networks through **cyber-artivism**, which consists of the hybridization of digital space, art and activism.

References

Lucas, C. B., & Hodler, M. R. (2018). #TakeBackFitspo: Building queer features in/through social media. In K. Toffoletti, H. Thorpe, & J. Francombe-Webb (Eds.), *New sporting feminities: Empodied politics in postfeminist times* (pp. 231-251). Palgrave Macmillan.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

Generating memes becomes a means of communication focused not only on criticism, but also on change and transformation due to their capacity to act and make new messages visible in a simple way, connected to the daily lives of young people. Thus, in this activity, memes become a potential tool for critical analysis, reflection and action.

Part 1. Search

Ask your students to select several posts (images, with or without text) about the body, exercise, fitness, nutrition or health from social media.

Part 2. Critical view: questioning and analysis

Then, in small groups, the selected publications will be shared, and the following questions will be asked to identify, analyse and discuss: What is behind the image and the accompanying texts?

✸ *Surveillance of bodies:* Do you consider that the post encourages hyper-control, scrutiny or self-monitoring of the body?, is the post the subject of "critical glances" from others, e.g., does it elicit negative or positive comments about the body online?

✸ *Body ideal:* If the posts are about physical exercise, are they for the purpose of improving physical attractiveness (muscle, weight loss)?, is a "perfect" body ideal promoted even if it is claimed to be for health?, does the image show only part(s) of the body?

✸ *Body-psychological transformation:* Does it convey the idea that if you transform your body towards the ideal body, you will be happier?, is it emphasised that this transformation is "just a matter of attitude or mental power" or that "there are no excuses for change" ignoring any social determinant or particular problem?

✸ *#ICanDoItAll:* Does it convey that success requires individual effort, ignoring any particular situation or problem?

Part 3. Creation of memes

After the previous analysis, students will be asked to modify the image and/or text to give it a new meaning that presents a critical view of the whole, or to generate a "counter-meme", e.g., a meme that questions the hidden messages found.

When working with memes, it is necessary to establish rules to maintain an atmosphere of respect and civility necessary for any educational activity. Some considerations when creating memes include:

✸ Memes should be funny, but not offensive. Under no circumstances should they be used as a motive for mockery, exclusion, cynicism towards individuals, or perpetuation of negative stereotypes.

✶ Memes may never make judgements or reveal information about a person's personal life, directly or indirectly, without their consent.

✶ The meme must challenge or "break" the core message conveyed by the image (identified in the previous step). This can be done using the humour-based strategies through exaggeration, irony, parody or absurdity. For example:

  ✴ Expressing the opposite of the implied meaning in the image, without making it obvious, but not falling into sarcasm or mockery.

  ✴ Use of contrast such as presenting two images in one, to create an expectation-reality effect. For example: "what you order on Aliexpress and what you get".

  ✴ Connecting with a topical issue and expressing it in a very obvious way to provoke criticism.

  ✴ Transform a personal anecdote from everyday life into a narrative.

For the elaboration of memes, it is recommended to use some online tools, such as Memegenerator, Iloveimg, Imgflip, Know your meme, Quickmeme, Livememe, Canva or other software such as Photoshop Express Editor or Powerpoint.

Part 4. Activist part

We will encourage students to publish their productions on their social networks. This action of publishing the counter-messages is a way of returning these ironic narratives about bodies and health to the online world, from a critical reading.

We can make use of a hashtag agreed upon by the class group, so that participants can find the creations made (e.g., #ARTmemeo). Finally, reflections can be made with the group to discuss the results and conclusions.

Consider for the development of this activist part the ethical issues on the use of social media that are addressed on pages 23-26 of this guide.

Activity 5

How not to be our "best self": questioning the transformation culture

By María José Camacho-Miñano and Shirley Gray

Educative level	Secondary school Primary Education (5 and 6 year)
Learning areas	Interdisciplinary Physical Education

Objectives

- To analyse how health and fitness messages circulating on social networks raise the need for change or transformation towards normative gender models.
- To be aware of the ways in which we are encouraged to consume products and services through 'our motivation' to change.
- To question how this need for change generated by health and fitness content on social media makes them feel.
- Generate and express alternative messages focused on what makes them feel good and enjoy themselves.

Short description

In this activity, students will search for content (videos, images, messages) on social networks that represent the idea of change or transformation, analysing these messages, as well as the marketing strategies and products/services they sell to achieve it. Then, following the same sequence of analysis, they will generate publications that encourage them to feel at ease and enjoy themselves.

Reasons to be considered a good practice

- Help students develop self-awareness about why they choose to engage with particular messages, influencers and social media practices.
- It empowers students, as it makes them aware of their capacity to produce alternative messages and meanings.

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References

Camacho-Miñano, M. J., & Gray, S. (2021). Pedagogies of perfection in the postfeminist digital age: young women's negotiations of health and fitness on social media. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *30*(6), 725-736. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2021.1937083

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

Many social media posts that claim to promote health through dieting and/or exercise, use as a motivational strategy the need for change or improvement of the body and one's own psychology. This perspective, although seems inspirational, is in reality a flawed one as it requires people (mainly women) to believe that they themselves or their lives are "not enough"; and that they have the ability to reinvent or transform themselves by taking expert advice. Therefore, although the imperative of transformation seems to encourage to be healthy and happy, it implies an understanding of the self with shortcomings and flaws, which increases the pressure to work on oneself. An example of this is the "before" and "after" images that are posted online to demonstrate what has been achieved and what you too can achieve. However, this implies that you need to change and that currently, you are not good enough. It also implies that everyone can achieve these bodies regardless of circumstances.

Research tells us that young girls learn about body transformation through "fitspiration" content (inspirational fitness messages), explicitly from these before and after images. For example, the participants in our study admired and found these transformations motivating, despite recognising that they could be linked to risky health practices or be edited and fake (Camacho-Miñano & Gray, 2021).

Part 1. Look for publications

Organised in small groups, students will be asked to look for publications (or posts) on social networks that "encourage change". Students will use the questions presented in the left-hand column of the table below (Table 1) to guide their analysis of this content. Each group will present their results to the rest of the class, generating a discussion around the issues raised.

Part 2. Generating alternative messages

Each group will be asked to generate alternative publications, which do not focus the message on the need to change, but rather on health enjoyment, feeling good, being at ease (right column of the Table 1).

Social media posts which encourage change	Our social media posts for health, happiness and enjoyment
What strategies do they use for transformation (e.g. what do they promise)?	What strategies do we propose to celebrate ourselves and enjoy now?
What products or services do they 'sell' to achieve change?	Why is this important?
What types of physical exercise do they promote?	What movements or physical activities would we propose?
How does this/might this make you feel?	How does this/might this make you feel?

Table 1: Social media posts for change versus for happiness and enjoyment

Part 3. Doing the proposed activities

After presenting the alternative messages, the teacher will help the students to carry out the suggested activities.

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Activity 6

Playing with online messages about physical activity, health and gender

By Shirley Gray

Educative level	Secondary school
Learning areas	Physical Education

Objectives

- To explore and understand how masculinities and femininities are constructed online in relation to sports, movements and activities.
- To critically understand and challenge the concept of 'gendered' activities, sports or movements.
- To pay attention to those things we typically ignore (or simply do not see) because they are understood as 'not for us'.
- To move and feel in different ways.

Short description

The students will search for and critically discuss pictures or videos of activities or sports that reflect a 'typically' masculine/feminine body or way of moving. They will then work together to engage in the activities that are counter to their own sense of gendered embodiment and explore the ways in which they can feel like the activities can be for them – regardless of gender.

Reasons to be considered a good practice

- It challenges the idea that some activities are 'for men' or 'for women'.
- It encourages young people to move in different ways and focus on affects or emotions they experience.
- It encourages young people to work collaboratively solve problems.
- It encourages young people to be critical of online messages but also to work with digital technologies in different and empowering ways.

References & additional resources

This activity is similar to the Activist work of Kim Oliver. See: Oliver, K.L., Hamzeh, M. and McCaughtry, M. (2009) Girly girls can play games: Co-creating a curriculum of possibilities with fifth-grade girls. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 28 (1), 90-110.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

There is a common assumption that certain ways of moving and certain sports/activities are either masculine or feminine. For example, taking part in activities such as football, rugby and basketball that require physical contact, aggression, speed and strength are masculine, and therefore are 'for men'. By contrast, activities such as dance, aerobics and yoga that require grace, creativity and flexibility are feminine and therefore are 'for women'. There are several problems with this assumption. For example, both men and women can be made to feel like they are not permitted or able to take part in the activities/movements that do no align with their understanding of masculinity or femininity. Furthermore, both categories work to exclude those individuals who do not conform to gender norms. When individuals do challenge these norms and take part in movements or activities that do not align with a specific 'gender norm' then they can be pejoratively labelled as 'butch' (females talking part in 'male' activities) or 'gay' (males taking part in 'female' activities). This way of thinking about movements and activities simply reinforces gender stereotypes, often working to disadvantage females and non-gender conforming individuals more than males.

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Part 1. Identify and interrogate masculine and feminine images online

The students will search online (web, social media, etc.) for pictures or videos of activities or sports that reflect a 'typically' masculine/feminine body or way of moving.

Questions to discuss:

✷ Why are they considered masculine or feminine?

✷ In what way(s) do online messages contribute to these conceptualisations?

Part 2. Engage in, challenge and feel masculine and feminine movement activities

The students will be asked to select and engage in an activity that is counter to how they understand their own masculine or feminine body (way of moving).

Questions:

✷ How does it make you feel?

✷ Why does it make you feel like this?

Part 3. Moving towards positive affect

If moving in this way generates a *positive affect* – create a meme or a GIF to show that they CAN move in this way – regardless of their gender.

If moving in this way generates a *negative affect*– explore why. What needs to happen for this negative feeling to become more positive? Work collaboratively with the students to search for solutions. 'Story' this experience using a story board, video or photographs. The aim is to work towards feeling like you CAN engage in this activity – regardless of gender.

Activity 7

Keeping a digital diary about health, gender and body

By Verónica Moretti & Antonio Maturo

Educative level	Secondary school
Learning areas	Physical Education Interdisciplinary (e.g., Language, Arts, Digital technologies)

Objectives

- Analyze how gender norms influence young people's routines (food, physical activity, confidence or lack of confidence, advertising).
- To explore the individual idea of "perfect body" and what it means in everyday life.
- To understand the role of diet and fitness apps in students' everyday life.
- To help young people reflect about the influence of gender expectations in diet and fitness apps over their own identities.

Short description

Through this activity, young people will be asked to register a whole week's digital-diary, and record personal entries about their food intake, physical activities, the use of fitness apps, etc. They could focus on their relationship with these apps, the effect of advertising on their own health, the use of images on social media, their perception of body and health, etc. After receiving the anonymous digital recordings from participants, the teacher will analyse and share some of the posts in an anonymous and judgement-free environment, to show, discuss and challenge the main ideas.

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Reasons to be considered a good practice

- The digital diary-diaries technique might help us to capture individual experiences, emotions and nuances of young people on the normative gender ideals that are predominant in our society. Specifically, this process can portrait how young people perceived their bodies in public and private spaces, responding in a different way to images of idealized figures that, especially in the advertisement, instill imperatives around weight loss, physical confidence, lot of exercise, etc.
- Additionally, sharing these stories could help young people to confront each other's on different sensitive topics, such as body shaming, lack of confidence, physical discomfort, how people "should act" considering gender expectations, etc.

References & additional resources

Maturo A. and Moretti V. (2018). *Digital Health and the Gamification of Life: How Apps Can Promote a Positive Medicalization*. Emerald Group Publishing, Bingley UK.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

Nowadays, technology offers new opportunities for diary keeping. Digital diaries can capture experiences in real time and offer a practical method of recording. Additionally, digital messages are a part of contemporary everyday life, since we are living in a society where technology and digital platforms allow us to constantly connect with others. Entering personal impressions and activities can have an impact on two different levels:

🌟 *Personal*. We can see the digital-diary technique as a link between knowledge and action, empowering the subject; a diary constitutes a 'restitution of the self' in the third person–a sort of mirror through which to understand aspects of our ordinary life.

🌟 *Public*. Sharing how these mirrors reflect personal beliefs, values, and ideas surrounding "bodies" with the other can stimulate critical reflection.

Part 1. Some questions to get started

Describe your idea of fitness…

✸ How do you feel when you exercise?

✸ What is in your opinion a healthy body?

✸ Do your school fellows share the same ideas?

✸ Do you talk to someone of your class about your body?

✸ Do you perceive any expectations on your body?

✸ What type of bodies you see the most on social networks?

Part 2. Learning about everyday physical activity, health, bodies & gender

Ask each student to register a whole week digital diary.

✸ Give clear instructions on how to complete their diaries: why, what, when, where and how to record. They can enter the records on their laptop, smartphone or another device. Students could use an app or platform in accordance with school guidance (e.g., padlet, word document).

✸ Provide Item checklists: events or behaviours to help jog the diary keepers' memories. These items should include personal ideas of bodies, fitness, beauty, physical activity, food.

After the period, students will send the diaries to the teachers. These recordings must be anonymized by teachers.

Select some of the extracts on different aspects (food, fitness, body, gender, health) and bring them to the class.

Show to the class these diaries-pieces and start with the discussion. Ask students to discuss about what they perceived, feel, think on these extracts. These comments can be done in a written and anonymous form..

Part 3. Activist part

Collect the results of the discussion and compare them with the extracts. Then, create a collage to show differences between personal and public beliefs. These extracts can be also used to narrate stories through creative movement.

Activity 8

Drawing my digital data, drawing my body

By Noemí Ávila

Educative level	Secondary school
Learning areas	Physical Education, Art Education

Objectives

- To think critically about digital self-monitoring technologies (e.g., wearable devices) and the quantitative data they generate about our body and health.
- To generate personal and subjective data about the own body through the creative language of drawing.
- Reflect about the influence of gender expectations on visual representations of data.
- Use drawing as a tool to promote critical thinking about the body.
- Acquire creative skills to express thoughts and feelings related to the body.

Short description

Through this activity, students will be asked to identify and reflect on the visual interfaces of digital technologies that encode and present data about our body and health (through mobile phones, activity wristbands, etc.). They will reflect on how these technologies generate images and graphics that represent 'objective' data and how this data can be manipulated or transformed visually. Subsequently, students will have the opportunity to draw their own data about their body or health and through drawing as a creative procedure, they will critically reflect on what these data mean and what uses and value are given to them in our daily lives.

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Reasons to be considered a good practice

- It helps to question the meaning of the data those digital technologies produce about our bodies and our health.
- Drawing is a powerful strategy for the development of critical thinking. Through drawing, students can reflect, and look for other meanings or ways of visualizing everyday reality.
- Through different dynamics and data drawing strategies, students can observe, imagine, reflect and project other visual solutions.
- Drawing is a transferable skill that can be integrated across the curriculum, connecting different subjects (such as Art Education and Physical Education).

References & additional resources

Hetland, L. Winner, E., Veenema, S., Sheridan, K. (2013).
Studio Thinking 2. The real beneficts id Visual Arts Education. Nueva York: Teacher College Press.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY
Problem

In our technological world, much of the visual information that surrounds us is made up of visual interfaces that generate graphics and images, which our students consume and produce. Among this type of visual data, the recording of data about our health behaviours and our body (e.g., heart rate, calories consumed, steps or kilometres travelled, etc.) is particularly important.

While such data can generate motivation, its use can also be problematic because it encourages the development of "quantified projects" of the self. This approach promotes control and even excessive surveillance of the body, leading us to continually struggle to generate more and better "objective" data, whose standard of highest performance is male. Beyond what our digital data tells us, it is important to consider our sensations, feelings and life

circumstances. In this sense, drawing serves as a powerful tool that enables us to learn and develop new ideas and alternative ways of thinking and feeling the body and to explore how we feel. In this way it is possible to respect the diversity of people, circumstances and life contexts.

Part 1. Discussion based on data images created by health and wellness software

Observing the images below, the following open questions will be asked to start the discussion:

✸ What do you see in these images?

✸ What data do they record?

✸ Do you know who designs these visual interfaces?

Fig 1. Author: Cottonbro studio
https://www.pexels.com/es-es/foto/manos-tecnologia-monitor-escritorio-5083222/
Fig 2. Author Karolina Grabowska
https://www.pexels.com/es-es/foto/hora-dispositivo-artilugio-reloj-apple-4379288/
Fig 3. Author: Cottonbro studio
https://www.pexels.com/es-es/foto/mano-tecnologia-monitor-reloj-de-pulsera-5081914/
Fig 4. Author: Onur Bnay
https://unsplash.com/es/fotos/4401uqU9bf8?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=refer-
ral&utm_content=creditShareLink

Part 2. Continue the discussion about an art project on the data

Students will be shown the four images below and asked the following questions:

★ What do you see in these images?

★ What might they be talking about?
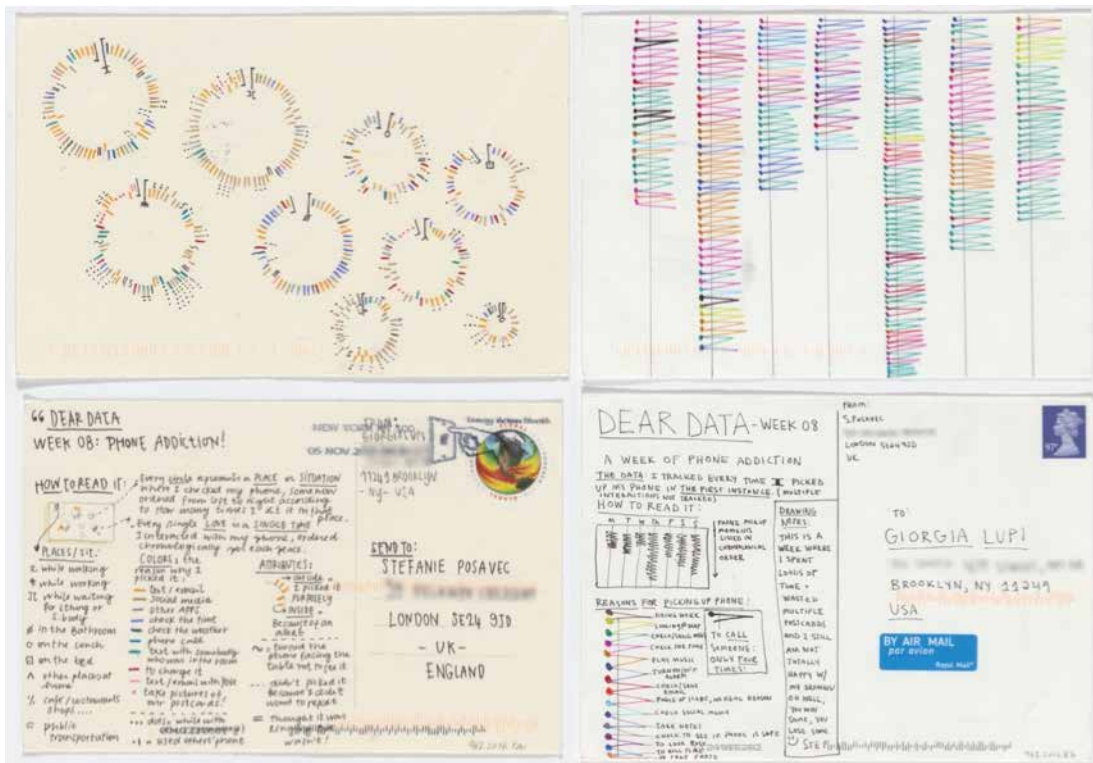
Fig 1, 2, 3 and 4. Data Postcard. In Lupi, G., & Posavec, S. (2017). *Dear data postcard kit: for two friends to draw and share (data visualization postcard kit).* Princeton Architectural Press

The discussion would continue with the following questions:

★ What devices do you use every day that provide you with visual data about your body or your health? What data do you record?

★ What do they tell you about yourself? How do they make you feel?

★ What data do we need for these devices to tell us that we are healthy or living a healthy life?

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Next, the project "Dear Data" (http://www.dear-data.com/theproject) created by the artists Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec will be presented. For the explanation of the project, you can use this sentence from these authors:

> **"W**e prefer to approach data in a slower, more analogue way. We've always conceived Dear Data as a "personal documentary" rather than a quantified-self project which is a subtle – but important – distinction. Instead of using data just to become more efficient, we argue we can use data to become more humane and to connect with ourselves and others at a deeper level."

The debate will then be reintroduced with the following question:

✸ Do you agree with this idea of the artists: "*we can use data to become more humane and to connect with ourselves and others at a deeper level*"?

Part 3. "Drawing my body"

In their book "Dear Data", Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec invite us to carry out small data drawing exercises, through postcards that can be shared with friends (Fig. 5). The artists propose this exercise of drawing data.. We will ask our students to do the same activity. Through this drawing exercise, we will encourage students to generate other kinds of data about their bodies, data that have been filtered by their own experience, in which they have to make certain decisions or judgements about how to represent them visually.
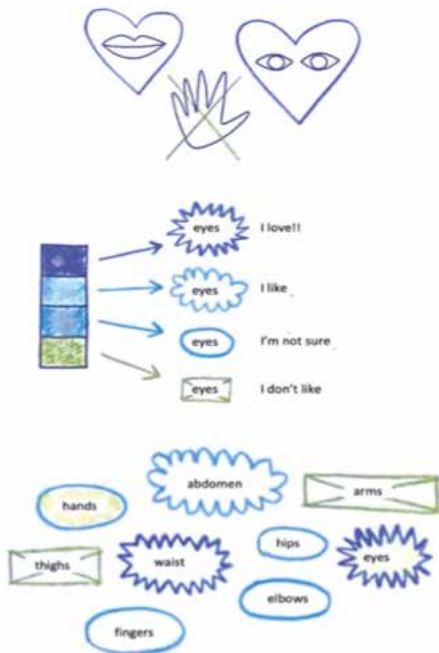
When the students have finished filling in their cards, they will each choose one part of their body that they like and one part of their body that they don't like. Then, on two cards they will be invited to write a short explanation about why they like and dislike it. If you feel that this activity could cause some distress in your students, you can adapt it suggesting students write about an imaginary person rather than themselves.

I love my … because…
I don't like my … because…
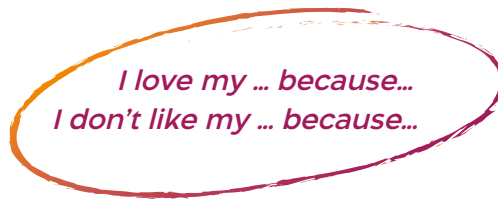
What do you think about your body?

Which parts of your body do you like and which part you don't like?

Here you have a list of different parts of your body. Reflect about each one and then draw your thoughts following these drawing rules:

eyes — I love!!
eyes — I like
eyes — I'm not sure
eyes — I don't like

abdomen · hands · arms · thighs · waist · hips · eyes · elbows · fingers

hair · forehead · eyes · eyelashes
ears · chin · nose · lips
back · neck · chest · shoulders
armpits · abdomen · belly button · arms
hands · waist · hips · elbows
fingers · ass · thighs · forearms
nails · ankles · calves · knees
feet · heels · toes · foot nails

Fig 5. Data Postcard.. In Lupi, G., & Posavec, S. (2017). *Dear data postcard kit: for two friends to draw and share (data visualization postcard kit)*. Princeton Architectural Press

These explanations must be anonymous and will be collected by the teacher. This aspect of confidentiality is crucial, since we are dealing with sensitive and intimate subjects and students should feel that they are in a safe environment in which their identity and their comments are protected. Teachers should also explain that these letters will form part of an exhibition or visual panel. Students should know in advance how this material will be used so that they can assess what they want to include and how they want to write and show it, preserving their identity and anonymity.

Part 4. Collective and activist part

In this part, we are going to propose a quick body parts drawing exercise. The students will be given different coloured cardboards (15x15 cm) and each student will be asked to draw different parts (eye, nose, hand, etc.) in a quick and schematic way. These drawings should be done spontaneously and quickly using a pen or pencil.


Fig. 6. The parts of my body. By Noemí Ávila.

At the end of this drawing exercise, students will be asked to collectively create a *visual device* (poster/mural) by combining these quick drawings (on different parts of the body) with the anonymous explanations collected on the cards (part 2) about the parts they like and dislike:

This *visual device* can be displayed at school to encourage students to think about body messages, gender stereotypes, feelings and the relationship between images and reality. Here are some questions to elicit discussion:

✷ Are these drawings and comments gendered? Why?

✷ Do you consider that the information presented in this visual device is sufficient or relevant to describe you as a person?

✷ Do you feel comfortable with the display of your drawings or comments? If YES or NO, explain why.

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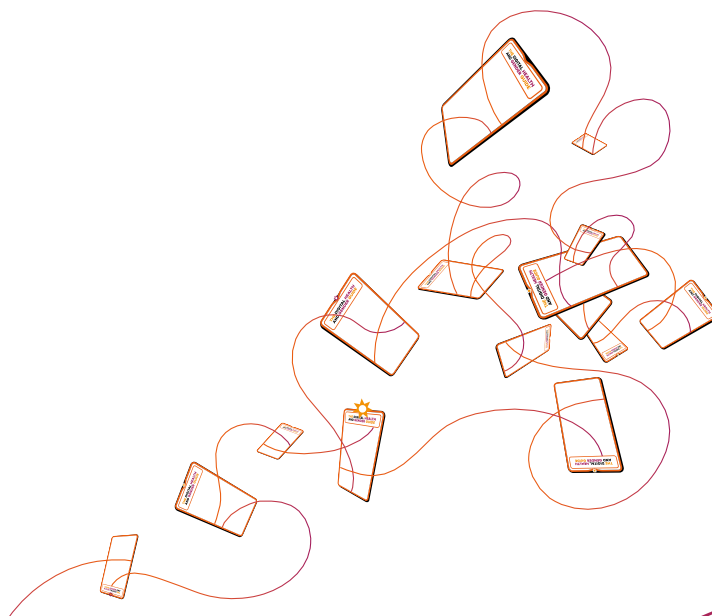
FOR ENQUIRIES

If you have engaged with the **Digital Health and Gender guide** in any way, want to receive information about our current projects or wish to be involved in future developments, please contact us.

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THE DIGITAL HEALTH AND GENDER GUIDE

Digital Health and Gender is an educational resource aimed at supporting teaching and learning around gender and digital technologies for healthy lifestyles in Primary (ages 10-11) and Secondary Education (ages 12-16). It can be used in schools and other educative contexts, such as youth centres, clubs and by a range of communities.

Developed by a team of researchers from six Universities (Bath, Complutense, Edinburgh, Bolognia, Alcalá, Vigo) and three countries (Spain, UK, Italy), the Guide covers a range of contemporary gendered issues related to learning about health through digital technologies. These include a broad range of issues, from pressures on social media associated with body ideals, the role of health influencers, to self-tracking devices and digital data. The Guide is intended to help teachers, educators and young people to navigate the complex terrain of digital health and gender.

Designed for flexible use across lessons, subjects and contexts, a range of key findings, guidelines and activities are provided.

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