

Body Image: Media Influences



Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- W – 7.2 Examine personal grooming/cleanliness, and evaluate the impact of grooming/cosmetic advertisements on personal grooming habits/choices.
- W – 7.4 Analyze the messages and approaches used by the media to promote certain body images and lifestyle choices.
- R – 7.1 Analyze how thinking patterns influence feelings; e.g., positive thinking, all or nothing thinking, overgeneralization, and perfectionism.

Teacher Background

Body image continues to be a topic of interest in junior high, as students attempt to define and discover who they are. On a daily basis, students are bombarded with messages in the media which affect this process. Helping them to navigate through it all is an important task.

The activities in this lesson are intended to make students look at media advertisements so they are more critical of what they are seeing and less apt to internalize the messages. The individual instructor sets the pace, meaning that if there is a particular concept that requires reinforcement, there is opportunity to use this lesson as a springboard for further discussion.

This lesson is taken in part from the Grade 7-9 Body Image Kit. The Body Image Kit contains more activities you can use in your classroom for further expansion of this topic. Contact information for the Body Image Kit is in the reference section at the end of this lesson.

Objectives

Through the use of group activity, participants will:

- Identify and analyze a variety of advertising techniques.
- Discuss the impact of media messages on body image.
- Determine strategies to neutralize the impact of media messages.

Materials

- Student collected advertisements
- Handout: “*Media Motives*” Worksheet
- Handout: *Advertising Methods, Decoding By Definition*
- Handout: *Strategies for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media*
- Handout: *Ground Rules*

Get Ready

- In preparation for this lesson, have students collect advertisements from various sources that pertain to body image.
- Introduce today’s lesson. For example, “Advertisers have developed a multi-billion dollar industry to convince consumers that we need to buy their products”.
- In this lesson, we are going to examine the advertising methods that are used. Body image can be a sensitive topic to many individuals, so it is important that others be respectful to emotions and feelings that may arise. Review *Ground Rules* sheet.

Activity: Media Motives

- Break students into small groups.
- Distribute one or two advertisement(s) and one worksheet to each group.
- Have each group decide which advertisement they will critique. (If time permits, they could critique both).
- Instruct them to “decode” the ad as they proceed through the worksheet questions.
- Have each group present their ad back to the large group.
- As groups present their ads, students will fill in a “definition” sheet that serves to identify the advertising methods.

Instructor Note: There is no formal answer key to accompany the definitions sheet – the intent is to have students arrive at their own understanding of the techniques. They will be better equipped to neutralize the impact of media messages.

Discussion

- In what ways might these ads affect our body image, if at all?
- Brainstorm strategies to help students become critical viewers of media messaging (refer to handout *Strategies for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media*).

Optional Video Streaming

- You may choose a video clip from your district video streaming options to support this lesson.

Conclusion

Through the use of magazine advertisements, we have discussed what motivates the advertising industry and the effect that media has on body image. A final conclusion is that each student is left with strategies about how to strengthen themselves against these messages.

Take Home Activity

Students will select an advertisement that they find particularly harmful or positive towards how they feel about their own body image. Have them research the company's address and write a letter (either of complaint or of commendation). Share any responses that the students receive.

Assessment Strategy

- Students will identify and analyze a variety of advertising techniques.
- Students will discuss the impact of media messages on body image.
- Students will determine strategies to neutralize the impact of media messages.

References

Alberta Mental Health Board. (2001). *Body Image Kit*. Retrieved from <http://www.bodyimageworks.com>

This kit contains several other activities that you could also use with your students.

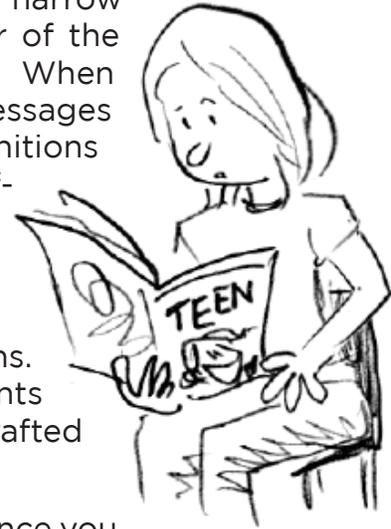
**The Body Image Kit (AMHB 2001)
is free to borrow from several sources.**

Contact:

- Your school's community health nurse
- Edmonton Public Schools: Comprehensive School Health Consultant
- Edmonton Catholic Schools: Consultant – Wellness, Physical Education and Health.
- Alberta Health Services Mental Health Promotion Specialist, Addiction and Mental Health, Edmonton Zone

Strategies For Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media

Media messages about body shape and size will affect the way we feel about ourselves and our bodies, only if we let them. One of the ways we can protect our self-esteem and body image from the media's narrow definitions of beauty is to become a critical viewer of the media messages we are bombarded with each day. When we effectively recognize and analyze the media messages that influence us, we remember that the media's definitions of beauty and success do not have to define our self-image or potential.



Remember:

- All media images and messages are constructions. They are NOT reflections of reality. Advertisements and other media messages have been carefully crafted with the intent to send a very specific message.
- Advertisements are created to do one thing: convince you to buy or support a specific product or service.
- To convince you to buy a specific product or service, advertisers will often construct an emotional experience that looks like reality. Remember that you are only seeing what the advertisers want you to see.
- Advertisers create their message based on what they think you will want to see and what they think will affect you and compel you to buy their product. Just because they think their approach will work with people like you doesn't mean it has to work with you as an individual.
- As individuals, we decide how to experience the media messages we encounter. We can choose to use a filter that helps us understand what the advertiser wants us to think or believe and then choose whether we want to think or believe that message. We can choose a filter that protects our self-esteem and body image.

“Media Motives” Worksheet

- What type of product or service is featured in your ad?
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- What approach has the advertiser used to promote or sell this product or service? Here are some of the methods that advertisers use to attract consumers:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sex Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> Homestyle or Traditional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Join the Bandwagon:
Everyone is getting one! | <input type="checkbox"/> We Try Harder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highest Quality Available | <input type="checkbox"/> Best Value |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financing Plans/
Installment Incentives | <input type="checkbox"/> New & Improved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Name Brands & Logos |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Safety |

- What message does this ad give the consumer?
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- How would you define or describe this approach to advertising?
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- Do you think that this approach is effective advertising for the product?
Why or why not?
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- In what ways, if any, could any part of this advertisement impact a person’s body image? (e.g. you could take into consideration: the product itself, the models selling it, the way it is being presented, etc.)
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Advertising Methods

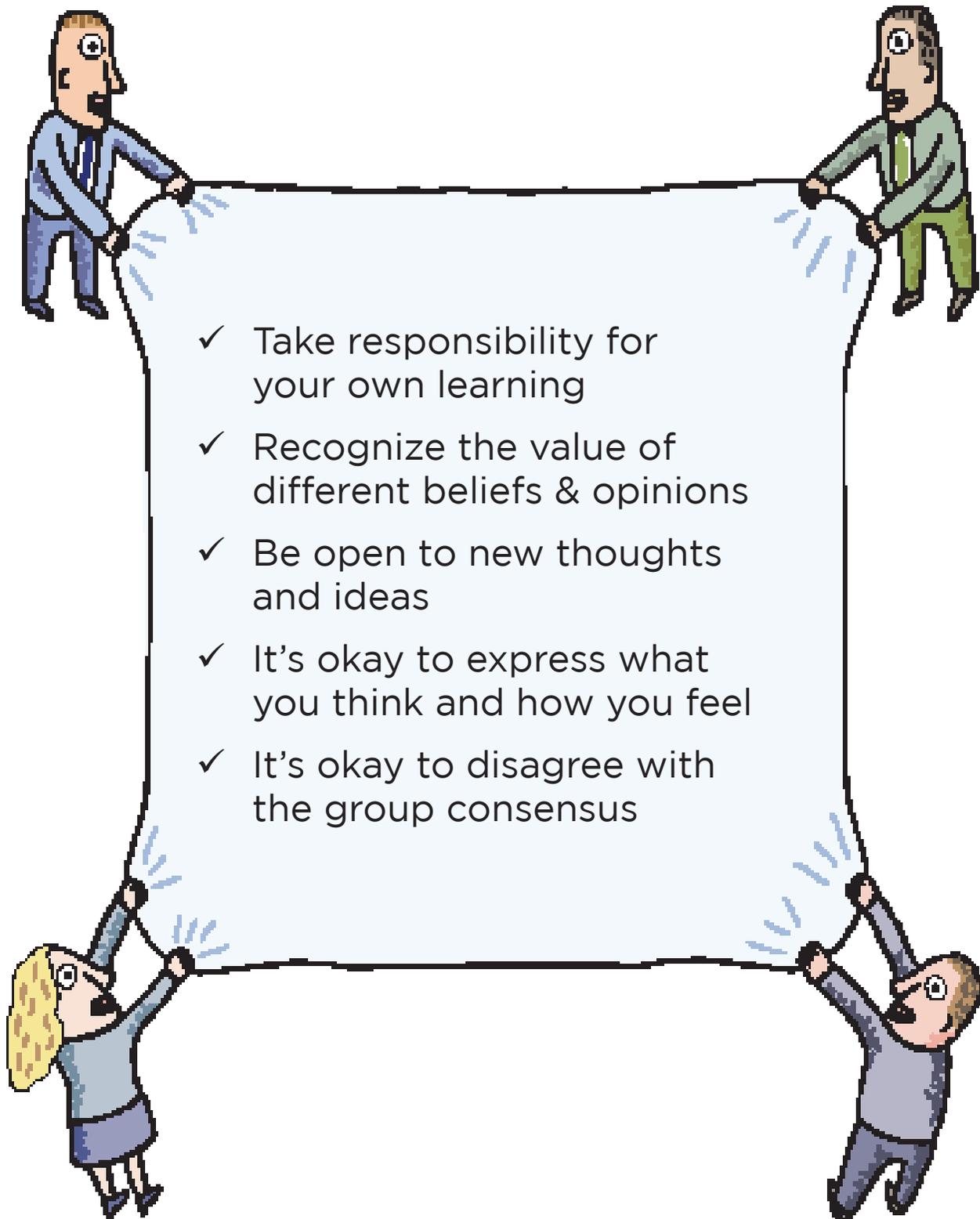
Decoding by “Definition”

Give your best understanding of how the following advertising methods work:

- 1 Best Value
- 2 Celebrity Endorsement
- 3 Financing Plans/Installment Incentives
- 4 Health & Safety
- 5 Highest Quality Available
- 6 Homestyle or Traditional
- 7 Join the Bandwagon/Everyone is Getting One
- 8 Name Brands & Logos
- 9 Negative Advertising
- 10 New & Improved
- 11 Sex Appeal
- 12 We Try Harder



Ground Rules



- ✓ Take responsibility for your own learning
- ✓ Recognize the value of different beliefs & opinions
- ✓ Be open to new thoughts and ideas
- ✓ It's okay to express what you think and how you feel
- ✓ It's okay to disagree with the group consensus