



## L2 - Body Image



### **Lizzie Velasquez**

When Lizzie Velasquez turned 17, she experienced every teenage girl's worst nightmare. She discovered a YouTube clip of herself in which she was described as the world's ugliest woman. The clip attracted 4 million hits and thousands of negative comments. One online commentator even advised her to put a gun to her head and take her own life.

Sadly, bullying became part and parcel of Lizzie's childhood in Austin, Texas. As a baby, she had developed in the womb without amniotic fluid. Consequently, she was born with an unusual medical condition that prevents her from gaining weight. She may eat around 5,000 calories daily, but she has never weighed more than 64 pounds. Her condition has left her blind in one eye and with limited vision in the other. Now aged 25, Lizzie struggles daily with exhaustion.

Quite remarkably, Lizzie allowed that cruel online video to become a positive turning point in her life. Speaking of her reaction in her TEDxAustinWomen talk, she says: 'I cried my eyes out, and I was ready to fight back, but something kind of clicked in my head and I thought: "I'm just going to leave it alone." I just kind of realised that my life is in my own hands. I could choose to make this really good, or choose to make it really bad.'

Lizzie was determined not to be defined by the shallow labels imposed upon her by so many. 'Tell me those negative things? I'm going to use them as a ladder to climb up to my goals,' said this plucky young woman in that same talk.

#### **Activity:**

1. What difficulties did she face in life? How was she treated in school?
2. What are some of Lizzie's positive traits that contribute to her positive self-concept?
3. What about her do you most admire?
4. How might her positive virtues and traits inspire and help others?
5. How does Lizzie demonstrate that "beauty is on the inside"?
6. Who in her life supported her, and how did this help build her self-esteem?
7. If she were a student at this school, [how could the school community support her?](#)