



Embrace Discussion Guide

Director: Taryn Brumfitt

Year: 2016

Time: 90 min

You might know this director from:

This is the debut feature film from this director.

FILM SUMMARY

In the United States alone, over 10 million women battle with anorexia or bulimia, while another 13 million are prone to binge eating. People on both end of the spectrum struggle with body image issues, no thanks to the constant presence of unrealistic “perfect” bodies in media and advertisements. With *EMBRACE*, body image activist Taryn Brumfitt embarks on a globetrotting campaign to inspire women around the world to change the way they feel about themselves and think about their bodies.

Following the birth of her third child, Brumfitt herself was left grappling with the fact that her post-baby body was no longer the youthful figure it once was, so she challenged herself to get “the perfect body,” training with a strict exercise and dietary regimen with the goal of entering herself into a bodybuilding contest. But even at her most fit, she found that she was lacking the most crucial aspect of life—happiness. So, she made some changes, and in 2013, Taryn posted a before and after picture of herself from the competition and her current, happier self that was seen by more than 100 million people worldwide and sparked an international media frenzy.

EMBRACE sees Taryn visiting pinnacles of body positivity around the world, from Mia Freedman, the youngest ever editor of the Australian edition of *Cosmopolitan*, Emmy Award-winning television presenter Ricki Lake, Adelaide researcher Professor Marika Tiggemann, UK talk show host and photographer Amanda de Cadenet, body image blogger Jes Baker, and motivational speaker Turia Pitt, each imparting their own perspective on how to bring body positivity to the fore of the public consciousness.

FILM THEMES

Utilizing her own image and the global reach of social media, Taryn Brumfitt has kick-started countless conversations about the detrimental effects traditional advertising has on women's body image across the world.

BODY POSITIVITY

It's hard to argue with the overwhelming statistics that show how one's perception of their body has been wholly warped by constant exposure to media and advertising that tells us that it is better to be thin above all else, but the truth is that this is a lie. As Taryn and many others have discovered, body positivity starts by accepting the quirks and singular attributes that make you unique. No one is built the same. These are the things that make you look like you!

DIFFERENT BODIES ARE NOT UNHEALTHY BODIES

Just because you can't squeeze into a size 2 or 12 doesn't mean that you are an unhealthy person. Some people are curvier than others. Some people are taller and thicker than others. Some people also happen to be naturally thin, but these features are not a measurement of a person's value in the world. Just because you don't stick to a super strict diet and workout for hours a day doesn't mean that you can't maintain a healthy lifestyle that fits in regular exercise and nutritious meals. Don't be fooled by advertising that sends the message there is only one type of healthy body.

MEDIA & ADVERTISING INDUSTRIES PROMOTE ONE BODY TYPE

If you ever turn on your TV, walk through the checkout at your local grocery store, or walk down the street of any metropolitan city, it's impossible not to be bombarded by images of women that promote the false idea that one body type is best. With so much overwhelming exposure to this singular message, it's no wonder that women around the world have undergone immense anxiety and self doubt about the shape of their own bodies. Thankfully, people like Taryn Brumfitt and her community around the globe are working hard to change this.

GLOBALIZED NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Taryn Brumfitt's entire Body Image Movement was sparked when a pair of images she posted of herself went viral on social media. Amazingly, that global reaction has been reflected in the network of people she's managed to bring together for the film, and the support systems that have been created for people in need of help with eating disorders or body image issues. Help is out there, one just needs to reach out to find it. In addition, social media has been flooded with body positive advocates, working to ensure that all kinds of bodies are represented, seen and celebrated.

“Your body is not an ornament, it's the vehicle to your dreams”

Taryn Brumfitt

“You have to be hot at every age, at every stage and that's a shocking burden and a shocking indictment of how our culture devalues women by how we look.”

Mia Freedman

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS:

1. Had you heard of Taryn Brumfitt or the Body Image Movement prior to seeing the film? If not, what was your first impression?
2. What were the biggest takeaways from the film? What were its biggest strengths? Do you have any critiques of it?
3. Do you have anyone in your life that has suffered from body image issues or eating disorders? If so, how have their struggles changed your perception of the issues at hand?
4. The film takes a globetrotting, road tripping structure to highlight how universal an issue body positivity is. How does this structuring device work for you?
5. When going through a normal day, have you noticed how prevalent images of unrealistic body types women are in advertising and various media? How do you personally react to them?
6. Have you, like Taryn, gone to physical extremes to attain a sort of mental ideal of your own body?
7. Are you currently happy in your own skin or do you struggle with the same issues of insecurity and disgust that many women admit to in the film? Is this a struggle for you?
8. Many of the women portrayed in the film use social media as a support network or positive feedback loop. How do you find yourself using social media?
9. What do you do personally to maintain a positive outlook on your own physicality?
10. Is there anything you feel like the film was missing that could help the body image movement?

NOTES:

FILM FACTS:

- EMBRACE had its world premiere at the 2016 Sydney Film Festival, where it made it into the festival directors' top 5 picks and was nominated for the Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Best Documentary.
- Taryn Brumfitt's Body Image Movement teaches women the value and power of loving their body from the inside out, supports health at every size, values real beauty from the inside out – humility, kindness, humour, respect and generosity – advocates natural ageing, yet doesn't discriminate against anybody.
- The dieting industry takes in a staggering \$40 billion a year within the United States alone.
- After launching a Kickstarter campaign to fund the production of EMBRACE, 8,909 backers pledged \$331,046 to help bring Taryn Brumfitt's documentary project to life.
- The average American woman is 5'4" and 140 lbs, while the average fashion model is 5'11" and 110 lbs.
- To help support the Body Positivity Movement, Taryn formed The Unstoppable Program, to help "empower you to create and live a life full of clarity, courage and coffee-like verve."
- Despite the possibility of teens developing support networks via social media, statistics show a correlation that the more time spent on social media websites, the more likely adolescent girls are to develop an eating disorder.
- Taryn is a mother of 3 children – Oliver, Cruz and Mikaela, she is a professional photographer, writer and speaker, she lives in Adelaide, Australia, with her husband Mathew.
- The before and after pictures that Taryn Brumfitt shared on social media in 2013 went viral, receiving more than 100 million views worldwide and support from celebrities such as Ashton Kutcher, Rosie O'Donnell and Zooey Deschanel.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Post** about the film using the hashtag #ihaveembraced, share the trailer, or [host a screening](#) of the film in your area to help encourage body positivity around the world!
2. **Sign** Taryn Brumfitt's [petition](#) to help encourage positive body image by demanding mandatory labelling on photoshopped imagery in advertising via legislative changes.
3. **Contribute** to the [Embrace Education And Social Outreach Program](#) or the [National Eating Disorders Association](#) to financially support resources that help people overcome their fears and issues with eating and body image.
4. **Reach out** to those in your life that may be struggling with an eating disorder, offer your support and let them know that there are resources available that can help them love the body that they have.
5. **Become** a Body Image Movement Global Ambassador to help spread body positivity with help from Taryn's program! Just fill out an application [here](#).

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.