

Inmates get 'body image' lesson | [View Clip](#)
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Resist one-size-fits all idea, says official from eating disorders center

When it comes to what the therapists call "body image," Marissa Massey doesn't seem to need much bucking up. Before the question was even asked, the inmate at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women had a ready answer: "I love my body. I do."

If everyone had that much confidence, Saturday's event at the prison in Jessup might not have been considered necessary. Representatives of the Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt and the Girl Scouts set up shop at the prison yesterday to continue their campaign to resist what is considered a pervasive cultural obsession with an ideal body type, usually thin and thinner.

"We're not promoting obesity," said Dr. Steven Crawford, associate director of the center, but trying to challenge the notion that body size is a one-size-fits-all proposition. Crawford said it's possible to eat and exercise in a healthful way and still not look like, say, Beyoncé.

But Beyoncé is everywhere, along with Jennifer Aniston, Paris Hilton and an endless array of rail-thin fashion models - all delivering a powerful message. Crawford said research suggests a link between exposure to such images and emergence of eating disorders, especially among girls and women, although men seem to be catching up.

Since 2006, Sheppard Pratt has been holding workshops at schools and public events to promote healthful habits and greater willingness to live happily in the body you have, rather than striving for an unattainable ideal.

The location this time was the prison, where some 20 inmates were seated around four tables in the gym. The workshop was arranged largely as a family event to benefit young girls, and the inmates' daughters were supposed to be there, but as the result of a mix-up with the bus arrangements, most of the visitors never showed.

Nonetheless, after an introduction by Sheppard Pratt art therapist Julia Andersen, the women went to work making posters to convey the theme "Love Your Tree," the tree being a metaphor for the body that would be appreciated for what it is and not compared to some other, more perfect tree.

Massey, 33, of Washington, serving nine years on drugs, conspiracy and assault charges, was clipping pictures from a copy of Oprah magazine and pasting them on her poster.

"I think we as women should take care of our bodies," said Massey, who said she works out as much as the prison schedule will allow: three 45-minute sessions a week. She doesn't fit Cosmo cover proportions, but she's fine with that.

Stacey Schoolfield of East Baltimore was using felt-tip pens to cover her poster with an array of light- and dark-green leaves and branches. She said her 7-year-old daughter, Taylor Moss, is already showing signs of heightened self-consciousness about what she wears and her weight.

"She says she doesn't want to wear that because her stomach is poking out," said Schoolfield, who is serving an 18-year term for armed robbery. "She says that because somebody told her that."