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# MINI UNIT: REPRESENTATION OF YOUTH IN MEDIA

*Lessons for Youth 13-16 Years Old*

## MINI-UNIT OVERVIEW

This mini-unit includes three lessons designed for youth 13-16 years of age and will look at how youth are represented in the media. Each lesson is approximately 75 minutes in length.

In the first lesson, students start by exploring how media is constructed with a focus on the rates of media violence in popular media. This will lead into a discussion about how youth need to be critical consumers of media because it is all constructed. They will conclude by conducting a media analysis and look at celebrities as role models and discuss celebrities versus reality celebrities.

The second lesson will start with a review of how media promotes unrealistic images, expectations and stereotypes about youth. Next, students will analyse media examples for stereotypes and discuss the representation and expectations of males and females based on what we see in the media. Finally, students will review music lyrics and how the content can add to the expectations and pressures placed on youth.

In the third lesson, students will examine how stereotypes and expectations seep into their digital lives, with a particular focus on how social networking and digital media are vehicles for youth to construct their identities. They will also discuss what constitutes a healthy digital relationship versus an unhealthy digital relationship. This will lead into an opportunity for students to examine the impacts that media and technology have on their expectations and relationships and become critical consumers of media. To conclude, students will discuss and decide healthy boundaries and limits for media and technology.

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

## DEFINITIONS

- **Media:** media constitutes any form of mass communication. It can include print based components including newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and books. Media also includes electronic and digital components such as music, movies, television, radio, Internet, videogames, and more.
- **4Cs of Media Literacy:** creeds, codes, constructions, commercials
- **Creeds:** looking at creeds means looking at the messages and values being reinforced. It would be important to analyse the lifestyles, values and points of view that are represented or omitted, and consider how various people would interpret the message or context.
- **Codes:** looking for codes refers to looking for the symbols media uses to communicate ideas and impressions. Things to consider include darkness suggesting evil, or clenched fists signifying anger. It is also important to look at what the codes represent.
- **Constructions:** this is the way things are presented, such as considering the choice in people, props, objects, lighting, etc. When looking at the creeds, you also look at what elements of design are used on a set or in a background, particularly colour, layout, and model. Everything in media is constructed – there was some reason or decision to make something a certain way.
- **Commercials:** this is looking at how a product is sold, who is the target audience, who is the author, publisher, or company responsible for the media, and who profits from the sales.
- **Stereotype:** a stereotype is a limited or distorted view of a person or group that causes others to make harmful assumptions about that person or group. These views can be based on a single character trait or incident, and thus fail to take into account complex personalities and circumstances. These stereotypes often limit the opportunities for the victim because he/she then is made out to be less human/not as important as others because of the stereotype. It's difficult to "like" someone when you have labelled them as something instead of really getting to know the person.

## WEB RESOURCES

- American Academy of Pediatrics: [www.app.org](http://www.app.org)
- Canadian Women's Foundation: [www.canadianwomen.org](http://www.canadianwomen.org)
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)
- Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children: [www.crevawc.ca](http://www.crevawc.ca)
- Common Sense Media: [www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org)
- Kaiser Family Foundation: [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)
- Media Smarts: [www.mediasmarts.ca](http://www.mediasmarts.ca)
- Pew Research Center: [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)
- The Association for Media Literacy: [www.aml.ca](http://www.aml.ca)

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Bennett, B., & Rolheiser, C. (2001). Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration.
- Bennett, B., Rolheiser, C., & Stevahn, L. (1991). Cooperative Learning: Where Heart Meets Mind, Classroom Management: A Thinking and Caring Approach.
- Gibbs, J. (2006). Reaching All by Creating Tribes Learning Communities.

# LESSON #1: MEDIA AS CONSTRUCTION, MEDIA VIOLENCE, AND DESENSITIZATION

## LESSON #1 OBJECTIVES

- Explore how media is constructed with a focus on the rates of media violence in popular media
- Discuss how youth need to be critical consumers of media and realize that everything is a construction
- Conduct a media analysis and look at celebrities as role models and discuss celebrities versus reality celebrities

## NOTES TO FACILITATORS ABOUT LESSON #1

- For the Introduction activity, students must work independently to get the results that you need.
- For Activity #1, you may want to prepare these questions on the board, the SMART Board, or chart paper rather than just reading them aloud to students.
- For Activity #3, you will need to create a line and have two signs (totally agree, totally disagree) ready for the values line strategy.
- For Activity #4, you may wish to write out the scenarios for groups to review while they are huddling up.
- For the Conclusion activity, you may wish to prepare the definition on the board, the SMART Board, or chart paper rather than just reading them aloud to students.

## MATERIALS

- Copies of the following handouts:
  - Awareness Test (1.1 Handout)
  - Media Violence Statistics (1.2 Handout)
- Chart paper, board, SMART Board
- Posters that say “totally agree” and “totally disagree”
- Masking tape

## TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

### *INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)*

- Provide students with a copy of **Awareness Test** (1.1 Handout). Ask them to write down what they see without consulting anyone else. Once everyone has written their answer, ask students to raise their hands if they wrote “Duck”. Tally the hands. Then, ask students if they saw a “Rabbit”. Once again, tally the hands. Ask students to take a moment and try to see the other image. They can work with a partner to do so if they need help.
- Once everyone has recognized both images, let students know that often there is more to something than what we see initially. There are many hidden messages, details or layers of information built into one image, story, or post. The purpose of the next few lessons is to help youth think critically about the media they consume and to decode or deconstruct their digital world.

### *ACTIVITY #1: PURPOSE OF MEDIA (20 MINUTES)*

**Strategy: Scramble**

- Start by telling students that media has an impact on youth and how they believe they should act. Explain to students that it is important to look critically at media because the majority of media is made to create a profit for a particular company or individual. What we see on television or online might change our beliefs or perspectives on what our relationships with others should look like, but we must be critical of what we see and always compare that to real life.
- Tell students that for this activity, the class will brainstorm as much information as possible about the purpose of media.
  - Give the instructions for this activity: *Students will stand up and walk around the room. When you say “scramble”, they must partner up with someone. At that point, you will ask a question and they will discuss it with their partner. After 30 seconds, you will ask for volunteers to share their answers, then you will have students move around again until they hear “scramble” and the process repeats.*
- Start the activity. The questions and possible responses are listed below.
  - What are the common types of media we see and hear? *Answers will vary; some responses include: music, videos, television, books, movies, photographs, internet, magazine, newspaper, video games, blogs, advertisements, art, etc.*
  - What is the purpose of these types of media? *Answers will vary; some responses include: entertainment, propaganda, influence decisions, advertisements for products or new releases, communication, share stories, etc.*
  - What kinds of positive images and messages do we see and hear in media? *Answers will vary; some responses include: friendships, pursuing passions or dreams, love, be yourself, live in the moment, etc.*
  - What kinds of negative images and messages do we see and hear in media? *Answers will vary; some responses include: violence, sex, drugs, alcohol, partying, no concern for the future, live in the moment, degrading images particularly of women, unrealistic behaviours and consequences, unhealthy relationships, cruelty, stereotypes, generalizations, etc.*
  - How do we see girls represented in the media? What kinds of behaviours and stereotypes do they show? *Answers will vary; some responses include: sexualized, objectified, no longer kids anymore, age compression, sexualized violence, girls fighting each other to assert power rather than being respected, expected to be sexually active regardless of the consequences*
  - How do we see boys represented in the media? What kinds of behaviours and stereotypes do they show? *Answers will vary; some responses include: violence, fighting to assert power, getting what they want when they want it, guys as "kings" when they are sexually active with girls; to win they need to be violent to get what they want then they are rewarded; can't be athletic, smart and good-looking; the athlete as Neanderthal versus the good student as a nerd or not cool;*
  - Are there any “double-standards” that we see on television? For example, are there common themes we see where boys and girls do the same thing but are treated differently for it? *Answers will vary; some responses include: when boys are promiscuous, they are praised but when girls are promiscuous, they are called names or considered slutty; female characters are sexualized in video games and the female characters' body proportions objectify women whereas male characters are macho, strong, and tough.*
- When the activity is over, have students return to their desks. Summarize the activity by indicating to students that we are bombarded with media each day. It is important that we are aware of what we are reading, watching, and listening to, and that we consider the impact of media on us and the people around us.

## **ACTIVITY #2: IMPACT OF MEDIA VIOLENCE (10 MINUTES)**

### **Strategy: Group Discussion**

- Provide students with a copy of **Media Violence Statistics** (1.2 Handout). Read through the statistics on the handout as a group. Ask students to consider these rates of violence in media and how that relates to their lives. Tell them that they should consider the statistics while they work through the rest of the lesson.
- Ask students to consider the difference between boys as consumers of media versus girls as consumers of media. Are the messages directed at youth the same, equal? All students time to talk with a friend, then ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.
- Summarize this activity by explaining to students that it is important to look critically at all media because the majority of media is made to create a profit for a particular company or individual. We always need to be critically thinking about the media we are consuming.

## **ACTIVITY #3: REALITY STARS AS CELEBRITIES? (10 MINUTES)**

### **Strategy: Values Line/Fold the Line**

- To start this activity, have students think about the following question: *What do reality stars do to get their “fame”?* Give students 30 seconds to think to themselves, then allow them some time to share their thoughts with a partner. Ask for volunteers to share their answers.
  - *Answers will vary; some suggestions include: fighting, sex, drinking is how they got their popularity -- the more outrageous, inappropriate, crude, etc., the more popular they become; when the envelope is pushed, the ratings and their popularity is higher*
- Tell students that this next activity will help them evaluate the role of reality TV stars and whether their time on television should give them celebrity status.
- Use a “values line” strategy by creating a line with “totally agree” at one end and “totally disagree” at the other end. You can put masking tape on the floor to make the line or use one that is already there. Ask students the following question, *“what I see on reality television influences my choices in real life”*, and have them place themselves on the values line with respect to their opinions. For example, students who feel strongly about the statement should stand near the totally agree side and students who disagree should stand near the totally disagree side.
- Remind students that everyone has to find a spot on the line, shoulder to shoulder, and that they might get pushed further toward an end than they choose, but they will have a chance to explain their opinions shortly.
- Fold the line in half so that the students at each end become partners. Have each person in the pair share why they chose to stand where they stood. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.
- Debrief by reminding students that media is constructed so all stars, reality or not, are part of something that is created and what we see is not actually real life or real situations. They may be based loosely on situations that could or would occur, but the scenarios and outcomes are not real. Remind students that some people will continue setting negative examples and projecting or reinforcing stereotypes, but just as in real life sometimes people don’t do the right thing.

## **ACTIVITY #4: REALITY VERSUS REALITY TV (25 MINUTES)**

### **Strategy: Huddle Up**

- Have students think to themselves about the negative messages they see or receive on television. Give them a few seconds to think about it and perhaps allow them to discuss their thoughts with a partner. Pose the following question to the class: Do these negative messages represent reality? Have volunteers share their responses. Prompt students if necessary.
  - *Answers will vary; some responses include: media does not represent reality because it is made up to entertain us; sex sells; the most popular media is stuff that talks about inappropriate content, violence, sex, drugs, drinking, partying, and negative behaviours; pushing the envelope makes it popular; unrealistic consequences portrayed in media; etc.*
- Tell students that this next activity is called “huddle up”. The process is as follows: *students will get into small groups of 5-6 students, the teacher will read a statement aloud, the groups will “huddle up” and brainstorm all the possible responses, then the teacher will tell students to stop and ask one person from each group to quickly state one or two ideas that their group came up with. Repeat the process until all the statements are read.*
- Put students into small groups. Below are the three huddle up scenarios to be read:
  - We often see excessive drinking and partying in reality shows. For example, it seems like everyone in a reality show always has a drink in their hands, day and night. Excessive drinking often leads to fighting, violence and unhealthy sexual behaviours. Are the consequences for these behaviours on reality television the same as real life? What are the real life consequences?
    - *The answer is no. Responses will vary; often when people in real life drink excessively, consequences include issues in friendships and relationships, substance abuse, arrests, charges of assault, broken trust, violence, unhealthy sexual behaviour, etc.*
  - Sex and hooking up are common to many reality shows. Sexual behaviour without responsibility is a message repeated over and over on television. Safe sex is not practised – it just a competition or goal to have sex with multiple people. Are the consequences for these behaviours on reality television the same as real life? What are the real life consequences?
    - *The answer is no. Responses will vary; most youth don’t consider the emotional and physical effects of casual sex, as well as other consequences such as unflattering reputations, STIs, unhealthy sexual habits, lack of respect for yourself, pregnancy, feeling used or taken advantage of, abuse, girls labelled as sluts but boys labelled as champs, etc.*
  - Most reality shows depict excessive drama. Mistrust, fights, jealousy, anger, disrespect and rudeness fill episode after episode. Constant drama, rude and profane language, and cruel and vicious comments are staples for most reality shows. Are the consequences for these behaviours on reality television the same as real life? What are the real life consequences?
    - *The answer is no. Responses will vary; most times consequences for these kinds of actions are long-lasting. They can include broken relationships and friendships, broken trust, accusations of bullying and/or abuse, charges of threats and harassment, unhealthy relationships, etc.*
- To conclude, ask students to consider how the discussions in their “huddles” went with respect to interpretations or perspectives on reality versus reality TV. We don’t see the outcomes or consequences of any unhealthy behaviour on television. The show just moves on to the next piece of “entertainment” or party or dramatic scene. It is important to consider the real life outcomes to these behaviours.
- Explain to students that it is also important to consider how the messages in media are interpreted by others. Often times, people’s life experiences play a role in how they understand or perceive messages in media. More importantly, it is our life experiences that influence the effects of media violence on us.

- Media impacts each person differently. This is because our experiences and perceptions of things are unique. Audiences decide meaning in media messages, but media messages are also constructed by producers. Remind students that media is constructed, so it is that construction of our entertainment that they need to learn to critically consume.

### **CONCLUSION: DESENSITIZATION DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Strategy: Group Discussion**

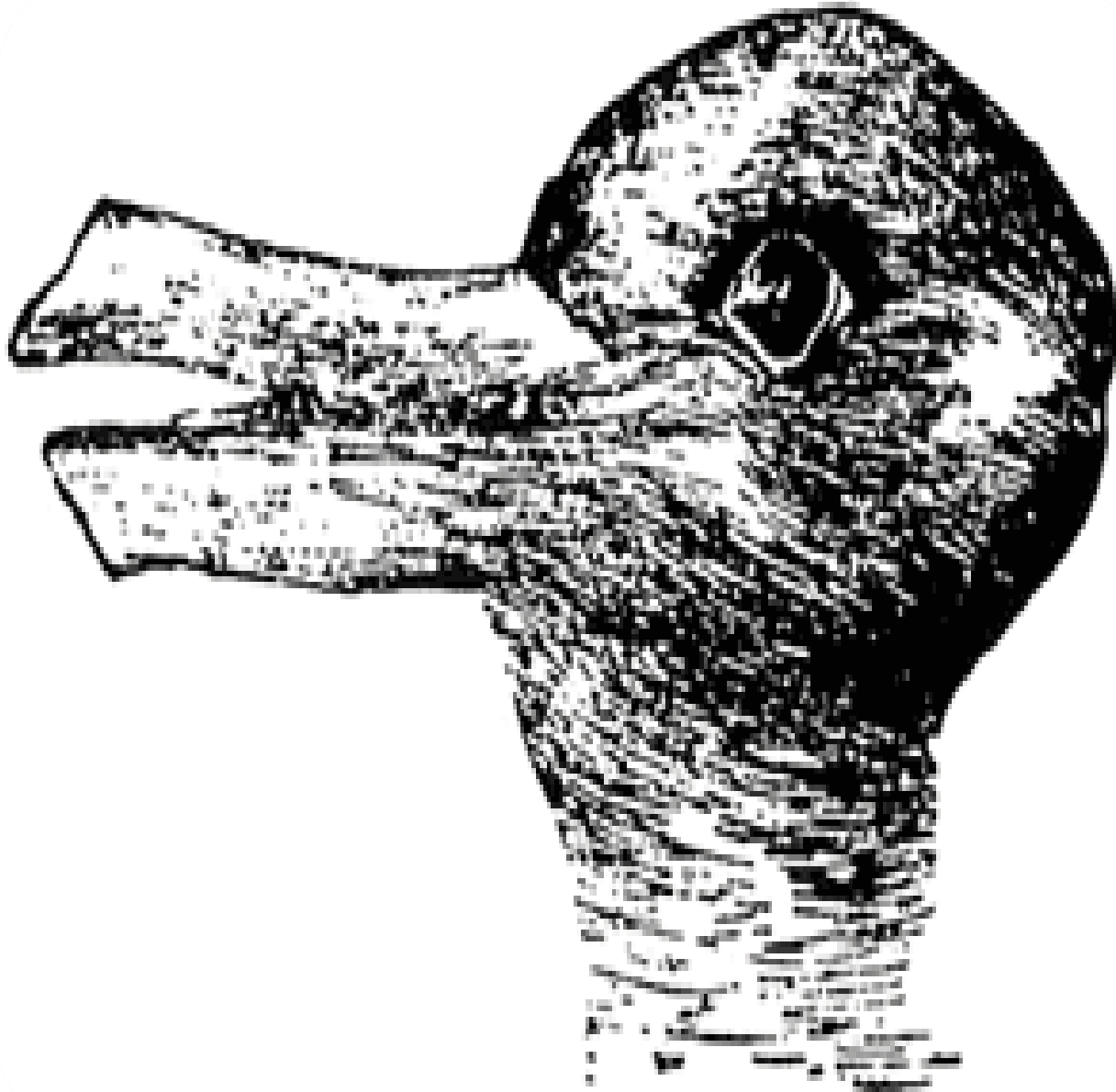
- Ask students to think about the term “desensitization” and what that means. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts. Read the following definition aloud to the class:
  - *Desensitization is the process of lessening a person’s response to certain things by overexposing that person to these same things. People who witness actual occurrences of violence in their homes and communities also become desensitized. The danger of becoming desensitized is that a person no longer recognizes dangerous and wrong types of behaviour that are associated with the likelihood of violence.*
- Tell students that desensitization is the process that reduces their sensitivity to things like violence, substance abuse, unhealthy sexuality, bullying, and more. When they see so much of something, for example violence in video games, people tend to lose empathy toward future similar situations. You may feel sad or uncomfortable watching something at first, but after awhile, it doesn’t bother you as much. You may stop considering how those involved feel in that situation.
- Continue the group discussion by asking the class to consider why desensitization is harmful. Prompt students by asking them to consider responses to various forms of media violence and unhealthy behaviours.
  - Possible responses include: *it makes us think our actions don’t affect or impact others; standardizes behaviours that should be considered inappropriate (violence toward children, violence toward women, fighting, bullying, aggression, slander, abuse, etc.); levels of tolerance are higher toward violence or unhealthy situations so could confuse what is appropriate versus inappropriate; start to accept things as normal behaviour; exposure to media violence can make us less sensitive to violence in our lives; less sensitive to pain and suffering of others; prepared to tolerate more, etc.*
- Summarize this activity by telling youth that desensitization is harmful because it makes us think our actions don’t affect other people and often standardizes behaviours and actions that should be considered inappropriate, such as violence, unhealthy behaviours, substance abuse, etc.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

To extend the topics in this lesson, the following activities are suggested:

- Have students complete a Venn Diagram about celebrities and reality stars looking at their role on television and their responsibility as a role model.
- Have students write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine about the gender differences in media and how women/girls are portrayed in the media
- Have students research a positive celebrity or reality role model and present their findings to the class.

# AWARENESS TEST



*WHAT DO YOU SEE?*

(USED FROM [HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:DUCK-RABBIT\\_ILLUSION.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:duck-rabbit_illusion.jpg))



# MEDIA USE AND MEDIA VIOLENCE STATISTICS

## ***On average...***

- Nearly 2 out of 3 television shows contain violence (6 acts per hour)
- A child who watches 2 hours of cartoons a day may see nearly 10,000 violent incidents each year
- Youth watch 18,000 murders and 100,000 other violent acts on television by the time he/she leaves elementary school
- Boys will see 26,000 murders, mainly committed by men, by the time they reach age 18
- 70% of shows have sexual content
- There are 5.9 sex scenes shown during prime time
- Rap and rock videos contain 20% violence

*KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION (2005); AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS (2009); KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION (2003)*

## ***Recent studies on media usage of youth under 18 years of age found:***

- Children watch 22 hours of television per week
- 71% of youth have a TV in their bedroom and 50% have a gaming console in their bedroom
- Young now spend an average of 8 hours a day with media, which adds up to 56 hours per week – those figures do not include texting. On average, most youth send 3,500 text messages a month.
- 39% of youth are sending or posting nude or semi-nude images/videos of themselves; 44% say it is common for those messages to be shared with someone other than the original recipient. 11% of youth sent images to strangers.
- Most youth are online: 91% have an e-mail address, and 60% have an instant-message screen name. Nearly three-quarters have a cell phone, and 72% have profiles on social networking sites. On average, youth read almost 1,300 Facebook profiles per year. They will also read 2,300 web pages.
- 20% of youth have "cyber bullied" — harassed or threatened online or by text message.
- 15% of all young Internet users have met at least one individual in person whom they first met on the Internet - of those only 6% were accompanied by an adult.
- Girls tend to spend more time on social networking sites, listening to music, and reading, whereas boys spend more time playing video games, computer games, or going to video websites like YouTube.

*KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION (2010); SEX & TECK SURVEY (2011); PEW RESEARCH CENTRE (2010)*

## ***Consequences***

- 54% of heavy media users (around 16 hours per day) are getting poor grades, compared to only 23% of light media users (under 3 hours per day)
- Teens who watched more than one hour of TV a day were 4x as likely to commit aggressive acts in adulthood
- 75% of teens say that sex in media influences the sexual behaviour of kids their own age

*KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION (2005); AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS (2009); KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION (2003)*

# LESSON #2: DECONSTRUCTING REPRESENTATION OF YOUTH IN MEDIA

## LESSON #2 OBJECTIVES

- Look at how media promotes unrealistic images, expectations and stereotypes about youth
- Analyse media examples for stereotypes and discuss the representation and expectations of males and females based on what we see in the media.
- Review music lyrics and how the content can add to the expectations and pressures placed on youth.

## NOTES TO FACILITATORS ABOUT LESSON #2:

- For the whole lesson, the **Youth in Media** handout is completed in sections. You will have to instruct and remind students to only complete certain parts per activity.
- For Activity #1, some classes might benefit from viewing media examples of celebrities or musicians. Consider showing magazine advertisements, images from music videos, or pictures from celebrity events to spark student discussion.
- For Activity #3, you will have to prepare the graffiti chart papers in advance.
- For Activity #3, you can choose to show the Dove Evolution video that can be found on YouTube or the Dove website. Preview this prior to the lesson to decide if you wish to conclude with it.
- For Activity #5, you will have to print off a few different examples of popular song lyrics. Consider looking at iTunes top songs or at the local radio stations countdown selection for ideas. You could also assign them homework to bring in lyrics from their favourite song prior to this lesson. Some lyrics can be very offensive, so be sure to review the selections prior to using them with your class.

## MATERIALS

- Copies of the following handouts:
  - Youth in Media (2.1 Handout)
  - Music Lyrics 101 (2.2 Handout)
- Small packs of post it notes, one for each student
- Six pieces of chart paper with the questions for Activity #3 (*written out in advance*)
- Six markers, each a different colour, and six black markers
- Board, SMART Board, or chart paper

## TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

### *INTRODUCTION: NEGATIVE MESSAGES IN MEDIA (10 MINUTES)*

#### **Strategy: Graphic Organizer**

- Remind students that last class they looked at media violence, the realities of reality television and the importance of being critical consumers of their media so they don't become desensitized.

- Provide students with a copy of **Youth in Media – Graphic Organizer** (2.1 Handout). Let students know that they will be completing sections of this handout throughout the lesson.
- Ask students that you want them to think about how the media plays a role in promoting unrealistic images and negative messages to youth. Prompt students by asking them to think about models, celebrities, and musicians and how they are portrayed in the media. Tell them to think about the kinds of standards these images and representations may set for them.
- With a partner, students should brainstorm some answers. They should only complete the **Negative Messages in Media** section of the handout.
- Have students share their answers and encourage the class to add any new answers to their handout. Some possible responses for facilitators are found on the **Youth In Media – Reference** (2.1 Reference).

### *ACTIVITY #1: MESSAGES IN MEDIA (30 MINUTES)*

#### **Strategy: Graffiti Exercise, Graphic Organizer**

- Put students into six small groups and tell them that you are going to have them complete a graffiti activity. The focus of the activity is to look at the kinds of pressures that the media places on youth.
- Each piece of chart paper has one of the following statements written on it:
  - Messages in Media About Looks
  - Messages in Media About Behaviours
  - Messages in Media About Gender Roles
  - Messages in Media About Sexuality
  - Messages in Media About Violence
  - Messages in Media About Drugs and Alcohol
- Provide each group with one of the six coloured markers and one of the six pieces of chart paper.
- Tell students to record all ideas they can think of that respond to the question on their paper. After about 2 minutes, have students pass their chart paper to the group on their left. Once students have the new piece of paper, allow them 2 minutes to review the previous responses and add their own. Repeat this process until all groups have had an opportunity to respond to each question.
- Once the groups receive their original papers back, provide each group with a black marker. Have them review all the points on the page and circle the most important points. Each group will present the most important points to the whole class. Students should record these under the respective headings on their **Youth In Media** handout (2.1 Handout). These should also be recorded on a piece of chart paper or on the SMART Board for the class to see. Some suggestions for responses are prepared for the facilitator. These are found on **Youth In Media – Reference** (2.1 Reference).
- Conclude by reminding students that no one wants to be stereotyped or have generalizations made about them. We are all unique and special. Explain to students that it is important that we are aware of stereotypes, so that we can critically evaluate what we see on television or on the Internet. People are people, and we shouldn't group them or categorize them based on what society or media might want us to believe is true.

### *ACTIVITY #2: EXPECTATIONS OF MALES AND FEMALES IN MEDIA (20 MINUTES)*

#### **Strategy: Post It Pile It, Graphic Organizer**

- Next, tell students that you want to build on their responses to the stereotypes and representations of youth in the media by looking specifically at how males and females are portrayed.

- **NOTE: You could display the completed “Messages in Media about Gender Roles” chart paper from Activity #1 to start the discussion.**
- In small groups, conduct a Post It Pile It activity to generate responses about how males and females are represented in the media. Provide students with a small pack of post it notes and put them into groups of 4-5 students. If necessary, explain the instructions for the activity to your students.
  - INSTRUCTIONS: You will ask them a question. Their job is to record their responses on individual post it notes. For example, if you ask them flavours of ice cream, they would record “*cookie dough*” on one post it note, then record “*vanilla*” on a second post it note, then record “*rocky road*” on a third post it note, and so on. Once all students have recorded their responses, they take them up in their small groups. One student would identify a response, for example “*vanilla*” and put it in the centre of the table. Any other students in the group that had “*vanilla*” as a response would place their post it note on top. The next student would then share a response, for example “*rocky road*”, and any other students in the group who had “*rocky road*” would place it on top. This process continues until all the post it notes are compiled in the centre. At that point, ask groups to decide which responses were the most popular and have them share their answers with the class.
- Once you have reviewed the instructions with students, start the post it pile it with your class. The first question is “*What stereotypes about boys do you see in media?*” When students are done, ask groups to share their common answers. These should be recorded on a piece of chart paper or on the SMART Board for the class to see. Some suggestions for responses are prepared for the facilitator. These are found on **Youth In Media – Reference** (2.1 Reference).
- Ask students the second question, “*What stereotypes about girls do you see in media?*” Once again, when students are done, ask groups to share their common answers. These should also be recorded on a piece of chart paper or on the SMART Board for the class to see. Some suggestions for responses are prepared for the facilitator. These are found on **Youth In Media – Reference** (2.1 Reference).
- Debrief by discussing the results with students. Sometimes media creates or perpetuates stereotypes that are often idealized, oversimplified, or distorted views of reality. This can cause youth to feel like they have something to live up to. Often the expectation is something that youth can never attain because it is not real.

### **ACTIVITY #3: EXPECTATIONS AND STEREOTYPES (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Strategy: Group Discussion**

- Next, have a discussion with students about expectations and stereotypes based on media. Tell students that when youth try to live up to the expectations and stereotypes in the media, they often feel pressure to conform to some sort of image or standard. For example, if all the images in a magazine are of really skinny people, youth might feel like they need to lose weight, diet, or might develop an eating disorder.
  - Ask students the following question: what other pressures or dangers do youth face when they try to be like what they see in the media?
    - *Possible responses include develop eating disorders or exercise disorders, change hair colour, not be happy with how you look, plastic surgery or augmentation, constantly feeling like you’re not fitting in or don’t feel good about yourself, don’t value your uniqueness, self image can be lower; perceptions that you have to behave a certain way; change in values; objectifying people; placing importance on material possessions; inappropriate disrespectful way to treat people, etc.*

- Conclude this activity by telling students that it is important to always decode what we see and hear in our media. Youth consume an average of 8 hours of “media” per day, whether that is on social networking sites, watching music videos, texting, or listening to a podcast. It is important that they know and understand how media constructs our reality. We need to remember to always deconstruct what we consume so we stop feeling the pressure to conform.

#### *ACTIVITY #4: MUSIC LYRICS (10 MINUTES)*

##### **Strategy: Plus Minus Interesting (PMI)**

- One of the most common forms of media that youth consume is music, whether it is in a television show, listening to their iPod, using YouTube, or watching music videos. To further the discussion about stereotypes, gender roles, and expectations, tell students that you will now have look at popular music lyrics to identify the messages and insinuations.
- Provide partners or small groups with a copy of the music lyrics that you prepared or that students brought in. They will be conducting a **Plus Minus Interesting** review of the lyrics. Give each group a copy of the **Music Lyrics 101** handout (2.2 Handout). Tell students that they are to read the lyrics and identify lines and messages they find that are positive (plus), negative (minus), or interesting.
- When students are finished, you can have each group present one lyric or point from each column to the class or group the partnerships together and have them share amongst themselves.

#### *CONCLUSION (5 MINUTES)*

##### **Strategy: Graphic Organizer**

- Have students return to their own desks and work independently on the last task. Students should take a moment to reflect on the messages and lessons today about media and how it constructs or creates our reality.
- Students should complete the last box on their **Youth in Media** handout (2.1 Handout). Students should think about the lessons of the day and how they will deconstruct media moving forward. The completed handout should be reviewed by the facilitator.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

To extend the topics in this lesson, the following activities are suggested:

- Have students create podcasts, PSAs, letters to the editor, or another form of information media sharing their thoughts on the role of youth in the media.
- Generate a discussion or review of the role of people who do not identify as either male or female in the media.
- Have students write a letter to the editor or governing board about the content in a particular song, movie or television program.
- Conduct a Four Corners activity about the content in music lyrics. Examples of the types of questions include lyrics are violent, lyrics are offensive, or lyrics don’t make people act inappropriately.
- Show the Dove Evolution video (found on YouTube when you type “dove evolution” or available on the Dove website) to further illustrate that reality is completely constructed. The video shows a regular person “evolving” into her photo-shopped, trimmed, and altered version of herself that will appear in an advertisement.

# YOUTH IN MEDIA – GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

**Negative Messages in Media?**

**Messages in Media  
About Looks**

**Messages in Media  
About Behaviours**

**Messages in Media  
About Gender Roles**

**Messages in Media  
About Sexuality**

**Messages in Media  
About Violence**

**Messages in Media  
About Drugs and Alcohol**

**Males?**

**Females?**

**Why is it  
important  
for youth to  
see  
themselves  
or their  
realities  
reflected in  
media?**



## YOUTH IN MEDIA – REFERENCE

### Negative Messages in Media?

- Violence; degradation of women; conflicts are resolved in 30 minutes; drinking and drugs are normal; should be sexually active; don't have to be honest or faithful to people; it's ok to say whatever is on your mind, even if it is disrespectful; being mean is funny; fighting, bullying, aggression, slander, abuse are normal; cultural representations are exaggerated; degrade people for a laugh; stereotypes; expectations and representations of youth

#### Messages in Media About Looks

- no blemishes, in shape, always look great, features are even and small, no freckles or beauty marks, perfect teeth

#### Messages in Media About Behaviours

- sexual, coy, party, don't care about academics, "everything will work out with no work" mentality, drink or do drugs to have fun, have lots of partners, infidelity

#### Messages in Media About Gender Roles

- girls are submissive, coy, playful but sexual; boys are powerful, protective, should get what they want
- boys can't cry, be loving or nurturing; girls are inferior

#### Messages in Media About Sexuality

- promiscuity, should be sexually active if you're in high school, substance use/sex, girls should be flirty and sexy to boys; tease; boys should be with lots of different people; no concern about pregnancy or STIs

#### Messages in Media About Violence

- it's ok to fight to prove yourself; violence solves problems; it's entertaining; doesn't affect people once the fight is over; normal way to resolve conflicts

#### Messages in Media About Drugs and Alcohol

- need drugs/alcohol to have a good time; youth in high school should be drinking / doing drugs, it's common; accessible; won't cause long term problems; invincible



## Males?

- muscular; no fat on the body
- square jaw
- baby face
- strong
- minimal body hair
- powerful
- tall
- often with beautiful, slim women
- confident
- popular
- protective

## Females?

- very thin; no fat on the body
- perfect body and right sized breasts/butt
- no blemishes
- hair is long, thick or full
- always dressed sexy or with the latest trends
- popular
- submissive
- nurturing
- coy
- sexual

**Why is it important for youth to see themselves or their realities reflected in media?**



*Possible responses include less pressure to be something you're not; see yourself represented; see that it's ok to be unique or different; it's ok to not be perfect and have a crooked nose or blemishes; everyone is created differently; more acceptance; see our own differences and be happy/proud; connect with the images rather than changing to match; don't have to change to fit in; focus on healthy instead of thin or unrealistic*

# MUSIC LYRICS 101



# LESSON #3: HEALTHY DIGITAL LIVES AND HEALTHY DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS

## LESSON #3 OBJECTIVES

- Examine how stereotypes and expectations seep into their digital lives, with a particular focus on how social networking and digital media are a vehicle for youth to construct their identities
- Discuss what constitutes a healthy digital relationship versus an unhealthy digital relationship
- Examine the impacts that media and technology have on their expectations and relationships.

## NOTES TO FACILITATORS ABOUT LESSON #3:

- For Activity #1, you will need to show an example of a stranger’s Facebook profile page. The simplest way to do this is to search “Facebook profile page” in Google Images, then select the image of the profile that you wish to show the class.
- For Activity #3, you may wish to include additional examples of caring versus controlling behaviour, particularly if there is a trend or situation that you know of that has impacted your students.

## MATERIALS

- Copies of the following handouts:
  - Facebook Profile Analysis (3.1 Handout)
  - Digital Relationships – Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like (3.2 Handout)
  - Caring or Controlling (3.3 Handout)
  - Thinking Critically – Exit Card (3.4 Handout)
- Board, SMART Board, or chart paper

## TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

### *INTRODUCTION: MAKING CONNECTIONS (5 MINUTES)*

#### **Strategy: Review**

- Remind students that in the last two classes, they have looked at the effects of media on their perceptions of youth behaviours, media violence, how media is constructed, the impacts of music lyrics and reality television, and more. Now they will look at how media impacts their daily digital lives.

### *ACTIVITY #1: PERCEPTIONS (10 MINUTES)*

#### **Strategy: Graphic Organizer**

- Provide students with a copy of the handout **Facebook Profile Analysis** (3.1 Handout). Tell students that you are going to show them a Facebook profile and you want them to look at the image and answer the first three questions on their graphic organizer. Give students about 5 minutes to complete this activity.
- Once students have completed the graphic organizer, have them work in pairs to compare their thoughts. Tell students to use the Plus-Minus-Interesting graphic organizer at the bottom of their page to write out what they

had that was the same as their partner, what they had that was different, and what was interesting about how they each perceived the Facebook profile. Ask some pairs to share their responses.

- Students will have noticed different things and will have perceived different things based on their own experiences. Remind the class our own experiences and perceptions can impact our judgements on people. Tell students that the stereotypes and expectations from their media consumption will seep into their digital lives. They should remember that social networking and digital media are ways that youth can construct their own identities. What we see on Facebook or on the Internet is a construction. People choose what they show and what they write. We need to be critical consumers and not make judgements based on what we see online.

## **ACTIVITY #2: HEALTHY DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS (20 MINUTES)**

### **Strategy: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like**

- Introduce the next activity by telling students that just because our digital lives are a construction, it doesn't mean that what we do digitally is not real. Far too often, youth do not associate their real world expectations and boundaries when they are navigating their electronic world. The representation of youth in the media, particularly about healthy relationships, impacts their beliefs and opinions about healthy relationships.
- Put students into small groups and provide each student with a copy of **Digital Relationships – Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like** (3.2 Handout). Assign each one of the three headings, *Looks Like* or *Sounds Like* or *Feels Like*, to complete. Each student should record the responses on their copy of the handout so they have it in their notes for later.
- Students will be thinking about healthy and unhealthy digital relationships as they complete the handout.
- Once everyone is done, take it up as a class. Start by asking the *Looks Like* group to share their thoughts about healthy digital relationships, then have students make connections to unhealthy digital relationships. Repeat the process for *Sounds Like* and *Feels Like*. Use **Digital Relationships – Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like Reference** (3.2 Reference) when taking up student responses. As students are giving their answers, record the responses on a master copy of the handout, either using a SMART Board or chart paper. Students should complete their handout using the responses generated by their classmates.
- Debrief by explaining that sometimes in digital relationships we want to share a lot of personal things, but we can risk sharing too much. There is a difference between sharing personal details about yourself and sharing passwords or information that gives people access to information that others share in confidence with you.

## **ACTIVITY #3: CARING OR CONTROLLING? (20 MINUTES)**

### **Strategy: Myths and Facts & Graphic Organizer**

- Sometimes we can confuse controlling behaviour with caring behaviour and it is important that youth learn and understand the difference. Tell students that you will read a scenario aloud to the class, then they will answer a series of questions and respond whether they think the behaviour was caring or controlling.
- Provide students with a copy of the handout **Caring or Controlling** (2.3 Handout). Tell students to work independently and that their answers will not be shared. This will be a personal activity and when it is taken up, they will review the answers on their paper for their own learning.
- Read the following scenario to the class. This scenario is also on the top of their handout:
  - *Jasmine started dating Malcolm a few months ago. Jasmine is always telling her best friend Kiara that she thinks it is sweet how much Malcolm texts her and keeps in touch. The other day, Kiara and Jasmine were eating lunch together in the cafeteria when Malcolm stormed up and demanded to see Jasmine's*

*phone. Startled, Jasmine asked why. Malcolm said that he'd been texting her for the past fifteen minutes and she hadn't bothered to respond.*

- Ask students to think to themselves about this scenario. Is Malcolm caring or is Malcolm controlling? They should complete the quiz below, then once again consider their opinion on the behaviour Malcolm is displaying in the scenario. Take up the answers to the activity using **Caring or Controlling – Reference** (3.3 Reference). Remind students that their answers are private and this is an activity to get them thinking about their digital boundaries what is healthy digital communication in a dating relationship.
- Conclude this activity by telling students that a healthy relationship allows partners to still be independent and have their own space. Checking up on someone, constantly texting or messaging them, or asking for private things like passwords or semi-nude pictures are all forms of digital harassment. Sometimes these behaviours might make you think that your partner is caring or concerned for your well-being, but they are really examples of jealousy, controlling and possessive behaviours.
- Debrief by explaining to students that there is a big difference between caring and controlling. Just like in real life when you want your space and don't need to be with your friends or boyfriend/girlfriend all the time, the same applies digitally. Remind students to set and stay firm about their digital boundaries. If someone is pressuring them, making them feel smothered, or disrespecting them in any way, it is time to have a discussion about it and set healthy boundaries in the relationship.

### **CONCLUSION: THINKING CRITICALLY (15 MINUTES)**

#### **Strategy: Graphic Organizer, Exit Card**

- Tell students that just like they have to evaluate what is caring versus controlling behaviour in their relationships, they also have to evaluate the impact of media on their relationship expectations, on their perspective of how life should be, and on their decisions. Remind students that media is constructed, so it is that construction of our entertainment that they need to learn to critically consume. Media influences us but when we think critically and evaluate what we're watching, doing, using, and reading, we stay in control.
- To conclude, provide students with a copy of the exit card, **Thinking Critically – Exit Card** (3.4 Handout). Students should complete the handout individually. The completed handout can be submitted for review by the facilitator to ensure students understood the concepts presented in this mini-unit. In addition, it will also provide the facilitator with information about next steps for further developing critical media literacy.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

To extend the topics in this lesson, the following activities are suggested:

- Have students create some type of digital presentation on one of the topics covered in the past three lessons to educate others about what they learned.
- Have students do the quiz about their Digital Line on the MTV website called, "A Thin Line", then generate a group discussion about the results.
- In pairs, have students create their own "caring / controlling" myths and facts. These could be submitted and compiled to give as a quiz to the class.
- Further explore digital harassment and how technology can negatively affect relationships and conflict situations.

# FACEBOOK PROFILE ANALYSIS

What are the first three things that come to your mind when you view this profile?

1.

2.

3.

Describe what you think this person's life is like?

## Compare with a classmate:

Plus (same as partner):

Minus (different than partner):

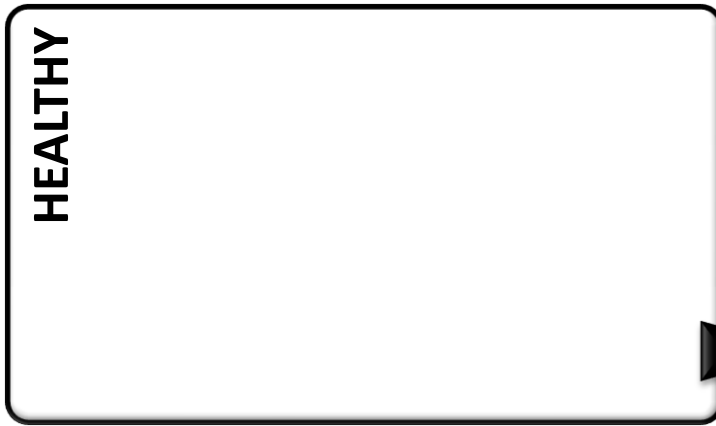
Interesting:

# HEALTHY DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS

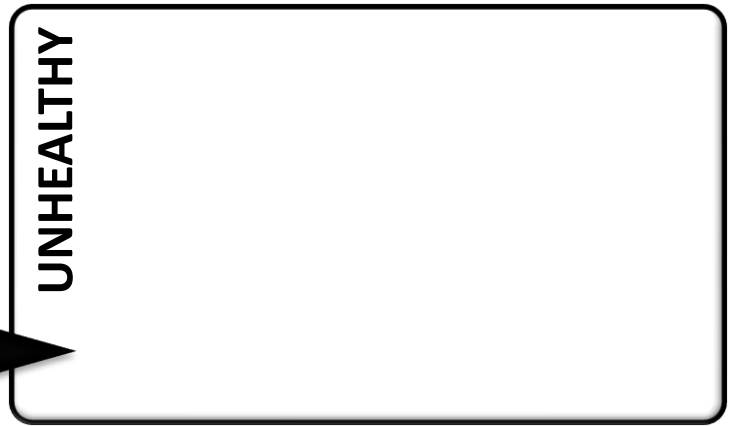
*Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like*

## LOOKS LIKE...

**HEALTHY**



**UNHEALTHY**



## SOUNDS LIKE...

**HEALTHY**

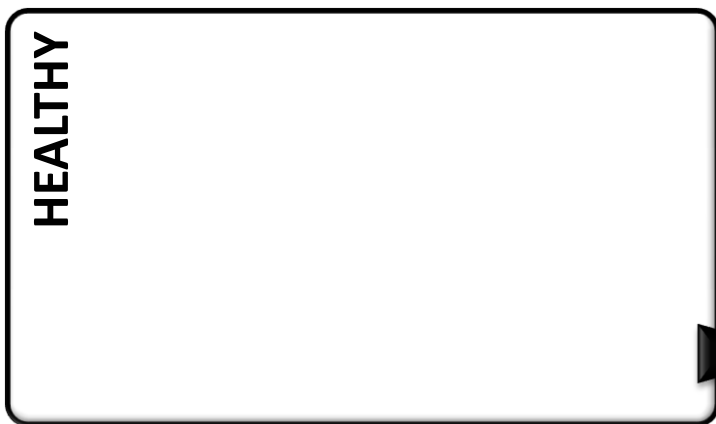


**UNHEALTHY**

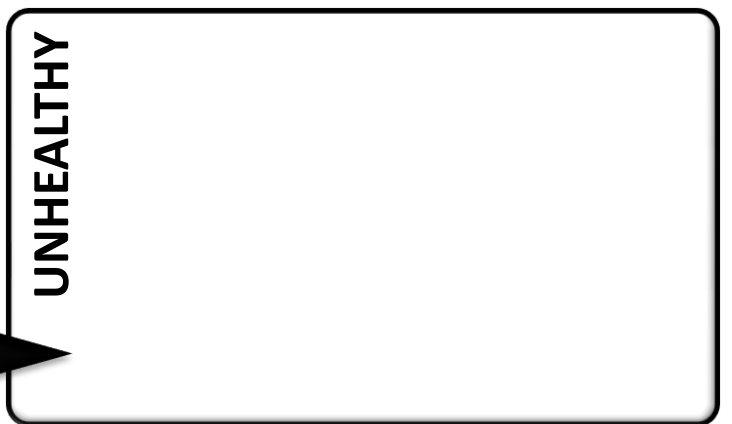


## FEELS LIKE...

**HEALTHY**



**UNHEALTHY**



# HEALTHY DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS – REFERENCE

## LOOKS LIKE...

<b>HEALTHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>positive messages</li><li>happy emoticons</li><li>smiling</li><li>enjoy using the phone/computer</li><li>people getting along</li><li>reciprocated conversations</li><li>laughing</li></ul>	<b>UNHEALTHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>crying</li><li>angry emoticons</li><li>inappropriate language</li><li>mean messages</li><li>fighting</li></ul>
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## SOUNDS LIKE...

<b>HEALTHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>laughter</li><li>appropriate language</li><li>positive messages</li><li>pleasant conversations</li><li>two-sided conversations</li><li>excitement</li><li>joy</li></ul>	<b>UNHEALTHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>yelling</li><li>crying</li><li>arguing</li><li>negative messages</li><li>disrespectful language</li><li>one-sided conversations</li></ul>
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## FEELS LIKE...

<b>HEALTHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>willing to respond</li><li>happy to get messages</li><li>excited to share news</li><li>happiness</li><li>respect</li></ul>	<b>UNHEALTHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>sadness</li><li>disrespect</li><li>scared</li><li>embarrassed</li><li>worried</li><li>disappointed</li><li>hurt</li></ul>
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## CARING OR CONTROLLING

Jasmine started dating Malcolm a few months ago. Jasmine is always telling her best friend Kiara that she thinks it is sweet how much Malcolm texts her and keeps in touch. The other day, Kiara and Jasmine were eating lunch together in the cafeteria when Malcolm stormed up and demanded to see Jasmine's phone. Startled, Jasmine asked why. Malcolm said that he'd been texting her for the past fifteen minutes and she hadn't bothered to respond.

Caring?

Controlling?

*Is Malcolm's behaviour caring or is Malcolm's behaviour controlling? Take the following quiz below to review some examples of caring and controlling behaviour in a dating relationship.*

Read each scenario and indicate whether you think it is *caring* or *controlling*.

Your boyfriend / girlfriend...	Caring	Controlling
Wants to know your password to your email account.		
Calls at least once to see how your day is going.		
Sends multiple text messages while you're in class.		
Calls you and if you don't answer, sends a text asking you to call when you're free.		
Asks you to send semi-naked or nude pictures of yourself.		
Might go a whole day without texting/talking to you.		
Texts often to get updates on what you're doing and who you're with.		
Gets frustrated when you don't respond to text messages right away.		

## CARING OR CONTROLLING – REFERENCE

### Malcolm's behavior is controlling.

Malcolm should respect that Jasmine is independent and has the right to decide when to respond to his messages. He also assumed that she was ignoring him rather than considering that she might have other things going on and is unable to respond. His demand to see her phone shows his lack of respect of her boundaries and privacy.

Your boyfriend / girlfriend...	Caring	Controlling
<b>Wants to know your password to your email account.</b> Sharing your password to private accounts gives the person access not only to information you send other people, but also information they share with you. This puts your privacy, as well as the privacy of your friends and family that communicate with you online, at risk.		Yes
<b>Calls at least once to see how your day is going.</b> It is important to keep in touch with someone you're in a relationship with, but it is also important to give that person space to have their own life. This shows that your partner values your independence in the relationship, respects that you have other things going on, but also cares enough to find out how you are doing.	Yes	
<b>Sends multiple text messages while you're in class.</b> When your partner knows you're busy or learning, but sends you multiple text messages, they are not letting you have your independence or do things that are important to you. They should be respectful of your needs and time.		Yes
<b>Calls you and if you don't answer, sends a text asking you to call when you're free.</b> This shows that your partner is respectful of your time and knows that you might be doing something and can be patient to talk to you later.	Yes	
<b>Asks you to send semi-naked or nude pictures of yourself.</b> Take a minute to think about what may happen down the line and how much control that person will have by owning private pictures of you. There is a lack of respect in the relationship if your partner is pressuring you for these types of pictures.		Yes
<b>Might go a whole day without texting/talking to you.</b> People in healthy relationships often have other commitments and obligations, so it is normal that they may not talk or text all day. It shows that the relationship is strong enough that both people can do their own thing but still feel secure in what they have as a couple.	Yes	
<b>Texts often to get updates on what you're doing and who you're with.</b> It is important to share with your partner things that go on in your life, but on your own terms. You shouldn't feel like someone is checking up on you or that you have to share everything with your partner.		Yes
<b>Gets frustrated when you don't respond to text messages right away.</b> You have a right to your own life and space. Independence is an important part of a relationship and someone who is frustrated with you for not responding to them right away isn't respecting that boundary.		Yes

## THINKING CRITICALLY – EXIT CARD

Identify THREE things you learned about gender roles and stereotypes in media.

- 
- 
- 

List TWO ways you can have a healthy digital relationship.

- 
- 

Name ONE way you can apply the lessons you've learned about media.

-