



Girl Guides  
of Canada  
Guides  
du Canada

# Be You

## Sparks Program





# Sparks Challenge

The Be You Challenge is designed to help girls become more self-confident while building their self-esteem. Girls will develop a better understanding of body image pressures from media and society while learning skills and strategies that will have a lifelong impact on their wellbeing.

As you and your unit plan your Be You meeting(s), review the activities and decide which ones are suitable and of interest. Then you can mix and match activities to create your unit meeting. Each theme offers a variety of choices. **Girls should complete at least one activity from each theme – three activities in total – to earn the Be You Crest.** Activities have been created specifically for each branch taking into consideration the age, maturity and developmental level of the girls at that age range. However, Guiders should feel free to use/modify/adapt the activities from other branches for activities that may also be suitable for the specific group of girls they are working with.

For this Challenge, starter and closing activities have been included, which you can integrate into your normal opening and closing. Additional reference materials are in the Guider Backgrounder. Some activities might require you to collect additional materials.

Throughout the Challenge, suggested questions and conversation starters are included to prompt further discussion. These conversations will be important indicators to help you assess experiences the girls had with each activity and help to connect the experience to the broader theme. It is important to debrief whenever possible to ensure the girls have an improved understanding and have a chance to reflect on their experiences.



Don't forget to share what you are doing in the Be You Challenge by telling us about your participation in the program and sharing photos with us on social media using **#BeYou** and the following tags:



Girl Guides of Canada



@girlguidesofcan



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Look for the **OUTDOOR** icon throughout this Challenge. This icon identifies activities that can easily be done outdoors with little or no modifications.



≡ **BEGIN** the Challenge with this Starter Activity ≡

## Starter Activity – What Makes You You: Spark Portraits

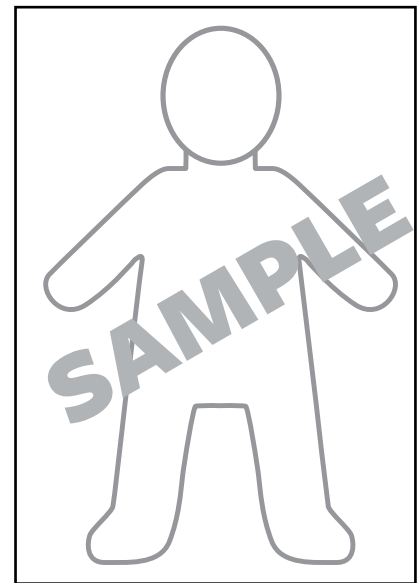
At this age, girls are just starting to determine who they are and the elements that make them unique. In this activity, girls start by creating self-portraits – their Spark Portraits – by drawing a picture of themselves and the things that interest them and help define who they are.

### Materials:

- Markers/crayons/pencil crayons
- Blank paper
- Optional: paper Spark (see page 18)

After you have opened your meeting, discuss with the girls that there are many things that make them unique and interesting. Have the girls draw a Spark Portrait or make a collage that shows some of the things that they are interested in. Before they start, ask them to share some of these things, such as:

- The activities they like to participate in
- The toys they like to play with
- The clothes they like to wear
- The books they like to read
- The shows they like to watch
- The things they are good at



**TIP:** If your girls need a starting point for their portrait, you can print a copy of the paper Spark from the appendix (page 18) and fill it with images that they would use to describe themselves.

Once they are finished, have them share their portraits and some of the things they included. To prompt discussion, you can ask the girls:

- What types of things did you include?
- Do you notice anything similar between your Spark-portrait and someone else's?

Hang up the portraits so the girls can reflect on them as the meeting progresses.



≡ **CONTINUE** the Challenge by selecting one activity from each of the themes. ≡

## Theme 1 – Media, Society and Me: Be You–nique in the face of pressures

Recent research from the University of Ontario Institute for Technology (UOIT) and the University of Washington has found that self-esteem appears to play a critical role in how children form their social identities. This can start as early as the age of five. When girls are constantly bombarded with messages from society and the media about who they should be, girls can feel pressure to conform to unrealistic expectations that can lead to an unhealthy sense of self. Societal change is slow moving, though possible. Key to this change will be for girls to confront these pressures so that they embrace that which makes them “you-nique.”

### Objective:

- Girls will work to develop an understanding that messages from media and society can set unrealistic expectations for girls and women.

### Outcomes:

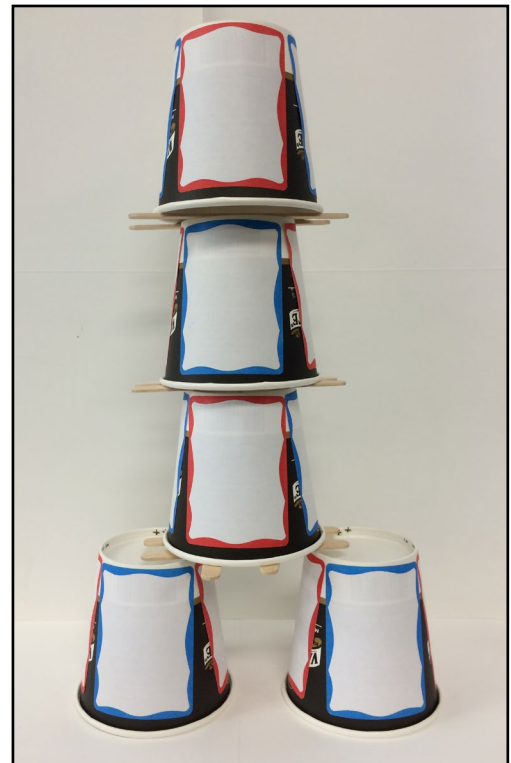
- Girls will develop an understanding that there is a link between the messages sent through media and pressures from society to conform.
- Girls will develop awareness that there are differences between “real life” and what they see or hear from the media, including stereotypes.
- Girls will build skills in spreading body positive messages, such as “Every Body is a Good Body.”

### Theme Activities: Strength Under Pressure

Pressure to look and act a certain way can come in many forms for Spark-aged girls. Although pressure may seem like an abstract concept in their life, this structure-building activity will help them talk about the pressures they face and how they withstand pressures in their lives.

### Materials:

- Plastic or paper drinking cups
- Popsicle sticks
- Weights: Rocks, marbles, etc.





You may need to explain to the girls what pressure looks like in their life — friends, family or messages that influence the choices they make. To help the girls better understanding these messages, you can ask:

- How do you decide which toys you want? (to play with, ask for, etc.)
- How do you decide which clothes you wear?
- How do you decide what activities you are going to do?
- How do you decide what television shows to watch? Movies to go see?

**TIP:** The Kids Health Organization describes peer pressure in this way:

“Making decisions on your own is hard enough, but when other people get involved and try to pressure you one way or another it can be even harder. People who are your age, like your classmates, are called peers. When they try to influence how you act to get you to do something it’s called **PEER PRESSURE**. It’s something everyone has to deal with — even adults.”

<http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/peer-pressure.html>

Depending on the size of your unit, the girls can work independently or in groups to try to build the tallest tower possible using only eight Popsicle sticks and five cups, but without using any adhesives. After the girls have built their tower, they will add a weight to the top, and keep adding weights until their structure topples. Some structures will topple immediately and some may be able to withstand the weight. After the structures have all been tested, bring the girls together and talk about why some structures toppled easier than others. Possible reasons may include:

- It had a stronger base so it didn’t topple as easily.
- Some towers were taller than others and that made them topple easier.
- Specific ways that the Popsicle sticks or cups were used to support the tower.

**TIP:** Different building materials will also work in this activity as long as you ensure that each girl or groups of girls has the same number of pieces. Variations can include:

- Marshmallows in various sizes and dry spaghetti
- Wooden blocks
- Cookie cases
- Lego or similar building toys

You can explain to the girls that they are like the towers, they all look and act differently but when they are supported they can be strong in the face of the weight from pressure. Ask the girls:

- Who makes you feel strong?
- How do you help other people feel strong?
- How do you support your friends and family so they feel strong?



## For Girls or Boys?

Some girls will have a preconceived notion of jobs that are for boys and jobs that are for girls. These gender stereotypes can hold girls back from pursuing interests that may not be traditionally seen for girls.

### Materials:

- Paper
- Crayons/markers/pencil crayons

In this activity, you will be asking the girls to draw people who work in a variety of jobs. Choose a profession from the list below and in addition to drawing their person, ask them to give the person a name, and describe them. Repeat this activity two to three times, changing profession each time so the girls have a few comparisons. When you are giving the girls options, try to pick careers that may have uniform or common appearance traits such as hats or coveralls. Some possible careers include:

- Firefighter
- Construction worker
- Paramedic or EMT
- Nurse
- Police officer
- Garbage collector
- Scientist
- Mail carrier



After they have drawn their pictures, ask a few girls to describe one of the people they drew. Take a quick tally of how many drew the firefighter, or police officer, etc. as a man or as a woman. If they dominantly chose one gender over the other, you can ask them as a group “Why did you think of a man/woman when you heard this job?” After giving them the opportunity to share their rationale, ask them about whether it is a career that has to be done by a specific gender or if anyone can do that job. Debunk any stereotypes they state as they come up.

**TIP:** For a sample conversation on this topic, there is an excellent video that can be found by Omar Oakes at <http://tinyurl.com/hlgskkj>. You can also bring in a female guest speaker to share their experience in that career.

If time permits, you can have the girls choose one of their drawings and draw themselves in that career. You can also have the girls look at the variety of their drawings and notice that people of all shapes, sizes and genders can be in found in these careers.



## Thank You, Body

### Materials:

- Craft paper cut to the size of girls or construction paper
- Crayons/markers/pencil crayons
- Scissors

Ask the girls to think about the different things their bodies can do. Start with their heads and travel all the way to their toes having the girls suggest the great things their body parts can do. Examples may include:

- Their head comes up with great ideas.
- Their mouths can sing.
- Their arms give such strong hugs.
- Their legs run quickly.
- Their toes give them the chance to wear fun socks or they can use their tippy toes to help reach things that are high.
- Their shoulders can help them carry their backpacks.
- Their fingers help them hold hands.

After the girls share positive things their bodies can do, they will thank their bodies for these things. Depending on the size of the group, the girls can trace their hand or their entire bodies. They can work together to make this easier. After they have traced their shape, they will draw pictures or use words that thank their body parts for all the wonderful things they do. After they have added their thank-you notes, they can share their bodies/hands and celebrate their differences.

### #LikeAGirl



(Modified from the Always Social Media **#LikeAGirl** campaign)

In the past, “like a girl” was used to insult someone to suggest that they were weak or did something poorly. Girls worldwide are reclaiming this expression to show their power, confidence, and ability. The Like A Girl hashtag (#LikeAGirl) was developed in response to the stereotype that “You do \_\_\_\_ *like a girl*” such as run or throw.

### Materials:

- Optional: Timer or stopwatch

For this activity, bring your girls together as a group and ensure they have space between them to act out how they \_\_\_\_ *Like A Girl*. They are going to act out each of the descriptions in place and after they complete each for 10 to 20 seconds, ask them why they acted that way.



Examples include:

- Running *Like A Girl*
- Throwing *Like A Girl*
- Science *Like A Girl*
- Science *Like A Girl*

You may find that your girls act in stereotypical ways when you first ask them to \_\_\_\_ *Like A Girl*. Instead of correcting them, ask them to think about the way **THEY** do it. For instance, if you ask them to Run *Like A Girl*, ask them:

- Is that how YOU run?
- Do you take long strides or short ones?
- Are you a fast runner or do you prefer to jog?
- Do you run in a straight line or do you zig zag?

These types of questions can prompt them to think about the way they do something *Like A Girl*. You can give them as many actions as time permits and ask the girls for suggestions for actions. Make sure to use a balance between active and quiet actions so the girls can see a variety of activities.

At the end of the activity, bring them together to share their thoughts. You can debrief by asking:

- When you were acting *Like A Girl* did you act the same as everyone else? Do you have to act the same as everyone else to be a girl?
- What is your favourite way to act *Like A Girl*?
- How do you feel when you act *Like A Girl*?







## THEME 2 – Accepting Myself: Be You–rself: Accepting yourself and your choices

In order to build self-esteem, girls must first develop self-acceptance by embracing everything that makes them who they are, including their differences and perceived flaws. One way that girls can develop self-acceptance is by owning the wonderful things that make them special and celebrating their abilities. Making decisions and choices on aspects of their lives can help girls to feel empowered, building their self-esteem and acceptance. With the necessary tools, they can feel empowered by this independence.

### Objective:

- Girls will develop self-acceptance and become more confident in the choices they make in their lives.

### Outcomes:

- Girls will build self-acceptance.
- Girls will acknowledge that they have different types of choices in their lives and that even making small decisions for themselves can have a positive impact on their sense of self.
- Girls will accept the idea that everyone is unique and deserves respect regarding their lifestyle and appearance choices.

### Theme Activities: Feeling Happy

#### Materials:

- Star template from the appendix (page 19)
- Magazines or catalogues
- Glue
- Crayons/markers/pencil crayons
- Scissors



As a group talk about things that make the girls feel happy in their lives. These can include things like:

- Activities or sports that they enjoy
- How people treat them
- Things they have done that they are proud of (like a great score on a spelling test, or when they participated in a dance recital, or when they learned a difficult move in karate)
- Doing things that they are good at (such as playing a sport, drawing, singing, etc.)

The girls will be creating a collage that illustrates the things that make them happy and that make them feel good. They can either draw or create a multi-media collage using images or different textures of craft supplies.



After they have created their collage, discuss why they chose those specific items. Talk about how their body feels when they are happy (they may feel like they have more energy, they may smile more, they may feel relaxed). To help the girls identify these physical changes, ask:

- How does your stomach feel when you think about the happy things in your picture? Is it calm or does it feel jumpy?
- How does your back feel when you think about the happy things in your picture? Is it tight or loose?
- Do you smile when you think of the happy things in your picture? Do you feel your face change when you think about it?

## Making Choices – Sparks

When girls are given a choice, even a small choice like what activity they will participate in, it increases their independence and confidence.

### Materials:

- The materials needed vary depending on the choices you are making available to the girls.
- Active games can be taken outdoors as well
- Guiders should set up stations in advance to show the choices

In this activity give the girls two options to choose from, such as:

- Singing their favourite songs
- Playing a circle game
- Colouring
- Doing a small craft
- Doing a physical activity
- Playing an active game



Each girl will have the choice of which activity they would like to do for this part of the meeting. After they have completed the activity, bring all the girls together to ask them about their experiences. Possible discussion prompts could include:

- Why did you choose that activity?
- How did it feel to have a choice in what activity you would do?
- What type of choices (big or little) do you have at home, at school, with friends?

## Pelele Game

(Modified from the WAGGGS/Dove Free to Be Me program <https://www.waggs.org/en/what-we-do/free-being-me/>)

Pelele (pronounced ‘Pe – lel – ay’) is a game that kids in Spain often play in the spring time. It gives the girls the opportunity to recognize the things that they like about themselves.



## Materials:

- Parachute or flat sheet
- Soft toy or soft ball

In this WAGGGS game, the girls try to keep an object (the Pelele) on the parachute or sheet. If the object flies off, the Guider can throw it back on. While they are bouncing it up and down they recite a little poem:



*Pelele, Pelele, we like you,  
We like you just the way you are,  
Pelele, Pelele, we like you,  
And we like (name) too!*



At the end of the chant, fill in the name of one of the girls. In order for everyone to have a turn, have the Sparks name the girls around the circle in order. The girl named says something that she likes about herself and starts to run around the outside of the parachute. Other girls that like that thing about themselves also run around the parachute. The remaining girls hold the parachute down so it touches the tops of their feet keeping it in place. If the girls are shy or reluctant to speak, you can ask them a question or give them a prompt to help them. They can use one that they have already heard but encourage them to think of something different each time. Things that girls might like about themselves may include:

- I like my smile
- I like how fast I can run
- I like my laugh
- I like how I treat my little sister
- I like how high I can jump
- I like my arms because they can hug
- I like how funny I am
- I like my feet because they can dance
- I like my hands because I can draw
- I like that I am a good reader

The post-discussion will focus on the benefits of choosing to look and focus on the positives within ourselves as opposed to the negatives. After the girls play the game, ask them:

- How does your stomach feel when you hear something positive about yourself?
  - Does it get fluttery? Does it feel calm? Does it feel like it is jumping?
- How do you feel inside when you hear something positive about yourself?
  - Do you feel “warm” inside? Do you feel calm or excited?
- How did you feel when other girls stood up and ran with you?





## THEME 3 – My Balanced Life

### BE true to YOU: Taking care of yourself

Balance is key to having a healthy life – a balance between rest and play, between being social and being on your own, in the foods you eat, in the activities you do, etc. But finding balance is often a struggle for girls. Although girls won't always have a say in their overall family decisions and lifestyles, becoming more aware of the importance of achieving balance will benefit them both now and as they grow since they will learn to recognize it as a priority for a healthy lifestyle.

#### Objective:

- Girls will learn that a healthy lifestyle is about finding a balance between the social, emotional, and physical aspects of their lives.

#### Outcomes:

- Girls will understand what balance can look like in their life.
- Girls will develop the courage to try new things.
- Girls will develop the knowledge that a time for both rest and activity is necessary and that there can be fun in both.



#### Theme Activities: Try Something New

The girls in your unit will all have a diversity of skills, abilities, and talents, many they may not have yet shared with their Spark friends. In this activity, the girls are given the chance to learn something new from each other or try something they may not have tried before.

#### Materials:

- None

Bring the girls together and make a circle so they can see each other. Explain to the girls that even though we may think we know someone really well, they can still surprise us with something we didn't know about them. Ask the girls to share some of the activities that they like to do or something that is interesting about them. These may include:

- Knowing how to do a particular dance
- Knowing another language
- Knowing a song that others may not have heard in a meeting
- Knowing a game that hasn't been played in a meeting
- Able to do an interesting thing with their bodies (such as the splits, touch their tongue to their nose or curl their tongue, touch their toes to their nose)



In groups of two or three, the girls can demonstrate their unique talent for each other and try to teach the others to do it too. After they have shared with each other, they can come together as a unit and share some of the things they learned from each other. To debrief you can ask them:

- Did you learn something new about someone?
- What did you find the most fun to try?
- What did you find most surprising about you or the other Sparks?

## Finding the Balance

Girls are very busy in their daily lives and even for Sparks it is important to talk about what balance might look like in their life.

### Materials:

- Chart paper or a white board
- Create a simple balancing scale (see suggested materials below)
- Weights:
  - Marbles
  - Flat river rocks
  - Beans
  - Lego

Before they start the activity, play a game with the girls to get their minds and bodies moving. Make one side of the room the “restful” side and the other side the “active” side. Call out a list of activities one at a time and have girls move to the side of the room that best fits the activity. They can move in a creative way like crabwalk, hopping, skipping, clapping hands, tapping knees, wobbling their heads, etc. Girls should return to the middle before the next question is asked.

A few samples include:

- Reading a book (restful)
- Playing tag (active)
- Watching a movie (restful)
- Hopping on one foot (active)



After they play the game, bring them back together and ask the girls to list some of the things they do in their everyday lives that are active (playing at recess, walking home from school, dancing, playing a sport, etc.). Next, ask them to list some of the things they do to rest (sleep, read, watch a TV show afterschool, etc.). The Guider should record their ideas on chart paper so they can refer back to them.



Next, have the girls in groups of two or three create a simple balancing scale. The simpler the scale the better – materials can include:

- A ruler with a little cup taped to each side with a fulcrum in the centre made of paper folded into a triangle.
- Two little boxes or baskets attached with a piece of string and hung over a pencil.
- A popsicle stick balanced on an upside down Dixie cup.

Girls add a weight to each side that represents the things in their lives that are active and the things they do for rest or relaxation. If they do not have a balance they can make suggestions for some changes and try to rebalance their scales.

## Everybody's It Tag



(Modified from the Girl Guides of Canada BC Council "Sparks Colour Me Healthy Challenge")

This active game is great in an open space. It can be taken outside and can be played for any duration of time depending on how many movements you decide to use.

### Materials:

- Timer or Stopwatch

Have all the girls get up and move around the space trying to tap each other below the knee. If a girl is tagged, they complete a fitness challenge to come back in the game.

Sample movements could include:

- Pumping your hands over your head
- Crabwalk
- Hopping
- Arm circles
- Rolling head from shoulder to shoulder
- Skipping
- Walking backwards
- Shoulder shrugging

Sample fitness challenges can include:

- Five jumping jacks
- Large arm circles forward and backwards 15 times
- A lap around the boundary
- Touch your toes ten times
- Six squats
- 20 shoulder shrugs

After 60 to 90 seconds pass, change the movement and continue the game. Repeat for as long as you would like the activity to last. You can also change the fitness activity every minute if you would like to make it more interesting.

Bring the girls together and have them feel their heart beating in their chest. Ask them how they feel after so much movement and activity. You can also introduce them to the concept of feeling invigorated after physical activity and how they may feel more energized and alert.



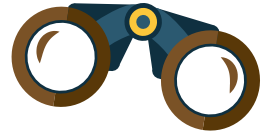
## Connecting with Nature Hike – Sparks



### Materials:

- None

Use this activity to take the girls on a five-senses hike, where the girls walk slowly and silently, paying careful attention to the world around them. You may want to prompt them every few minutes to listen to the noises around them, or touch something, or breathe deeply and smell the air. They can also have a little snack or drink along the way.



**TIP:** Remind the girls as they are hiking that they should not pick any of the plants and should be careful where they are stepping. A message such as “Take only photos and leave only footprints” can be shared with the girls prior to the hike.

After they have finished their hike, ask the girls about their experiences:

- What did you notice about the space around you while you were hiking?
- What did you notice about your body while you were hiking?
- How was this activity restful?
- How was this activity energizing?

**TIP:** For those that do not have access to an outdoor space to complete this activity, you can adapt it in a number of ways:

- Bring items from nature such as leaves or rocks to the meeting and give the girls the opportunity to see, smell and touch the items.
- Take them on a story hike. Walk them around the space and describe to them what is happening or what they might see. Have the girls contribute the details.





≡ **CONCLUDE** the Challenge with the following Closing Activity. ≡

## Closing Activity – Being You–nique!

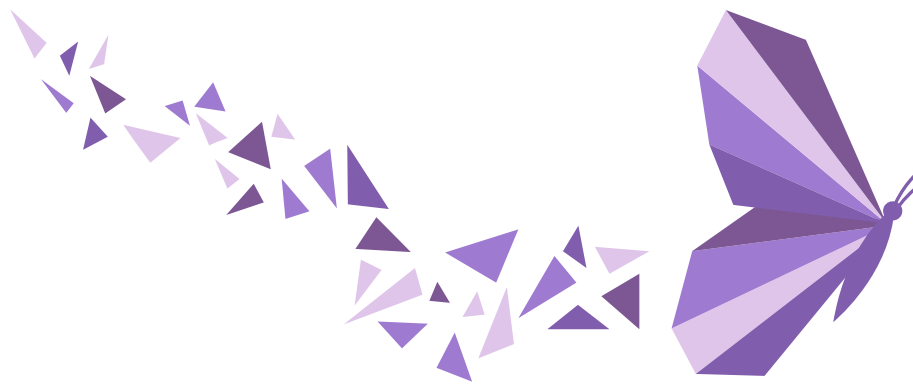
Over the course of the meeting, the girls have had the chance to challenge stereotypes, explore some of the ways that they can accept themselves and consider and what makes them unique while embracing everyone’s differences. In this final activity, have the girls come back to their Spark Portraits to add in some of the things they may have discovered about themselves.

### Materials:

- Self-portrait from Starter Activity
- Marker/crayons/pencil crayons

When you bring the girls back to their portraits, ask them to reflect on their learning from the Challenge. Have them look at their Spark Portraits and ask them if there is anything they would like add to their pictures. To help prompt their thinking, you can ask:

- Is there something that shows you trying something new?
- Is there something that makes you feel happy?
- Who are the people in your life that make you feel happy?
- Is there something that makes you feel strong?
- Is there something that makes you feel special?
- What is your favourite thing about “YOU”?







# Appendix

## Starter Activity: What Makes You You: Spark Portraits

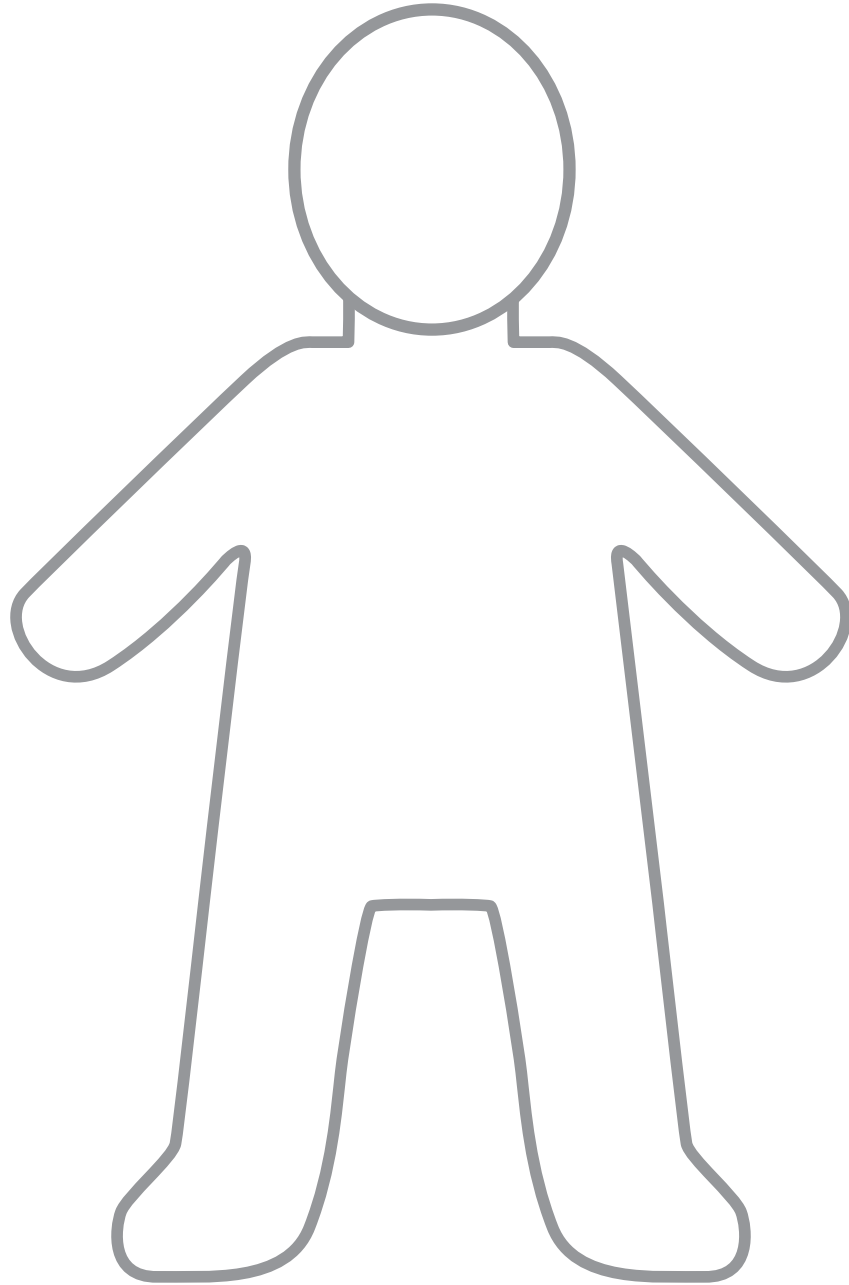
Paper Spark..... 18

## Theme 2 : “Feeling Happy”

Star Template for “Feeling Happy” ..... 19



## Paper Spark





## Star Template for “Feeling Happy”

