

Flipping The Media Message

Inspiring Healthier Views



by Amy Jussel, Founder/Exec Dir ShapingYouth.org

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www.ShapingYouth.org

As one who keeps a keen eye on the ‘chicken or the egg’ phenom of media’s power to fuel the fire on body image and appearance-based cues, I can’t help but wonder if all this attention on body image is stoking the engine, even when we’re trying to [counter-market ‘thinspiration’](#) and other toxic cues.

I’m always torn about putting too much ‘heat’ on an issue for fear of backdraft, so when *Shaping Youth* advisor *Dr. Robyn Silverman* asked me to pick a few favorite **media literacy tactics** we use to literally flip the motivations and persuasive tools being used by industry backwards ([example here](#)) I was a bit circumspect.

I always prefer *prevention to intervention* in the battle for the hearts and minds of youth, because we’re going up against a beauty and grooming products industry spending [billions to reach tweens/teens](#) (*not to mention diet-related products racking up \$40 billion in U.S. sales each year*) and frankly, we’re outgunned.

There’s a lot at stake here to reverse the damage and skewed worldview of appearance being paramount in our tweaked pop culture, and start instilling a healthier sense of self.

When unethical profiteers find that it “pays” to tank children’s self-esteem in order to sell it back to them one product at a time, there are staggering implications and long term medical and societal repercussions. ([See CCFC Fact Sheet/Statistics on Body Image](#))

Such as?

Dollar-driven health consequences from all ends of the body image spectrum: obesity, eating disorders and dysmorphia to stressors resulting in substance abuse and emotional upheaval, depression tanked self-worth, even teen pregnancy, dysfunctional relationships, domestic abuse and a battery of psychological possibilities...

Body image plays a pivotal role in the future of children’s mental and physical health.

We need to arm kids with critical thinking skills in shield-n-saber style to deconstruct the media messages, and moreover, DEFUSE the prominence of the focus altogether.

The propensity for an appearance-based culture with reality show humiliations and macro meanness offers junk food for the mind and body that's digging us deeper into a hole...But there's a part of me that wonders, *is all this talk about obesity and eating disorders making it worse?* Hmn... You can see why I'm in a conundrum.

There's a NEED for media analysis to "lift and reveal" the verbiage undermining good health, but there's a RISK in putting too much emphasis and awareness on a conversation...

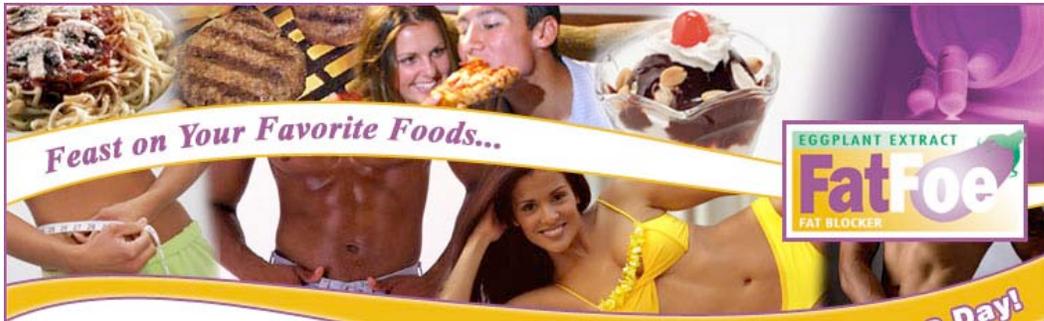
So use your own judgment and apply counter-marketing only when you see the ill-effects begin to take shape in terms of what kids are being told and sold. We'll list some favorite activities and link lists for online media literacy on body image at the end. Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Jansel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Body Image Counter-Marketing Tactics, Tips & Activities

Best practices for evaluating media and marketing imagery run the gamut from interactive media literacy games online to hands-on deconstruction of the latest and greatest ad campaigns and movie trailers (*always fun/pertinent to youth and great fodder for 'aha' moment receptiveness*)

One of my favorite media literacy interactives is ***“Fat Foe” a totally bogus site that reads like a weight loss ad***, prompting you to take a ‘quiz’ and basically walking you through all kinds of ‘eggplant extract diet’ verbiage that LOOKS real and is written in the style and manner of those horrid promise the moon body image abominations that pop up on the digital landscape of youth everywhere from Facebook to YouTube pre-roll.



When you ‘bite’ and get sucked into the quiz (*educators use it with students to instill media savvy*) the ‘answers’ result [in this page](#), which holds all of the ‘secrets’ to counter-marketing the misleading claims, sponsored by... **The Federal Trade commission**. Clever, eh?

In any media literacy or counter-marketing effort, you have to tap into the power base to see where the motivation is coming from, build awareness, and flip the allure to either position your message persuasively in a positive way or call out negative reverb to snap and tap into the ‘core motivators’ to shun the behavioral cue.

Wouldn't it be nice to enjoy your favorite foods – pizza, pasta, fried chicken, gooey chocolate desserts – and watch the pounds melt away? Best of all, wouldn't it be nice to have the trim, shapely figure you've always wanted without having to diet or exercise? **NOW – FINALLY – YOU CAN!**

How it works: Just take two FatFoe™ capsules before each meal. The safe, all-natural active ingredient in FatFoe™, auberginium, binds with food to block the absorption of fat, carbs, AND calories. Lose up to 10 pounds per week – with no sweat, no starvation!

Every Dieters Dream!

FatFoe™ is **GUARANTEED** to help you lose weight, regardless of how many calories you eat, regardless of how many calories you count, and regardless of how many pounds permanently you gain.

Order Today!

You've read about products like this on TV. To facilitate distribution FatFoe™ is available in stores. ORDER today!

Order now and get a free 60-day trial of FatFoe™ UltraThin Gel. Target the stubborn fat on your hips & thighs with this proven flab fighter.

“Wouldn't it be nice...”
if there was something you could take that would block the absorption of fat or calories?
Too bad it's not true.
There's no product on the market that can cause you to lose weight that way.

How can you spot false weight loss claims in the future? An ad is probably a diet rip-off if it promises:

- * you can eat your favorite high-calorie foods and still lose weight!
- * you can lose weight without diet or exercise!
- * a product can block the absorption of fat, carbs, or calories!
- * a product can make you lose more than 3 pounds a week!
- * a product will work for everyone!
- * a product will cause you to lose weight permanently!
- * any patch, cream, gel, etc., can help you lose weight!

The only thing you're guaranteed to lose is your money.

Media literacy encourages a ‘lift and reveal’ approach to uncovering elements of manipulation (*vested interests, profiteering, incentives for success/test scores, whatever*) which helps students take back their sense of self, and sense of agency that can be inadvertently damaged by too much pressure tilting in one direction of expectations, compromising self-worth in the quest for ideals.

The objective is to educate AND attempt to change behavior using persuasion and self-guided truths (*e.g. for sustainable change, an ‘aha’ moment needs to come from the student themselves, not an external authority figure like a parent or educator*).

Since Shaping Youth is a nonprofit/education resource, we love FREE media using sites like [‘Wordle.net’](http://Wordle.net) (*graphic below*) for kids to be able to express themselves on body image issues and ‘see their words come to life’ with validation and tangibility.

[Animoto](http://Animoto.com) is my favorite for video/movie trailer creation without a learning curve, because it helps our counter-marketing tactics ‘stick’ since kids ‘own’ their efforts and become fully engaged using creative media literacy tools that plug and play with ease (*plus they can export them to express themselves on their social networking sites, too!*)

missteps and over-reaching. ([See our Snack Attack/Counter-Marketing of processed pouches/team snacks](#))

It's always a fine line, so we try to stay positive by establishing the precedent (e.g. *a healthy choice vs. sugary snack*) at the onset, making the alternative the exception rather than the modus operandi, and keeping it 'matter of fact' in terms of why natural, whole foods are the 'obvious' choice for FUEL for students.

We call this counter-marketing method THREEP, which stands for "Three Ps"—precedent, persuasiveness, and peer perpetuation and we use it to deconstruct media messaging for kids' "m-powerment" toward healthier well-being.



Comparing some of our tactics with other research out there, we've found overlapping strategies fold nicely into the work of educators like *Stanford Technology Persuasion Lab* founder, Dr. BJ Fogg who writes on his site at [BehaviorModel.org](#) that there are several "core motivators" that we can all tap into in an attempt to change behavior:

Sensation (pleasure/pain) Anticipation (hope/fear) Social cohesion
(rejection/acceptance)

He discusses motivation, ability and triggers as core elements of behavior change with "simplicity" (*making it easy to do!*) being a key element for actually taking action. Using those principles, our THREEP tactics, and jolting us out of any GENDER stereotypes on "*Good Girls Don't Get Fat*" thinking, here's an example of **how to tackle a BOYS body image issue using media messaging sent to males.**

All too often, girls are striving to take weight off/slim down, while boys are striving to put weight on/bulk up. We know that the intake of unregulated supplements promising lean, mean teen machines is having a lousy impact on BOYS body image not just girls...

[NEDA](#) reports nearly a third of teen boys try to control their weight through unhealthy methods, like taking laxatives or smoking, and a *2007 Harvard Research study* of 3,000 adults reported that 25 percent of anorexics and bulimics and 40 percent of binge eaters were men, so there's reason to intervene with young males striving for those 'Taylor Lautner abs' early on...

How can we throw a wrench into unattainable ideals and promises for perfection snatching kids' self worth?

What ways might we “counter-market” the buffed boy/steroid abuse media messaging?

We could: point to the 70+ side effects of anabolic steroid use and the science behind it, using [NIDA](#) tidbits that would no doubt get kids' attention with REVERSE enthusiasm, like:

“Teens on steroids risk losing their hair, inappropriate breast development, shrinking of testicles, impotence and lowered sperm count.”

Yeah, I know, they don't put that on the “enormous increases in brute strength” style packaging, eh?



We could: inoculate youth with media literacy by tapping medical pros and doctors like [Alison Field, Harvard Medical School](#) professor of pediatrics and lead researcher on [the GUTS \(Growing Up Today Study\)](#) to back up the data with their own case studies showing how the media/marketing blitz selling kids ways to **last longer, get stronger, “be hot with a shot”** that's complicit in the escalation of body image problems wreaking havoc on this appearance-obsessed generation of kids.

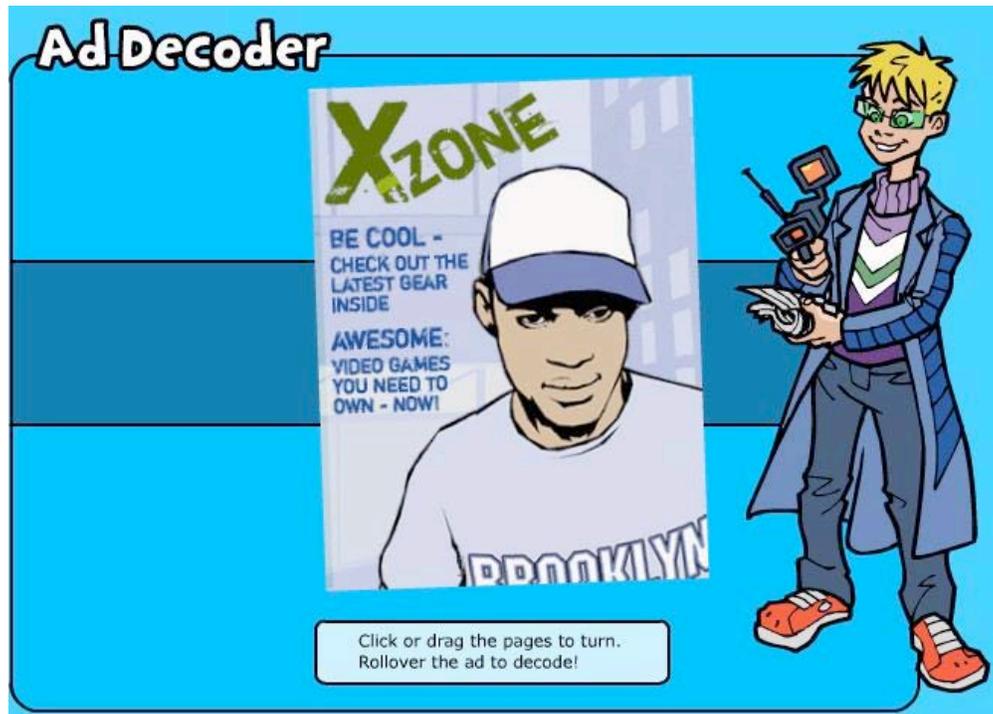
We could: use the [“FAT FOE”](#) fake site we mentioned earlier to instill media literacy via online FTC ‘red flags’ where [bogus claims](#) from supplement and diet ads [Test Your Supplement Savvy](#) to make a strong, convincing case for being alert and seeing how fast people can be sucked into finding this crud credible. (Also see [NEDA category on men and boys’ stigmas around body image as well as all of the fabulous tips and TLC for women and girls](#) to surround themselves with love instead of body bashing belief systems)

We could: use film to counter-market the message, here’s a host of video offerings from [NEDA \(3pp pdf !\)](#) ripe for media literacy deconstruction, from commercial picks to documentaries. Depending on ages, you could show clips from films like [JacksonKatz.com](#) who produced [Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity](#) and [Wrestling With Manhood](#) and [Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies and Alcohol](#) all factoring in to perceptions and pressures of growing up male in our media culture. (Katz is a groundbreaking filmmaker for anti-sexist gender views, see [Media Education Foundation](#))

Similarly, sites like [The Strength to Resist: The Media’s Impact on Women & Girls](#) and all of the [Media Education Foundation](#) films and accompanying study guides are great! Teens get into some heated discussions challenging media with documentaries like *Slim Hopes*, *Killing Us Softly*, *Playing Unfair* (sexualization of female athletes in endorsements etc) and the new Cover Girl Culture, all worthy of media literacy body image convos.



We could: use music as a starting point for media analysis of subtle body image and behavioral angst embedded into lyrics (like the “no homo” hiphop verbiage snuck into the songs, or the muscle-man buffed boy visuals deconstructing music videos, misogyny, and a host of other stressful/anxiety producing precedents put forth in media) We could show Byron Hurt’s *HipHop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes* film, and use his [great media literacy tip sheet](#) to uncork conversation about gender, race, body image identity



We could: visit sites with game-based interactives like [BAM \(Body and Mind\)](#) [Ad Decoder](#) which helps younger kids deconstruct magazine imagery, especially since many are prone to blurring the boundaries of ads and product claims... (e.g. BAM shows clever animations that kids can mouse over like a magazine to pop up misleading messages/ad deconstruction, such as the use of celebrity factor/coolness cache, action hero videogame icons with super-muscular ideals, athlete endorsements of 'strong' candy bars/buffed boy disconnects, energy drinks and poor nutritional turns of phrase, 'keeps me going' (caffeine) etc.

We could: deploy hands-on games and THREEP tactics (see example on counter-marketing 'team snack' pouch vs produce) relating to body image and perceptions of 'what's cool' —We could: ask kids to dip into current media shows, films, ads, and products to pool ideas and commentary about media literacy basics: The use of lighting, sound, camera lens/angle, slogan, voice, colors, assumptions, representations of 'hottie vs nerd' stereotypes, boy gets girl and teachable media moments

These are just a FEW examples of how we might 'flip the message' using 'perception vs reality' media literacy tools to remind BOTH genders how easy it is to take back their power, talkback to peers, profiteers, and other pivotal players undermining their health and wellbeing. Bonus? Being 'in the know' on media

insider tactics boosts self confidence, assertiveness, and leadership by serving as an influencer for others...

More Activities & Media Literacy Fun & Games

Co-Ed Groups/Body Image: Consider that an appeal to BOTH genders for life lessons and media literacy skill sets might help establish a shared sense of purpose, rather than thwart open conversation/truth-telling. (Many times body image is split into single gender convos in health classes and such)

The dynamic of “we’re in this boat together” can help co-ed classes understand each other’s worlds and teach to the greater good of humanity as a whole, so don’t discount kids’ ability to empathize and discern in a more nuanced conversation, especially in teen years.

Activity: Media Morass: Use today’s media tools to deconstruct the fallacies and implications of messages in fun fresh ways. [Here’s a ‘show-n-tell’ using Animoto](#) to upload simple covers of books, ads, cartoons, and familiar celebrity body image issues to discuss the vastness of the problem and seed some solutions-based thinking to curb eating disorders and body fixations. Use media to tell the story... Video game icons? Comic book action heroes? Sitcoms, YouTube clips, branded body image ‘why to buys’ etc. Get creative!

Activity: Messaging Mythology: Debunk mind/body adages that have embedded in our thought patterns over time. See how vastly different the perception and the reality is in 21st century media messaging:

“The camera doesn’t lie”

Ahem, digital distortion is often built IN to cameras now for auto-retouching, digital ‘diets’ and other visual trickery at the consumer level; look at school yearbook photos at elem/middle school levels now offering alteration as part of the ‘package.’ What other changes have taken place with the advent of new technology and digital alterations? Discuss “the PhotoShop factor”—[The Dove “Evolution” creature feature](#) of time-lapsed, surreal ‘beauty’ where altered states are not remotely human. Also check out “Is Seeing Believing” on the editorializing of photography in journalism, from [Media Literacy Clearinghouse](#)

“You are what you eat”

Really? Explore this phrase with today’s food supply, additives/preservatives/colorings for shelf-life and genetically modified ‘ Frankenfoods’ mixed into consumer offerings.

Now come up with more of these body image fallacies and debunk them in ‘that was then, this is now’ mode...

Activity: Mood & Tude Look into your own habits of how your mood might impact your relationship with food. Do you: Lose your appetite after a breakup, or your moderation during a sad spell? Using the Mindless Eating.org “One Page Wonder” activities, see how you can take control of your own mind and body habits by becoming more aware of your internal landscape.

Activity: Thanksgiving, Year Round Ever notice after an illness how thankful you are to be WELL? Or how happy you are to have that cast off, cold healed, alert drive home with keen eyes in the rain? Snag that feeling with a love note, to appreciate your body and revisit your writing whenever you feel blue about same. Great site with prompts and examples: www.LettersToMyBody.com

Activity: Scenario BackFlips Shaping Youth’s known for backflipping media messages but this particular game not only opens minds it can open hearts with greater understanding of the human experience.

We use it for the toughest behavioral change instances when a massive dose of empathy needs instilled (bullying, teasing, body image, gender stereotypes, substance abuse, special needs) by lobbing a ‘what if’ factor into the media mix.

Adjust it for grade levels from playgrounds to young adults, creating altered states by drawing upon the group themselves to ConsiderIt® before taking action.

Simple teen example? A distracted driver is riding your bumper, cuts you off cluelessly, and amps you into road rage mode, ready to shoutout with a foul hand gesture...Freeze.

What if: The driver was emotionally rattled, having just lost a family member? (What if...insert any scenario you wish...e.g. being booted off an athletic team for ‘not making weight,’ ‘roid rage, public bodysnarking/digital humiliation, whatever the issues your given group can relate to)

Use for various (in)civility scenarios where consideration comes into play to approach the world from a humanist perspective



10 Tips For Healthier Body Image Literacy

Word Watching:

- 1.) Ban banning: Forbidding certain foods sets up a deprivation mentality
- 2.) Focus on health, mobility, life balance, NOT weight, size and shape
- 3.) Turn stereotypes upside down w/observable examples (e.g. I'm thin/tall have high cholesterol; my aerobic instructor is short/stout yet strong/fit)
- 4.) Use moderation methodology to avoid absolutes & black/white thinking
- 5.) Counteract body-snarking/peer teasing pronto
- 6.) Keep it Simple "Eat when you're hungry, drink when you're dry"
- 7.) Ditch dieting, scales, calorie counting (constant focus keeps food top of mind)
- 8.) Normalize and de-stigmatize sweet talkin' (desserts are not 'sinful, ecstasy, taboo, or other trigger happy amped up sexualized cues)
- 9.) Remove 'I'm not ___ enough' from your lexicon
- 10.) Turn down the heat: Deflect and dodge the constant barrage of media banter focusing more on how you LOOK than who you ARE (*Counter-market narcissism, self-absorption& internal struggles with macro views/outward actions steering away from minutiae and toward fun/fabulousness! Also, service learning to help others gives vital perspective and upends myopia nicely*)

Further reading on Shaping Youth:

[**Childhood Matters: Raising Strong, Healthy Girls in Today's Media Culture**](#)

[**Raising Girls Amidst Meat Marketing: BK Burger Raunch**](#)

[**How to Counter-Market Thinspiration**](#)

[**A Huge Opportunity: Don't Blow It ABC Family**](#)

[**A Huge Conversation: Media Literacy Talking Points**](#)

[**Let's Move to Prevent Eating Disorders!**](#)

[**Empowering Girls Rather Than Consuming Them**](#)

[**Media Musts to Wrap Up All Things Girl Week Part One**](#)

[**Seven Sensational Blogs About Girls: All Things Girl Week Part Two, Finale!**](#)

[**Selling Healthy Kids Cuisine Via Product Presentation**](#)

[**A Huge Breakthrough For TV**](#)

[**Buffed Boy, Body Image, and Teen Scene 'Hottie' Factor**](#)

[**Tips For Teens To Survive The Media Morass**](#)

[**Are We Making Matters Worse By All the Body Image Chatter?**](#)

[**Preteen Tips/How to Say it To Girls**](#)

[**Girls Prescription for Self Worth-Respect Rx!**](#)

[**So Sexy So Soon: Amy Jussel Chats with Author Jean Kilbourne**](#)

[**Body Image Category: Chock Full With Media Analysis of Today's Offerings**](#)

[**More Tips & Tactics for Positive Body Image**](#)

[**Common Sense Media Resources**](#)

[**CSM: Boys & Body Image**](#)

[**CSM: Girls & Body Image**](#)

[NEDA: Educational Videos](#)

[Media Education Foundation Videos](#)

[Online Interactives & Media Literacy](#)

[BAM \(Body & Mind\)–Ad Decoder from the CDC](#)

[YWCA Interactive: Digital Guide for Parents of Girls](#)

[Deconstructing Print Mags/Diet Ads: Media Literacy Clearinghouse](#)

[Fake or Foto Challenge \(AutoDesk/fun interactive tool\)](#)

[Letters To My Body.com](#)

[Loving Your Body Inside & Out: WomensHealth.gov](#)

[How I Look Journal \(mother/daughter duo; NEDA sanctioned\)](#)

[Feel Good, Girl \(more tween talk\)](#)

[My Pop Studio \(Media Lab: Tween Media Literacy\)](#)

[More Media Literacy Resources: MLC's Frank Baker](#)

[CSPI: Kids Food Site/Label Literacy: Smartmouth.org](#)

[SY: Online Media Nutrition Calculator](#)

[More Body Image Favorites to Come, Including:](#)

[Jess Weiner](#)

[5 Resolutions](#)

[We Are the Real Deal Body Image Blog](#)

[About Face](#)

[Any-Body](#)

[The Illusionists](#)

[The Body Positive.org](#)

[Real Beauty Is.com](#)

[Packaging Girlhood](#)

[Packaging Boyhood](#)

[Daughters.com](#)

[Hey Ugly.org](#)

[Shapely Prose](#)

[You'd Be So Pretty If](#)

[**Beautiful You + Julie's blogroll:**](#)

- [The Body Image Project](#)
- [Operation Beautiful](#)
- [The Baby Bump Project](#)
- [you'd be so pretty if...](#)
- [Elizabeth Patch's More to Love Sketchbook](#)
- [Letters to My Body](#)
- [Beauty Business](#)
- [FedUpGirl](#)
- [Claire Mysko](#)
- [What's the Skinny?](#)
- [Improving Body Image in the Media](#)

[**Using Media to Inspire: Positive Body Image on Shaping Youth.org:**](#)

[**Athletes at All Ages & Stages: Lia Neal to Dara Torres**](#)

[**Raising Strong, Healthy Girls Today: Childhood Matters**](#)

[**Empowering Girls Rather Than Consuming Them!**](#)

[**America the Beautiful- Documentary: See It. Support It.**](#)

[**ATB Review + "How Much Do You Pay For Beauty?"**](#)

[**ATB Movie: Amy Jussel Interviews Director Darryl Roberts**](#)

[ATB & the Oprah Factor: Yo-Yo Dieting Messages](#)

[Seven Sensational Blogs About Girls](#)

[Food for Thought: Media to Digest For Healthier Kids](#)

[28 lessons in 28 years from PsycheCentral.com blog](#)

[Body Image vs. Self Image-Dr. Phil](#)

[WSJ report: dieting/body image issues getting worse '09](#)

[The Contagion Effect: Let's Skip Lunch Says The Hungry Generation](#)

[Body Image/Food Related Activities](#)

[Teaching Toolbox from MindlessEating.org](#)

[Food For Your Mood](#)

[The Nose Knows Best](#)

[Bottomless Soup Bowl: Visual Cues/Portion Control Intake](#)

[Test Your School Junk Food IQ With This Quick Quiz!](#)

Bonus: Handout/Sample of Shaping Youth Activity Ready to Use

For NON-COMMERCIAL use only (e.g. educators, parents, scout troops, etc)

Squashing Stereotypes, Flipping Media Messages For Healthier Worldviews

© Amy Jussel, Shaping Youth m-power media literacy games

If one out of two ads today are targeting girls about their looks, and 250,000 commercials specifically about appearance have entered the brain of an average 17 year old girl ('07 Harris Interactive Poll) how does that impact self-image and worldview?

Moreover, how can we switch the track on this runaway train, FAST so that kids don't let media define them before they can even define themselves?

Welcome to some warm up games and media literacy musts to turn down the volume of negative body image so we can hear our own songs of the heart.

Don't think you're impacted? Close your eyes & take this pop quiz:

What does a runway model look like? A school outcast? A female banker? A mathlete in AP calculus? A female construction worker? A woman CEO? A checker at the local market? A biotech scientist shopping at the mall? Did that last one particularly throw you? In a quick snap we've pre-set our brains to absurd media myths, formulas and 'uniforms' of imagery that we wear in a lens of pre-judgment from pop culture shortcuts of iconic representation.

You're about to flip those perceptions & realities upside down in fun, hands-on games that will give you skill sets for life and tell you a lot about yourself in the process. How are you swayed by the power of imagery to suggest attitudes—Stereotypes that set up perceptions hard to crack and conquer?

We'll peel away our masks to reveal the crucial difference between stereotypes stemming from external media, and snap judgments derived from internal gut instincts. It's a huge distinction that will help you build awareness, make authentic choices and trust your "blink" from school cliques & career paths to life partners and beyond. Ready for a 'reality check?' Game on.

HANDOUT SHEET #1: Icebreaker/Warm Up

© Shaping Youth (using Teen mags as visual aids)

STOP! WAIT! DON'T TURN OVER THE PAPER YET!!

You're about to sit on a stereotype...And by the end of our session, we'll be squashing several more using media messages to deconstruct exactly where some of these covert and overt attitudes are seeping into our psyches to wreak havoc on our happiness.

Using the index card and pencil provided, go ahead & answer these questions, then standby as we launch the game together

- What stereotype is most often applied to you based on your appearance and attitude?
- How do you think it got there?
- What would you do to change it?

In a sec, we'll collect these cards and ask volunteers to 'blow up' these perceptions (and misperceptions others have of them!) by sharing their own personal experiences.

Bubble gum goes to anyone willing to 'pop' their own stereotype and the media myth that surrounds it!

Stereotypes can 'stick' so throughout this workshop, we'll be flinging gum to anyone actively participating in blowing up these images, to help 'inflate' your self esteem.

It's time we all perceive ourselves in a healthier manner and give media moguls something new to chew on!

Whoever comes up with the best "reality check" for the session receives a prize!

HANDOUT SHEET #2: Snap judgments & media messaging (using body images/teen mags)

Shaping Youth is all about using media to flip messages in a healthier direction using games and reality shows for awareness, media literacy and counter-marketing. Today's game uses media's split second sound-bites and 'blinks' to show us how fast we judge!

Malcolm Gladwell's bestseller "*Blink*" is about the first two seconds of rapid cognition in which our minds jump to a series of conclusions. Our game has some similarities... We've developed a fun way to use this 'blink' concept to test our own snap judgments, and discover the difference between stereotyped blinks & those based on 'adaptive unconscious,' learning how quick we judge in the process and need to apply critical thinking skills to our universal awareness!

You'll have two minutes for this whole exercise, but only two SECONDS for your first 'blink.' Wait for the bell!

Ding! TWO SECONDS ONLY: Write down a one word 'blink' for the girl in the photo. (adjective, noun, whatever you wish)

_____ (Blink)

Now, assess your blink. (Why? Body language? Stance? Posture? Clothing? Expression? Appearance?)

She looks: (fill in/add your own: friendly, sad, likable, mad, high-maintenance, etc.)

_____ (Assessment)

Judging by your blink, is she someone you'd hang out with? Friend or foe? (circle one)

She seems like she's probably: (easygoing, fun, moody etc.)

She's probably (list job/profession, adj/adverb, etc)

_____ (Judgment)

Be ready to swap with your partner (clockwise) and do the same thing again with a different photo, until all four of you in the group have had a turn. Privacy please

(no peer sharing) until the 8 minutes is up and you share your findings among yourselves!

(Note to leaders: We'll note the patterns/debunk the mythology and then 'spin it' in a different direction based on what ifs/positive deconstruction, body image parity/media literacy (what's missing in this photo, what's included, editorial comments based on artistic vision, etc) Here's a snapshot of a :30 game session

HANDOUT SHEET #3: Primer for Group Leaders, appx. game time for :30 activity

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Squashing Stereotypes in Media Messaging: Weight & Body Image Impacting Kids' Worldviews

Game Goal: A rapid-fire game of two second 'blinks' revealing how we snap-judge, instantly, followed by a 'what if' context to reframe the scenario, backflip the message and alter the outcome

Shaping Youth Presents Squashing Stereotypes

Format: Hands-on, Interactive Game:

Topic Area: Media literacy; self-image/self-esteem

Tools: Index cards, pencils, handouts, Bubble gum handed out at random for those who participate by 'popping' stereotypes and blowing up the media messaging.

Icebreaker: 5 minutes

As girls file in, each seat has a two-sided sleeve waiting for them on the chair along w/pencil and note card. They're instructed NOT to flip it over to see the teen magazine face that they're going to 'blink' and snap judge, but instead, they'll fill in the mini-quiz to open up dialogue, warm up the room...(see handout #1)

Warm Up & Gum Flinging: 10 minutes

Passing the cards to the front, ask for volunteers to share their personal perceptions about themselves. Randomly read some cards aloud, discuss the self-assessments about perceptions/reality in school, jobs, etc. based on appearance, attire, 'look'; start by having them 'assess' the adult/workshop leader. Who were they in high school? What's their 'blink'? What do they do for a living now? Ask for some 'shout outs' of shows, icons, ads, examples of stereotyping in various media forums (print & broadcast) Challenge the audience with some untruths about their judgments, reveal some 'whoa' moments for drama if appropo/authentic (SY e.g. *tall thin blonde white girl as minority=how so? Hint: location*)

Break Into Teams of Four: (appx. 7 to 8 groups; 28-32 size) 16-20 minutes

Each girl has two minutes only to flip over the sheet they're squashing and do the 'blink' of rapid cognition (see attached handout of questions they'll need to assess)

At the sound of the bell they swap sheets clockwise and have two minutes to assess the next sheet the same way. Cycle continues for a total of 8-10minutes, until all have written down their ‘blinks.’ 8-10 minutes are spent comparing & discussing their assessments as a group and noting any commonalities in their perceptions, stereotypes, opinions.

Report Findings/Deconstruct: 15 minutes

One representative from each group will ‘report’ their findings, holding up the visual and discussing the outcomes/commonalities, assessment in front of all. Note the universal patterns of commentary, share stats/studies showing the more a particular type of image is shown, the more that ‘look’ is accepted as ‘beauty.’ Have group leader SPIN the findings into a “what if” approach to offer an idea of what would happen if our judgment was entirely WRONG. (Goal? Open minds to diff. views/interpretations/circumstances)

Perception? Reality. Examples

Wrap Up: 10 minutes

Discuss ‘gut feelings,’ media’s role in creating snap judgments/stereotypes, ‘sound bite’ mentality, impact on worth. Brainstorm positive media shifts away from stereotyped depictions, better role models we’d like to put forward, review what we learned about ourselves, each other. (***View Jean Kilbourn’s short 4 min. clip of Media Education Foundation offerings like the “Killing Us Softly” series on stereotypes/self-image/self-esteem***)