

# Body Image

Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart - Kahlil Gibran

**Language aim:** idioms of probability; infinitives & gerunds

**Skills focus:** speaking - giving your opinion; reading – skimming & scanning; listening – prediction & listening for specific information; writing – short stories; pronunciation – rhyming words & word stress

1. Look at the photographs. Who would be considered the most outrageous looking compared to the societal norms of your country? Discuss with a partner.



## 2. Idioms

We often use idioms to express how probable we think events or ideas are. Which phrases mean 'never' and which mean 'maybe'. Mark them 'N' or 'M':

- a) There's a slim chance
- b) When hell freezes over
- c) Not in a million years
- d) There's a vague possibility



## Discussion

### 3. Would you ever consider...?

- getting a tattoo/ piercing
- colouring your hair/ having hair implants
- getting a suntan
- using whitening cream
- having plastic surgery/ cosmetic dentistry
- dieting
- body-building/ taking steroids
- wearing heavy makeup

Why? Why not? Using the idioms, write down your answers. Compare with a partner.

For example, "there's a slim chance I'd have plastic surgery because it's very acceptable in my country."



## Discussion

4. In your opinion:
- Look at the photographs, who do you think is happier with her body? Why?
  - What makes a body perfect?
  - Why are some people obsessed with their appearance?
  - Does 'body perfection' actually exist?



## Listening

5. You're going to listen to three people talking about body perfection  
What are their answers to questions:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Are their answers different/similar to yours?

## Vocabulary

7. Fill in the gaps with the words from the box

impart	opt out	prosperity	pursue
relentless	heritage	rite of passage	starchy

- If you.....of something, you decide not to do it.
- A.....is something your society expects you to do to become an adult.
- Rice, pasta, potatoes and bread are examples of.....food.
- .....is something that comes or belongs to you from birth.
- If you are....., you do not stop doing something.
- .....is the same as financial success.
- When you give someone useful information, you .....knowledge.
- .....is a synonym for chase or follow something or someone.

### 7. Prediction - Look at the headline and photograph of the article.

- Where is the woman from?
- What do you think the article is about?
- Why do you think it is an insult to be called 'a slim princess'?

8. Read the text as quickly as possible. What do these numbers refer to?

- |         |        |
|---------|--------|
| a. 27   | d. two |
| b. 50s  | e. 10  |
| c. five | f. one |

# Where Fat Is a Mark of Beauty

***In a rite of passage, some Nigerian girls spend months gaining weight and learning customs in a special room. “To be called a ‘slim princess’ is an abuse,” says a defender of the practice.***

AKPABUYO, Nigeria—

Margaret Bassey Ene currently has one mission in life: gaining weight. The Nigerian teenager has spent every day since early June in a “fattening room” specially set aside in her father’s mud and thatch house. Most of her waking hours are spent eating bowl after bowl of rice, yams, plantains, and beans. After three more months of starchy diet and forced inactivity, Margaret will be ready to re-enter society bearing the traditional mark of female beauty among her Efik people: fat.

In contrast to many Western cultures where thin is in, many culture-conscious people in the Efik and other communities in Nigeria’s south eastern Cross River state view a woman’s large figure as a sign of good health, prosperity and allure. The fattening room is at the centre of a centuries-old rite of passage from childhood to womanhood. The months spent pursuing fatness are supplemented by daily visits from elderly matrons who impart tips on how to be a successful wife and mother.

Nowadays, girls who are not yet marriage-bound do a tour in the rooms purely as a coming-of-age ceremony. And sometimes, nursing mothers return to the rooms to put on more weight. “The fattening room is like a kind of school where the girl is taught about motherhood,” said Sylvester Odey, director of the Cultural Center Board in Calabar, capital of Cross River state. “Your daily routine is to sleep, eat and grow fat. Like many traditional African customs, the fattening room is facing relentless pressure from Western influences. Health campaigns linking excess fat to heart disease and other illnesses are changing the eating habits of many Nigerians, and urban dwellers are opting out of the time-consuming process. Effiong Okon Etim, an Efik village chief in the district of Akpabuyo, said some families cannot afford to feed a daughter constantly for more than a few months.

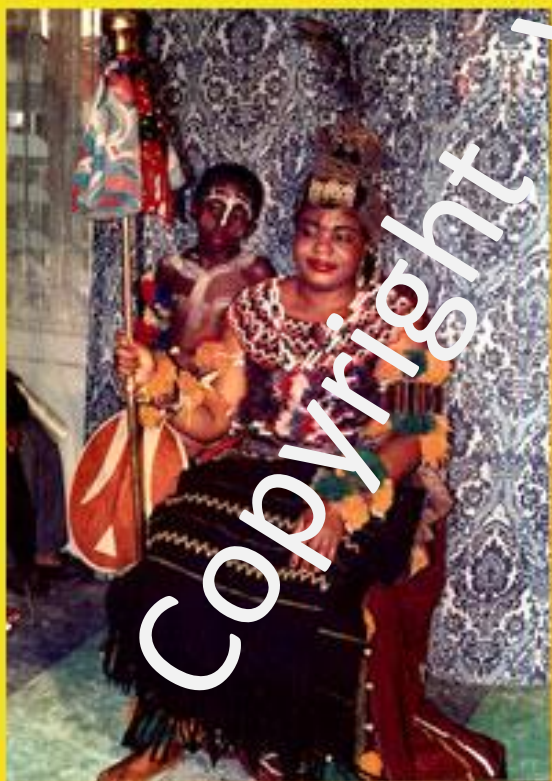
However, the practice continues partly because “people might laugh at you because you didn’t have money to allow your child to pass through the rite of passage,” Etim said. What’s more, many believe a skinny girl will be sickly or unable to bear children. Etim, 65, put his two daughters in a fattening room together when they were 12 and 15 years old, but some girls undergo the process as early as age 7.

## **BIGGER IS BETTER, ACCORDING TO CUSTOM**

As for how fat is fat enough, there is no set standard. But the unwritten rule is the bigger the better, said Mkoyo Edet, Etim’s sister. “Beauty is in the weight,” said Edet, a woman in her 50s who spent three months in a fattening room when she was 7. “To be called a ‘slim princess’ is an abuse. The girl is fed constantly whether she likes it or not.”

In Margaret’s family, there was never any question that she would enter the fattening room. “We inherited it from our forefathers; it is one of the heritages we must continue,” said Edet Essien Okon, 25, Margaret’s stepfather. “I remember being there as a child. It’s a good thing to do; it’s an initiation rite.” His wife, Nkoyo Effiong, 27, agreed: “As a woman, I feel it is proper for me to put my daughter in there, so she can be educated.” Effiong, a mother of five, spent four months in a fattening room at the age of 10.

**Adapted from the New York Times**







## Reading Comprehension

1. Check your answers to the prediction task.
2. What does being in a 'fattening room' involve?
3. Make a list of the positives and negative aspects that are mentioned in the text.
4. Why does this practice still continue?
5. Can you think of any equivalent practices in your society?

## Grammar Point

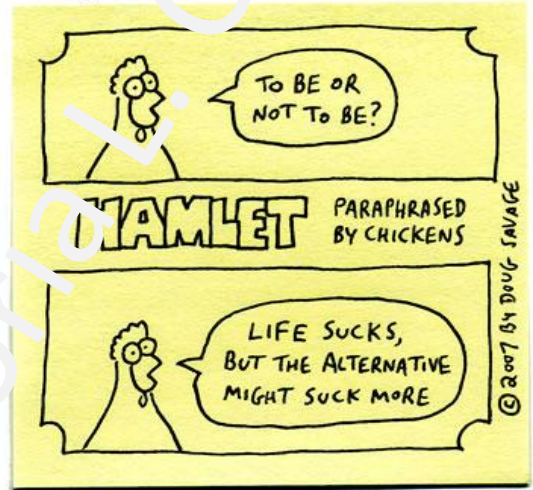
1. These two sentences are taken from the text:

*I remember being there as a child  
They cannot afford to feed constantly.*

What is the difference between these two sentences?  
Are these rules true or false? Correct the false ones.

- After a preposition, you always use a gerund T/F  
For example: \_\_\_\_\_
- To explain purpose, you use a gerund T/F  
For example: \_\_\_\_\_
- After somewhere/anywhere you use an infinitive T/F  
For example: \_\_\_\_\_

### Savage Chickens



2. Look at the text below. Delete the incorrect verb form. Compare your answers with a partner.

Growing/to grow up in the small town of Springfield, it was always stressful being/to be an overweight child. Even though I now run my own successful business to sell/selling comics, I still find it difficult, if not impossible to interact/interacting with customers. I can't help to think/thinking my appearance is blaming/to blame. Despite to star/starring in the hit TV show, the Simpsons, I still don't know how to attract/attracting women. I want to avoid/avoiding to end/ending up alone, so I have decided losing/to lose weight. I hope to become/becoming more confident in order to find/finding the woman of my dreams.

3. How does the meaning change?

*I stopped to work*

*I stopped working*

See Grammar Reference on page 7

## Learning Strategy

There are many ways to improve your language level, but what, in your opinion, are the best ways to develop your vocabulary?

Add three more to the list:  
Memorising song lyrics  
Reading for pleasure  
Making mind-maps  
Learning new collocations  
(i.e. make a mess, do homework)

Learning dialogues from films

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## Creative Writing – let your imagination run wild!

Using all the words below, write down a short story. Try to make it as inventive as possible!

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| 1. Mama    | 6. strong    |
| 2. USA     | 7. decisions |
| 3. hate    | 8. older     |
| 4. killin' | 9. media     |
| 5. love    | 10. equality |

For example, 'My mama taught me that equality is something important for all humankind because...

## Pronunciation

How many words can you think of that rhyme with the words above? Write down as many as you can. Compare with a partner.

1. You're going to listen to a song written and performed by the Black-Eyed Peas. It's called 'Where is the Love?' What do you think the song's going to be about?



### Useful language

#### Predicting & Speculating

It could be about...  
It might be something to do with...  
I think the main ideas could be related to...  
Maybe the topic concerns...  
I don't reckon it's to do with...  
It's unlikely to be about...  
One of the possible ideas might be...

2. Some of the words from the song are missing. See if you can fill them in. Now listen and check your answers.

What's wrong with the world, \_\_\_\_\_  
 People livin' like they ain't got no mamas  
 I think the whole world addicted to the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Only attracted to things that'll bring you \_\_\_\_\_  
 Overseas, yeah, we try to stop terrorism  
 But we still got terrorists here livin'  
 In the \_\_\_\_\_, the big \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Bloods and The Crips and the \_\_\_\_\_  
 But if you only have love for your own race  
 Then you only leave space to \_\_\_\_\_  
 And to \_\_\_\_\_ only \_\_\_\_\_ hate  
 And when you hate then you're bound to get \_\_\_\_\_, yeah  
 Madness is what you \_\_\_\_\_  
 And that's exactly how anger works and \_\_\_\_\_  
 Man, you gotta have love just to set it \_\_\_\_\_  
 Take control of your mind and \_\_\_\_\_  
 Let your soul \_\_\_\_\_ to the love, y'all, y'all

People \_\_\_\_\_, people \_\_\_\_\_  
 Children hurt and you hear them \_\_\_\_\_  
 Can you practice what you preach  
 And would you turn the other cheek?  
 Father, Father, Father help us  
 Send us some guidance from above  
 'Cause people got me, got me questionin'  
 Where is the love (Love)?  
 Where is the love (The love)?  
 Where is the love (The love)?  
 Where is the love?  
 The love, the love

It just ain't the same, always unchanged  
 New days are strange, is the world insane  
 If love and peace is so \_\_\_\_\_  
 Why are there pieces of love that don't \_\_\_\_\_?  
 Nations droppin' bombs  
 Chemical gasses fillin' lungs of little ones  
 With ongoin' sufferin' as the youth die young  
 So ask yourself is the lovin' really gone  
 So I could ask myself really what is goin' wrong

In this world that we livin' in, people keep on givin' in  
 Makin' wrong decisions, only visions of them dividends  
 Not respectin' each other, deny thy brother  
 A war is \_\_\_\_\_ on but the reason's undercover  
 The truth is kept secret, it's swept under the rug  
 If you never know truth then you never know love  
 Where's the love, y'all, come on (I don't know)  
 Where's the truth, y'all, come on (I don't know)  
 Where's the love, y'all

shoulder	older	drama	meditate
mama	straight	goin'	media
killin'	trauma	CIA	discriminate x2
irate	operates	strong	demonstrate
KKK	cryin'	colder	generate
belong	gravitate	bacteria	humanity
criteria	USA	animosity	unity
	dyin'	cinema	

I feel the weight of the world on my \_\_\_\_\_  
 As I'm gettin' \_\_\_\_\_, y'all, people gets \_\_\_\_\_  
 Most of us only care about money makin'  
 Selfishness got us followin' our wrong direction  
 Wrong information always shown by the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Negative images is the main \_\_\_\_\_  
 Infecting the young minds faster than \_\_\_\_\_  
 Kids wanna act like what they see in the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yo', what ever happened to the values of \_\_\_\_\_?  
 What ever happened to the fairness in \_\_\_\_\_?  
 Instead of spreading love we spreading \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lack of understanding, leading lives away from \_\_\_\_\_  
 That's the reason why sometimes I'm feelin' under  
 That's the reason why sometimes I'm feelin' down  
 There's no wonder why sometimes I'm feelin' under  
 Gotta keep my faith alive till love is found.

### Word-building

Fill in the gaps with the missing nouns, verbs, or adjectives from the same word family:

Noun	Verb	Adjective
terrorism	_____	_____
_____	discriminate	_____
_____	meditate	_____
equality	_____	_____
_____	gravitate	_____

### Discussion

- Were your predictions about the meaning of the song correct?
- "But when you only have love for your own race, then you leave space to discriminate. And to discriminate only generates hate".* How does discrimination relate to body image?
- Have you or anyone you know ever been discriminated against based on physical appearance?
- How can discrimination be prevented?