

As If!

WIN Kids Curriculum for 5th and 6th grade

Designed for classrooms, community youth groups, and other educational settings



Lesson Objectives

- Examine sources of body image messages.
- Understand myths of body image messages and their unrealistic images of perfection.
- Develop critical viewing skills to analyze messages.



Wellness IN (WIN) the Rockies Principles

- Be critical of messages that focus on unrealistic body images as symbols of success and happiness.
- Challenge your own size prejudice beliefs.



Health Standards

Content Area – Consumer Health

National Health Standards 2 (access information), 4 (influence), and 7 (advocacy)

Wyoming Health Content and Performance Standards 2, 4 and 7

Montana Health Enhancement Content Standard 5

Idaho Grade 5 Health Performance Standards 944

Idaho Grade 6 Health Performance Standards 954

Note: Suggested standards can be met depending upon lesson components selected and assessed. Potential assessment tools are designated with a ✓.



Approximate Length

- 30 minutes



The main message of the media is that happiness comes from products.

-Jean Kilbourne

Materials and Preparation

Handouts (1 per student):

WIN the Home: Become a Critical Viewer

As If video tape (approximately 8 minutes, see Sources and Materials)

VCR and television

Supplies for making life-size models (see Additional Ideas)





Background for Educator

We are bombarded daily with messages about “ideal” or “perfect” body shapes and sizes. Sources of these messages include television, radio, computers, billboards, magazines, newspapers, parents, teachers, friends, posters, and many more. These messages often depict unrealistic and altered body images as symbols of success and happiness. Many people have grown accustomed to this constant barrage and may be unaware of how it can undermine self-esteem.

The ideal or perfect body type is a moving target in the United States, particularly for women. In the late 1800s, the ideal female body was large and full-figured. In the 1920s the “flapper” look – or a sleek, trim, straight body – was ideal. Marilyn Monroe brought curves back in style in the 1950s. Twiggy was one of the first popular ultra-thin models of the 1960s and this image of perfection tied to thinness continues today.

From the male perspective, the past 30 years has seen a growing media fixation on men’s bodies. Powerful movie roles for Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger have propelled the image that muscularity symbolizes masculinity. The use of male models in commercial advertising is increasing.

In schools and communities, people whose bodies differ from what is supposedly ideal are often portrayed and treated in a negative way. The current ideal is so narrowly defined that virtually no one is capable of looking like the image. The photographs of those picture-perfect male and female models used to create and reinforce an ideal are often changed and enhanced – so even the models themselves don’t look that perfect!

Advertisers sell products. By portraying an unattainable ideal, they make us feel insecure and anxious. We want to believe the advertised product can make us feel better. Larry Kirkwood is an artist and body-acceptance advocate. He observes, “Anxiety is the basis of the beauty industry and body hatred is an extremely lucrative business.”

Jean Kilbourne writes and speaks about the image of women in advertising. She reminds us that ads try to convince us human relationships are fragile, difficult and disappointing – but that products won’t let us down. She asserts that ads create an environment in which bad choices are constantly reinforced. Much of advertising’s power comes from the belief that it does not affect us. If we think advertising is silly and trivial, we are less on guard and less critical than we might be otherwise.

Becoming a critical viewer involves understanding what messages and emotions are used to sell products. Oral and visual messages often have more to do with how we feel than with what the product will do for us if purchased.

This lesson and accompanying video examine the messages and the myths embedded in media messages related to body image, shape and size. It shows the ridiculousness and pervasiveness of these messages in an effort to promote critical viewing. The video uses the phrase “as if” to emphasize the unreal messages or myths promoted by the media.



Lesson Script

Overview and Video

1. We see and hear hundreds of messages every day selling or promoting products and showing us how we supposedly can look or feel if we use that product. Where do we see and hear these messages? (*Brainstorm and record responses on board. Refer to first paragraph of **Background for Educator** for ideas.*)

2. We are going to watch a short video about messages kids are exposed to every day. (*Watch the video **As If**, approximately 8 minutes.*)

As If Activity

What are the five “As ifs” in the video? (*Discuss and list on board using the students’ words. Discussion questions are listed below.*)

1. **Products can make you look instantly attractive and perfect.** (*Christy hears ad for a diet drink and imagines Miguel as her prince charming.*)

- * Who defines what is “perfect” or attractive?
- * What other things in the world are attractive or beautiful? (*sunset, shiny car*)
- * Do we all define attractiveness, perfection or beauty the same way?

2. **Happiness and wealth are a result of how you look.** (*Sean sees rock stars on CD covers and imagines wealth and fame if he looked that way.*)

- * What does it mean to be famous?
- * What makes a person successful?
- * Are all successful people happy?
- * Do all rich people look the same?

3. **Using the right product makes you popular.** (*Christy sees a lipstick ad and imagines instant popularity after using the product.*)

- * What do you look for in a friend?
- * What qualities make you a good friend to others?
- * What emotion does Christy feel when she sees the lipstick ad?
- * How does the ad make Christy feel insecure about herself?

4. **Everyone should look like society’s ideal.** (*Sean sees an “ideal” girl on the television and imagines all girls looking that way.*)

- * What would the world be like if everyone looked the same?
- * What is unique about you?
- * If we all looked “perfect,” would that look become boring?

5. **You can judge people by the way they look.** (*Christy hears about fat people from her sister and imagines her life changing as a result of being fat.*)

- * How can you tell if a person is honest?
- * What does a person do that makes them trustworthy or untrustworthy?
- * Does changing your outside appearance change who you are inside?

➤ LANGUAGE or ENRICHMENT Option: Have students write a short paper in reaction to any of the “As If” statements. ✓



WIN the Home: Become a Critical Viewer

1. Ask students to notice and write down where they see and hear messages about body image and how we look. During the next class, have students share what they saw and heard. During the sharing, have students discuss the most powerful or most unrealistic image.

2. (*Distribute **Become a Critical Viewer** worksheet.*) Remind students that advertisers use emotions or feelings to sell products. For example, the diet drink ad made Christy feel sad and she wanted to feel accepted. Ask students to complete the worksheet with a parent or another adult. Once complete, provide a time for students to share their worksheets. ✓

Please note: pilot testing of lessons has determined that WIN the Home activities are most successful when students have time over a weekend to complete them, when a follow-up is conducted in class, and when students receive credit for completion.



WIN the Community: Make Your Own Ad

Advertisers use all kinds of media to sell products. Media can also be used to inform or teach people. Have students create ads that can teach others how to be more critical of messages that focus on unrealistic body images as symbols of success and happiness. ✓
A few options are the following:

- 1) **Radio-style ads** to read over the school address system, at youth group meetings, as announcements at senior citizens centers, or as a program for local civic groups.
- 2) **Written ads** to print in newspapers, organizational newsletters, or on scrolling television bulletin boards.
- 3) **Visual ads** using drawings or pictures to display on a bulletin boards or posters in the school or around town.



Additional Ideas

➤ **Interactive Web Site** – Have students check out an informative, skill-building web site through PBS Kids (Public Broadcasting Service). <www.pbskids.org/dontbuyit> The site is called “Don’t Buy It, Get Media Smart!” and includes interactive sections about advertising and how to be a critical viewer. After interacting with the web site, have students write or share orally one new thing they learned from the site. ✓

➤ **Toys, Models, People Activity** – Messages about body size and shape are found everywhere, including with toys. Compare Barbie and G.I. Joe with an average-sized person and a typical model. Using a variety of materials, create a life-size version of these body shapes and share with the class. ✓ (Provide trash bags, newspapers, string, construction paper, hangers, wire, tape measures, scissors, glue, tape, markers, etc.)

Note these interesting items in the charts below (*numbers are approximate and vary by source*):

- * the change in G.I. Joe™ over time while Barbie™ has not changed
- * Barbie™ is much taller than G.I. Joe™
- * the difference between the average female and the typical female model is much greater than the difference between the average male and typical male model

Females

Measurements	Average Female	Typical Female Model	Barbie™ Doll
Height	5 feet, 4 inches ¹	5 feet, 10 inches ²	6 feet, 9 inches ³
Weight	152 pounds ¹	114 pounds ²	
Clothing Size	Size 14 ¹	Size 6/8 ²	
Bust	39 inches ^{1,2}	34 inches ²	41 inches ³
Waist	31 inches ^{1,2}	24 inches ²	20 inches ³

Males

Measurements	Average Male	Typical Male Model	G.I. Joe™ 1960s	G.I. Joe™ Today
Height	5 feet, 9 inches ¹	6 feet ²	5 feet, 10 inches ⁴	5 feet, 10 inches ⁴
Weight	180 pounds ¹	155 pounds ²		
Bicep			12 inches ⁴	27 inches ⁴
Chest	42 inches ¹	39 inches ²	44 inches ⁴	55 inches ⁴
Waist	36 inches ¹	30 inches ²	32 inches ⁴	36 inches ⁴

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Accessed 1 May 2002. <www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/bodymeas.htm>.

2 Kirby, Jane R.D. and The American Dietetic Association. “Excerpts from *Dieting For Dummies*®.” *American Dietetic Association*. January 1999. Accessed 15 May 2002. <www.eatright.org/dieting.html>.

3 Holmes, Betty. “Betty’s Thought Bullets: The Barbie™ Fantasy.” *Wellness IN Wyoming*. University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. February 1999. Accessed 15 May 2002. <www.uwo.edu/winwyoming/>.

4 Pope, G. Harrison, Olivardia, Roberto, Gruber, Amanda, and Borowiecki, John. “Evolving Ideals of Male Body Image as Seen Through Action Toys.” *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 26 (1999): 65-72.



Sources and Materials

Kilbourne, Jean. *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1999.

Kirkwood, Larry. *The Body Image Project*. Accessed 15 May 2002.

<www.kirkwoodstudios.com/>.

Pope, G. Harrison, Olivardia, Roberto, Gruber, Amanda, and Borowiecki, John. "Evolving Ideals of Male Body Image as Seen Through Action Toys." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 26 (1999): 65-72.

To obtain the **As If** video, contact University of Wyoming Family and Consumer Sciences Department at 307-766-4145 or check the WIN the Rockies web site at <www.uwyo.edu/wintherockies>.

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