THE ADONIS COMPLEX: BODY DYSMORPHIA, HEALTHY BODY IMAGE IN THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

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HANDOUTS

- Glossary of terms
- History of Adonis
- Resource Guides
- PowerPoint
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

• Who are we?

• Why are we here?

• PARTICIPATE AND ASK QUESTIONS!!!
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

• What factors (societal, economic, racial, etc.) contribute to the development of unhealthy body images for LGBTQ individuals?
In Greek mythology, Adonis was the god of beauty and desire. Originally, he was a god worshipped in the area of Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon), but was later adopted by the Greeks.

He was said to be an extremely beautiful young man and the most beautiful among men.

Was worshipped by women who fought over who got to be with him.
ADONIS COMPLEX DEFINED

• Commonly known as Muscle Dysmorphia, subtype of BDD
• Internalizing stereotypes of male gender roles (what is masculinity)
• The desire to be masculine drives us to draw distinct boundaries with femininity
• Societal norms, stigmas and stereotypes place transgender men as “unsuited” to achieve true masculinity
• The desire to achieve a muscular physique is the result of being on the “low side of masculine hierarchies”
• Individuals compensate for this by trying to achieve a “perfect” muscular physique
BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER

- Fixated on a “flaw” and/or body part that becomes obsessive in nature
- Belief that the deformed or flawed part of the body are the exclusive focus of others
- Typically the focus of BDD is the head or face
- Not being happy about physical appearance vs. BDD
- Subtypes of BDD:
  - Muscle Dysphoria
  - BDD by Proxy
- Classified as an Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.............
BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER

• Preoccupation with a “perceived” defect or flaw in physical appearance

• Repetitive, compulsive and ritualistic behaviors (checking mirrors, excessive grooming, picking, comparisons to others)
  - Muscle Dysmorphia
  - BDD by Proxy

• Good or fair insight

• Poor insight

• Absent insight or delusional beliefs
• LGBQ, individuals have a higher propensity to abuse or "stack" other substances to achieve a more masculine look or muscular physique

• Trans individuals are more likely to abuse testosterone (prescribed or unprescribed) in order to achieve desired outcomes quicker

• LGBTQ individuals are more likely to use methamphetamines, amphetamines, alcohol, ecstasy and Molly due to the effects associated with these substances (weight loss, sexual arousal, party drugs)

• LGBTQ individuals with BDD Muscle Dysmorphia report higher rates of steroids meth, or including dangerous stacking of different substances

• Gay men are more likely to use, abuse and become dependent on different steroid stacks (HGH, Testosterone, Deca, Tren)
ADONIS COMPLEX IMPACT

• Legal ramifications of steroid use can include fines, jail, imprisonment in the U.S. but from other countries where steroid were purchased

• Physical, emotional and behavioral effects of steroid use (damage to the liver, kidneys, brain; “roid rage”; impulsive behaviors, increased risk-taking)

• Transitioning illegal steroids with trans individuals (use of illegal steroids to transition are not monitored, levels are not obtained, irreversible physical damage)

• ASSESS FOR STEROID USE!!!
THE ADONIS COMPLEX AND LESBIAN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

• Lesbians live both inside and outside of the “dominant culture” and have an understanding of the construction of femininity
• Because of the immersion in both dominant and subculture, some lesbians developed a double consciousness (being able to accept and reject different cultural norms)
• Supportive environments help to foster self-acceptance
• Research notes high levels of body acceptance for lesbians
• Many lesbians are exposed to alternate femininities, not just the “dominant” femininity
THE ADONIS COMPLEX AND TRANSGENDER

• Trans individuals who are wanting to transition utilize exercise, bodybuilding and other forms of workouts as a means to decrease dysphoria

• The concept of masculinity: masculinity is not a given, needs to be “achieved”, performed, sometimes proven?

• The definition of masculinity-

• Female to male trans individuals are more likely to overcompensate for body image concerns through engaging in more “masculine” activities

• The relationship between musculature and masculinity (the role of media, redefining masculinity throughout history)
TREATMENT FOR BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER

- Combination of therapy and medications
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy
  - addressing beliefs and cognitive distortions as well as the behaviors stemming from these beliefs
  - shifting the focus from small details to big picture
  - changing the repetitive, compulsive actions triggered by thinking patterns
- Currently CBT is the ONLY psychological treatment for BDD that is supported by research
- SSRI's are recommended as a compliment to therapy
- In some studies SSRI’s account for a 40% reduction in symptoms
- Individual disorder or cultural/societal disorder?
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
RESOURCES

• Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
  www.adaa.org

• Body Dysmorphic Disorder Foundation  
  www.bddfoundation.org

• The International OCD Foundation  
  bdd.iocdf.org

• Treatment Finder:  https://iocdf.org/find-help/

• Mental Health America

• National Institute of Health

• Teens Health

• National Alliance on Mental Illness
REFERENCES


