

LESSON: Deconstructing Birth Control Ads

Overview

Teens receive a great deal of information (and misinformation) about sexuality from the media. The media provide a variety of vehicles for acquiring this information. Male enhancement drugs, such as Viagra, for example, are now well known even to younger teens thanks to commercials airing on TV and available on the Internet.

This lesson encourages students to deconstruct the commercials that they may encounter. It focuses on a sample commercial for the contraceptive Nuvaring and requires students to carefully examine the information that is being presented.

Objectives:

- Analyze a sample birth control commercial
- Evaluate this commercial as an educational tool for teens seeking to learn about birth control methods

Level: Middle / High School

Time: 1 class period

Preparation and Materials:

- Nuvaring Ad #1 (Girls in Bathing Suits)
- Nuvaring Ad #2
- Questions to Consider Handout

Procedures

The average person encounters about 2500 ads for different products every day. Where might we see some of these ads? (e.g. billboards, TV, movies, Internet, clothing that people wear, bus signs, magazines, etc..).

Some of these ads introduce us to new products that we might not have known about before. The key question we're going to consider today however, is how much do we really learn about a product from listening to the ad? The product we're going to examine is a birth control method called Nuvaring.

Some of you may have heard one of these two Nuvaring ads earlier.

Activity

Show Ad #1 (Girls in Bathing Suits)

Ask students to divide into teams of two people. Distribute the Questions to Consider handout.

NUVARING AD #1

- Tell students that we often see commercials but ask how often we really stop and think what they're telling us.
- Today we're going to take a second look at an ad for a birth control method and try to figure out how

informative it might be to a teen girl If you are a girl, assume you are interested in starting birth control or you're already using a birth control method but would be interested in changing methods

- If you're a boy, assume you are trying to help a girl who has come to you for advice (this could be your girlfriend and the two of you are trying to decide what would be best to do or the girl could be your sister, a close relative or a very good friend who needs your help).
- Using the Questions to Consider handout, deconstruct this ad and record your answers.
- Show the Nuvaring Ad #1 a few times so that the students have the chance to look at it in detail. (Make sure to tell them that no detail in an ad is there by accident! Everything is carefully planned.)

Before discussing #1, show Nuvaring Ad #2.

- As a group, deconstruct Ad #2 using the Questions to Consider handout Compare Ads #1 and #2
- Consider why the company might have decided on this approach to the ad.
- Does Ad #2 provide any new information that would be useful for the girl trying to learn about a new method of birth control?
- What techniques does Ad #2 employ to convince its audience?

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Ask students to write an essay analyzing and evaluating the two Nuvaring commercials. Include in their essays some advice to teens watching these commercials based on their conclusions.

Assessment

Responses recorded on Questions to Consider handout as well as the essay that students are asked to write can be used for assessment purposes.