

## LESSON: The Gift of Sexuality, Part Two Sexuality and the Media

### Overview

After discussing their own perspectives as to how expressions of sexuality change throughout an individual's lifetime (*The Gift of Sexuality, Part 1*), participants use images taken from print ads to make a collage illustrating how the media portrays sexuality.

### Objectives:

- To identify media messages about sexuality
- To reflect upon the ways in which sexuality is packaged in the media for the purpose of selling a product

**Level:** Middle / High School

**Time:** 1 class period

### Preparation and Materials:

- White Board
- Magazines, paper, glue, scissors OR Access to the Web
- Slide: *Properties of Sexuality*
- Handout: *Gift of Sexuality*

### Procedures

1. To begin a guided discussion, summarize with your group the ideas expressed in **The Gift of Sexuality, Part 1**. To help the group focus on the definition of sexuality, refer to the *Properties of Sexuality* overhead. Ask some of the youth to share and discuss their illustrations from the *Gift of Sexuality* handout with the entire group.
2. Inform the group that they will now be asked to compare and contrast some of the ideas that were raised during Part One with the media portrayals they see of sexuality.

Distribute magazines to the group, and ask youth to pull ads that portray sexuality at the various stages of development from early childhood through young adulthood.

Or if the students are able to access the Web, have them locate these ads online and create their own display for their findings.

3. Discuss some of the changes they see in the ways that sexuality is portrayed, using specific ads as examples. Ask:
  - Media uses sexuality to promote its products.
  - Sexuality is often used as an attention grabber to get you to watch a program or buy a product.
  - How might using "sex to sell" impact attitudes/beliefs about sexuality?

## Activity

Divide the class into small groups. Inform each group that they are to create a collage in the form of a mural depicting how the media image of sexuality is expressed to the target audience as it moves from infancy to young adulthood.

When complete, display the murals on the wall.

Ask youth to look at the images they found for the middle and high school target audience and to compare them with the images for the younger audience.

Consider the following questions for discussion:

- What are the messages the media is sending about sexuality in these ads? (e.g. the message concerning the overriding importance of instant gratification; you're nothing if you're not beautiful and seductive—these are the most highly valued traits in a person, etc.)
- Does the product actually make the consumer more sexy or attractive?
- How do some of the media messages relate to Dennis's earlier statement about "the wonderful gift of sexuality"? (Sexuality grows slowly, unfolding as we grow older and learn to appreciate ourselves and those around us.)
- Do you think Dennis had some of these media portrayals in mind?

Inform group that as media critics they have the opportunity to make their audience aware of how media uses sexuality to sell its product. Instruct youth to write an essay describing their observations about media portrayals of sexuality.

## Assessment

Answers given as student attempts to deconstruct the media images.