

LESSON: The Media Me And The Reality Me

Overview

Participants examine the way teens are portrayed by the media, and compare these portrayals to the ways that they would describe themselves.

Objectives:

- To compare media images of young adults with images depicting some of the ways teens see themselves
- To examine and discuss how media distorts the image of sexuality
- To examine and discuss how media portrays teens

Level: Middle / High School

Time: 1 class period

Preparation and Materials:

- White Board
- Computers and/or magazines/paper/glue

Procedures

1. To begin a guided discussion, create two headings on a flip chart: "Media Me" and "Reality Me," and ask the group to brainstorm how the media portrays images of young adults.
2. Write descriptive words under the Media Me heading. Ask the group how this compares with how young adults look on most days, e.g. going to school, going to work, hanging out with their friends.
3. Write descriptive words under the Reality Me heading. Ask group to discuss why they think young adults are 'glamorized' in media advertising.
4. Consider the following points for discussion:
 - Young adults are a big target market with lots of cash
 - Media uses sexual images to grab attention
 - The underlying message is that you will immediately get results if you buy the product
 - Youthful images appeal to older groups of consumers as well (i.e. if I buy that I can be "young again" with all the perks that entails)

Activity One

Divide youth into small groups. If you don't have access to computers, distribute magazines, paper, markers, scissors and glue to the groups. Inform youth that they are to create a two-part collage and do the following:

- Divide their paper into two columns: one column for "Media Me" and the other for "Reality Me"
- Pull images from the Web or from the magazines that show how the media portrays a teen like themselves, Place the images under the "Media Me" heading.
- Now pull images that portray a teen like themselves that much more closely resembles who they actually are in real life . Place those images under the "Reality Me" column.
- When completed, post the resulting collages around the room.

Discussion

- Ask the group to discuss what they notice as they look at the various collages.
- Compare and contrast the “Media Me” to the “Reality Me” as they are depicted on the different collages?
- What were some of the most striking differences between the “Media Me” and “Reality Me” that they found in doing this exercise?
- Ask the group to consider some of the rationale that people creating these media images might have for using portrayals such as the ones they found.

Activity Two

Have the students write an essay summarizing their findings about the “Media Me” and “Reality Me” collages they created.

Assessment

- Evaluation of the essay; points raised during classroom discussion.
- Creation and discussion of the Media/Me collage.