



Navigating the Media

Objectives:

- Girls will be able to recognize the marketing messages in various media outlets and how they affect our view of ourselves, our community, and societal standards.
- Girls will be able to define “pain points” and locate them in examples from the media.
- Girls will envision marketing practices that transmit healthy and positive messages to all members of society.
- Girls will begin thinking about their final project.

Lesson Plan:

- Icebreaker (5 minutes)
- Activity: Body Acceptance Baseline (5 minutes)
- Discussion: Messages in the Media (15 minutes)
- Break (5 minutes)
- Activity: Create a Feminist AD Campaign (15 minutes)
- Discussion: Final Project (Optional) (5 minutes)
- Week Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Icebreaker: (5 minutes)

- Icebreaker question: Who is your favorite movie, TV, or book character? Why?
- The girls may share to the whole group, or in pairs.
 - This icebreaker will set up the concepts in this lesson, by having the girls begin to think about the media, how it influences our ideals, and how we can define ourselves, as individuals and as girls or women, in more ways than just our appearance. The facilitator may wish to bring up the girls’ icebreaker answers throughout the lesson to exemplify points, such as beauty standards, the influence of the media on our views, or that our worth is more than just our appearance.

Activity: Body Acceptance Baseline (5 minutes)

*Materials: Body Acceptance Baseline**

- The facilitator should explain that the girls are going to fill out a quick questionnaire, that is just for their own reflection and self-awareness. These will not be collected or read by anyone else, and the girls will only be asked to share what they are comfortable sharing.
- The facilitator should print the Body Acceptance Baseline handout, or make an online version available, and give the girls as much time as needed to fill it out.
- Then, ask some discussion questions, such as:
 - How did it feel to fill out this questionnaire? What was the experience like?
 - Did any of the questions or your own answers surprise you?
 - What kinds of things make you feel happy with your body? What kinds of things make you feel unhappy with your body?
- The facilitator should then introduce the topic of the day's discussion: body positivity and how to navigate the media in a way that is positive.

Discussion: Messages in the Media (15 minutes)

- The facilitator should ask the girls how they would define the following topics, one at a time: body-image, media, social constructs, and the social construct/standard of beauty.
 - Possible definitions to provide:
 - **Body Image:** "Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception. These feelings can be positive, negative or both, and are influenced by individual and environmental [and social] factors" (McShirley, Collin 2019 "What is Body Image?," PsychAlive.org, <https://www.psychalive.org/what-is-body-image>).
 - **Media:** "the main means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the internet) regarded collectively" (Oxford Dictionary).
 - **Social Construct:** "an idea that has been created and accepted by the people in a society" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). These ideas are perpetuated by the political and social institutions of the society.
 - **Beauty Standard:** "the physical qualities that women and girls feel pressured to achieve and maintain" (Tovar, Virgie. *The Self-Love Revolution: Radical Body Positivity for Girls of Color*. New Harbinger Publications, 2020. Page 12). Our standards and ideas of beauty are influenced by our society, culture, community, families, education, and the media, and the same inequalities in these areas contribute to the

construction of beauty. That means racism/colorism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, and fatphobia all have an effect on what we consider to be beautiful.

- With these definitions, the facilitator should explain how all these concepts are working together to impact how we think and feel about ourselves as girls. Social constructions are created by societies. The specific construction of beauty in a society influences how the people in that society feel about their body image -- whether they measure up to the standard of beauty, and how important it is for them to fit into the construct or not. The media is one social institution that is central to our social construction of beauty.
- Now, ask the girls to discuss the beauty construct in our society with a partner, and be ready to share. (Or, another option is to conduct a quick google search of “beauty” and analyze the results.) After a couple minutes, ask one person from each pair to share what they think their society’s construction of beauty is.
 - The facilitator should keep notes of the girls’ responses, and reiterate main points. The construction of beauty in the United States favors whiteness and thinness, in a way that disadvantages people of color and people with darker skin, as well as people who are not extremely thin or who have a disability. This construction of beauty is unattainable for the majority of women. In terms of thinness alone, 67% of American women wear a size 14 or larger (Miller, Kelsey. “We Let You Down & We’re Going to Fix It.” *Refinery29*, 2016. <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2016/09/123687/plus-size-american-women-67-percent-essay#:~:text=As%20of%202012%2C%20it%20is,between%20a%2016%20and%2018>).
 - Remind the girls of the following points:
 - The media does not provide a true picture of the real world.
 - The media portrays an ideal image of physical perfection. But true beauty comes from within.
 - Our uniqueness comes from our differences.
 - Beauty comes in all colors, shapes, and sizes. It is important to be happy with who you are.
- **The Media & Pain Points:** The facilitator should now ask the group where they got these ideas about what is beautiful. Likely answers include social media, magazines, movies, music videos, fashion shows, TV, advertisements on TV, song lyrics, and the like. Explain that these are all examples of the media. A lot of what we see communicated by the media is part of an effort for someone to “sell” something and make money. The typical way to do this is by showing viewers “pain points.”
 - Ask the girls if anyone has heard of pain points. If not, ask what it sounds like.
 - Explain that a pain point is some problem that a person might have in their life, which might be causing them some kind of pain or inconvenience, which

they need a product to fix. For example, in an advertisement for a pest killer spray, an advertisement might show an ant infestation in someone's house, which is incredibly inconvenient, annoying, or even disgusting. This makes viewers want to buy the product, to fix or prevent such an infestation. The problem occurs when advertisers go farther than our simple need for a product, targeting our shame and trauma to make us want to change ourselves or our lives.

- Ask the girls to again pair up and discuss pain points: can you think of any examples of pain points you've seen in an advertisement? After the girls discuss, call on a few girls to share examples they thought of. Explain that in the beauty and fashion industries, pain points are regularly used to make women and girls feel like we should be ashamed of not fitting into the social construct of beauty.
- Finally, the facilitator should provide several examples of the media perpetuating unjust and unattainable beauty ideals/examples of advertisements using pain points. After each example, ask the girls to explain what is happening in the example, and why it might be harmful to our body image or self-esteem.
 - Potential examples:
 - Schick Hydrosilk TrimStyle
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joFvJR3LoFg>
 - Note the shame and unhappiness of the first two girls, and the jealousy they have for the last girl. Also, note that all the women are very thin.
 - Genie Hour Glass Waist Trainer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQ3NuHV8fQ0>
 - Note that this advertisement indicates that there is only one "perfect" type of body and that the mother was ashamed of her "mom body."
 - *Mean Girls* - "Meet the Plastics"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tP2XtYbIgD0>
 - Note the similarities between "the plastics," and that their ability to conform to the beauty construct determines their status in the social hierarchy of their school, and their perceived worth as individuals.
- Conclude: The media often profits off of making us feel insecure about our bodies and ourselves. It sets an impossible standard of beauty, and then tells us that we will not be worthy, happy, or successful unless we look a certain way, so that we will always feel like we need their product to be okay. The media can make us compare ourselves to our peers and friends and promote

feelings of jealousy instead of lifting each other up. When we interact with the media, we should keep these facts in mind, and remember that all bodies are beautiful, and our worth as girls and women does not come from our appearance. "Prettiness is not a rent you pay for occupying a space marked 'female.'" - Erin McKean

BREAK

Activity: Create a Feminist AD Campaign (15 minutes)

- The facilitator should ask the girls to form groups of 2-3, and explain that the groups are going to imagine a product or service and envision a campaign for the product or service that is inclusive of everyone and does not target shame or trauma.
- Each group should be prepared to present on the following:
 - What product or service are you advertising?
 - What medium do you want to use to advertise? (TV, social media, newspapers, some new future medium we haven't thought of yet!)
 - How do you want to tell people about this product/service using your medium of choice? (come up with 1 or 2 lines)
 - If a group finishes early, they could create a presentation (such as a drawing, slide show, or skit) as part of their campaign.
- Show or pass out the handout "12 Principles For Prototyping A Feminist Business" (from sister.is, IG: @sister.is) to give the girls some ideas.
- When all the groups are prepared, have them share their campaigns. Be sure to note the individuality and accomplishments of each.

Discussion: Final Project (5 minutes)

- The facilitator may invite or require girls to complete a final project that reflects on a topic or lesson covered in this curriculum. It's best to leave the project open for the girls to pursue their interests and embrace creativity.
- Some ideas:
 - Create a collage of your accomplishments
 - Create a collaborative mural
 - Design a social media campaign
 - Organize an event to spread awareness about mental health, sexual health, body positivity, healthy relationships, or any other social issue of interest
 - Create a film or documentary on mental health, sexual health, body positivity, healthy relationships, or any other social issue of interest

- Partner with an external organization to make contraceptives more available at your school
- Volunteer with an external organization
- Write and produce a song about self-love, body positivity, mental health, or another important topic
- Have fun with it! Do something that inspires you!

Week Wrap Up (5 minutes)

- First, everyone will go around the circle and say something they learned, something they appreciated, or give a compliment to another girl in the group.
- Everyone goes around the circle. Then the facilitator explains we like to end with a cheer, so all the girls should put their hands in the middle of the circle, and be ready to say with confidence, “Like a girl,” on 3. The facilitator will say, “1, 2, 3, LIKE A GIRL”!

Parent Email:

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Questions:

- *How do you think messages from songs, shows, and advertisements affect you and your friends?*
- *What would you change about the way advertisements portray girls and women?*
- *Is there something you would like to change about the way you interact with the media?*

Body Acceptance Baseline*

Read the following questions to help measure how accepting you are with your body and of yourself. Write true (T) if you agree with the statement and false (F) if the statement doesn't currently ring true for you

- _____ I like the way I look and I appreciate my unique traits
- _____ When I look in the mirror I see a beautiful person looking back
- _____ I do not participate in group body bashing, of myself or others
- _____ I do not compare my appearance to anyone else
- _____ I compliment others for their accomplishments, rather than their appearances
- _____ I wear clothing that fits my body and makes me feel good regardless of the size
- _____ I do not comment on other people's weight
- _____ I do not let the number on the scale determine my self-worth
- _____ I do not avoid certain activities or clothing for fear of judgement
- _____ I post realistic, unedited photos of myself on social media
- _____ I know that media does not set the standards of beauty or perfection
- _____ I don't feel the need to alter my natural physical appearance
- _____ I realize that I'm beautiful no matter what shape or size I am
- _____ I know that true beauty is not simply skin deep

*Adapted from NEDA (National Eating Disorders Association)

12 PRINCIPLES FOR PROTOTYPING A FEMINIST BUSINESS

- 1 You have a body.
- 2 You are connected with the earth, the plants, and all living beings.
- 3 Integrate!
- 4 Institutionalize empathy: build frameworks that support feelings.
- 5 Embody your values.
- 6 Reclaim happiness: new definitions of success.
- 7 Consider everything an experiment.
- 8 Free yourself from the myth of the meritocracy.
- 9 Tell the truth.
- 10 Cultivate abundance consciousness.
- 11 A business can be a healing for yourself & others.
- 12 A business can be a model for a new social & economic order.

☺ Jennifer Armbrust, jenn@armbrust.co