



Peer Body Project (India)

Eating Disorder Prevention Program for Adolescent Girls and
Young Women

Dr. Mridula Naik

Program Director



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Inviting Schools & Colleges to Partner

Benefits for Participating Institutions

- Promotes a culture of body acceptance and contributes to the prevention of eating disorders
- Encourages a healthy relationship with food and body image across the campus community
- Utilizes a Train-the-Trainer model to create independent, internal facilitators for long-term program sustainability
- Demonstrates a clear institutional commitment to student mental health and modern health challenges.

Why this program?

Adolescence and young adulthood are critical years for shaping lifelong health behaviours. However, increasing appearance pressure, social media comparison, and unrealistic beauty ideals are affecting how young people perceive their bodies and their relationship with food.

Studies from Indian colleges indicate that a large proportion of young women report dissatisfaction with their body shape or size, which is a key risk factor for disordered eating behaviours such as restrictive dieting, crash dieting, meal skipping, food guilt, and unhealthy weight-control practices.

- Increasing appearance pressures, fueled by social media and comparison culture, are also contributing to widespread body dissatisfaction, with **nearly one-third of young Indian women reporting significant concerns about their body image.**ⁱ
- Approximately **1 in 10** Indian adolescents now screen positive for **a high risk of eating disorders.**ⁱⁱ

If left unaddressed, these behaviours can compromise nutrition, mental well-being, reproductive health, and academic performance during critical developmental years.

Over time, unhealthy relationships with food and weight-control practices may increase the risk of metabolic and lifestyle-related diseases. In the Indian context, where many young women already face anemia and micronutrient deficiencies, these patterns can contribute to a double burden of malnutrition and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Because young women are future mothers, poor nutrition and health during adolescence and early adulthood can also have intergenerational consequences, affecting pregnancy outcomes and the health of the next generation. Early preventive education can help students develop healthier relationships with their bodies, food, and self-worth.

What is the Peer Body Project?

The Peer Body Project (India) is an educational program to help adolescent girls and young women build a positive body image and a healthier relationship with food.

The program is adapted from the internationally recognized Peer Body Project, designed and evaluated by **Dr. Eric Sticeⁱⁱⁱ and colleagues** at **Stanford University, the University of Texas at Austin, and the Oregon Research Institute, USA**. This program has been implemented in several countries and has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing body dissatisfaction and the risk of eating disorders.

The program encourages students to critically reflect on appearance pressures, challenge unrealistic beauty standards, and build confidence and resilience.

Note: Peer Body Project (India) is an educational awareness initiative and does not involve research data collection.

Who participates in the program?

The program is designed for female students in secondary school, pre-university, and undergraduate programs (approximately 14–22 years).

How does the program work?

The program is delivered through small-group interactive sessions that encourage reflection, discussion, and peer engagement.

Program structure

- Four structured sessions (Each session lasts approximately 60 minutes).
- Small groups of students (Each group typically includes 8–12 students).
- Interactive activities and guided discussions
- Facilitated by trained program peer facilitators

The sessions are designed to be supportive, age-appropriate, and non-judgmental, creating a safe space for students to explore body image concerns and develop healthier perspectives.

Where will the program be conducted?

The program will be conducted within participating schools and colleges in Bengaluru, in collaboration with the institution.

Institutions typically:

- Nominate students to be trained as Peer Facilitators (Phase 1)
- Announce the program on campus and onboard interested participants
- Coordinate the scheduling for student groups
- Provide a classroom or seminar room for sessions led by the trained facilitators

When will the program take place?

The program will be conducted during the academic year, at mutually convenient times in coordination with the partnering institution's schedule.

Each group participates in four sessions, which can be scheduled weekly depending on institutional preferences.

We are inviting schools and colleges in Bengaluru to partner in the first phase of this initiative.

Partner institutions will help create a supportive environment where students can build healthier relationships with their bodies and develop resilience against appearance pressures.

Who runs the program?

[Dr. Mridula Naik](#), *Eating Disorder Nutritionist & the Program Director*, leads this initiative in India. Dr. Naik has worked extensively with young people on nutrition, body image, and healthy eating behaviours. She conducts the online version of the Body Project in India. She is supported by [Ms. Sahana Nayak](#), Peer Body Master Trainer, UCSC, USA.

Contact

Institutions interested in hosting the program or learning more are welcome to connect:

Email: mridula.naik@gmail.com Mobile: 91-9880500811

References

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