



# Body Images in the Media

**Grade 7/8**

Lesson

1

**Lesson Objectives – Students identify and explain how two manipulative marketing strategies make people feel bad about their bodies (e.g., people in ads are not representative of the general population) and provide examples of each.**

	Time	Page
<b>Prepare Students</b> .....	5 min. ....	120
<b>Attention Grabber</b> .....	5 min. ....	120
<b>Explain/Demonstrate/Practice</b>		
Advertising Worksheets .....	12 min. ....	121
<b>Review and Preview</b> .....	3 min. ....	122
<b>Total Time</b> .....	<b>25 min.</b>	

### Equipment & Materials

- ✓ One female fashion doll (e.g., Barbie) and one male action adventure doll (e.g., G.I. Joe) or photos in Appendix 7/8-1A, p. 123.
- ✓ Magazine ads (one ad for each group of 4-5 students) that depict exceptionally “beautiful” people selling a product or service. For example, the ad might depict a man and a woman dressed only in skimpy bathing suits. Each holds a large bottle of alcohol.
- ✓ Copies of the “Body Images in the Media” worksheet for each group. Appendix 7/8-1B, p. 124.
- ✓ Photographs of famous actors, actresses and models (optional).

**Teaching Tip:** Be sure to choose ads that feature both men and women.

*This lesson addresses the following content standards:*

Michigan Standards		National Standards	
Physical Education	Health Education	Physical Education	Health Education
None	Standard #4	Standard #6	Standard #4

*This lesson relates to Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education:*

Grades 7-8, What’s Food Got to Do with It? Lesson 5: Advertising Claims and Lesson 6: Have a Healthy Body Image.

### Teacher Preparation

Prior to the start of this class:

- ✓ Find one female fashion doll and one male action adventure doll, if not using photographs.
- ✓ Clip magazine ads.
- ✓ Make copies of the “Body Images in the Media” Worksheet.

### Additional Preparation

This lesson may generate discussion that reveals a risk of eating disorders among students. Before presenting the lesson, verify procedures for referring a student for evaluation and intervention.

**Key Message & Background Information for Teachers****Key Messages:**

I believe there is no such thing as a “perfect” body size and shape.

**Background Information:**

We live in a society inundated with mass media images that portray extremely thin, muscular, “perfect” bodies as the norm. Advertising is notorious for using bodies to sell products and services. Although the people we see in magazines and on television are real, their appearance is not representative of the actual population. People naturally come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, and most are bigger than the people we see on screen and in print. These images do affect the way we see ourselves. Research has shown that exposure to media’s images of the slender “ideal” body is directly linked to body dissatisfaction. Teaching children how to be critical consumers of mass media can help promote self-confidence and positive body image.

**Prepare Students****5 min.**

**Gather** students together in a group seated on the floor.

**Introduce** the lesson:

- Today we are going to be talking about how to stop the images we see in the media from making us feel bad about ourselves.

**Attention Grabber****5 min.**

**Ask** students:

- Do you think that the stars you see in movies and in magazines have typical body sizes and shapes?

**Tell** students:

- Let’s look at some images you’ve probably all seen. (Show students the dolls or the photographs of the dolls.)
- Lots of kids grow up thinking that people are all supposed to look like these dolls.
- Raise your hand if you think this doll (hold up the female doll) has a realistic body shape.
- Raise your hand if you think this doll (hold up the male doll) has a realistic body shape.
- Actually, neither dolls’ shape is realistic.

**Ask** students if anyone has any idea how tall an average woman is? After a few guesses, tell the class the average woman is 5’4” tall.

**Teacher tip:** The source of the above information is available online at <http://www.anred.com/stats.html>.

**Tell** students:

- Now, let's look at the female doll again. (Hold up the female doll.)
- If this doll was life size, she would be 6' tall and she would weigh 101 lbs. So you can see that she isn't very realistic.
- Now let's look at the male doll again. (Hold up the male doll.)
- If this doll were scaled up to be the height of an average man, he would have a 28" waist, 50" chest and 22" biceps!
- Just as these dolls aren't very realistic, many of the images of people you see in magazines and on TV aren't realistic either. Today we're going to look at some advertisements and see how realistic they are for body size and shape.

**Advertising Worksheets****12 min.****Explain/Demonstrate****Practice**

**Have** students do the advertising worksheet.

- Divide class into small groups with 4-5 students per group.
- Distribute one ad and one worksheet to each group.
- Have each group choose a note-taker for the group's discussion.

**Review** the worksheet to make sure everyone understands the questions.

**Tell** students that they will have about six minutes to discuss answers to each of the questions on the worksheet.

**The worksheet will include the following questions/prompts:**

- What product or service is the ad selling?
- Describe the physical appearance of the person or people in the ad.
- What does the ad suggest or hint will happen if you buy this product?
- Is this a realistic expectation? Why or why not?
- Write a one-sentence rebuttal to the ad. (What would you say to the ad if you could "talk back?")

**Complete** the activity by having one person from each group explain to the class:

- What the ad suggests will happen to someone who buys the product.
- Their response to the ad.

**Emphasize:**

- The people who appear in media images—including, but not limited to magazines—do not represent average people.
- Very few people have the long, lean body types that we see so often in advertisements.
- A lot of work is done to make the pictures of people in the magazines look better than they do in real life. Makeup, camera angles, electronic editing, and plastic surgery can dramatically change a person's appearance.

## Review &amp; Preview

3 min.

Tell students:

- Images of seemingly “perfect” bodies are all around us.
- It’s important for us to recognize that these images are not realistic.
- The reality is that very few people are shaped like the people we see in magazines and other forms of media like TV and movies.
- We shouldn’t compare ourselves or try to be like the people we see in magazines, because those images are misleading.
- What we can do instead is appreciate that real people come in a variety of shapes and sizes.
- We can also look below the surface to appreciate that a person’s appearance has very little to do with what kind of person they are.

**Teacher tip:** (Optional exercise) If you have time, follow up this discussion with this brief activity. Show pairs of photos of some famous actors and actresses. The first picture of each pair would be from a glamour type magazine and show the person as we usually think of them—at their best with perfect makeup, fancy clothes and adjusted lighting. The second would be from one of the tabloids showing the person without makeup, costume or lighting. This comparison would clearly demonstrate that not only are the images we see unrealistic, but they don’t even accurately show what that person actually looks like. Most people don’t look like the people we see in magazines, TV and movies.

An easy example for this exercise would be the “before” and “after” photos of Jamie Lee Curtis at a photo shoot. These are available at

[http://www.lhj.com/lhj/printableStory.jhtml?storyid=/templatedata/lhj/story/data/jamieleecurtistruethighs\\_08212002.xml](http://www.lhj.com/lhj/printableStory.jhtml?storyid=/templatedata/lhj/story/data/jamieleecurtistruethighs_08212002.xml).



## Body Images in the Media Worksheet

- What product or service is the ad selling?
- Describe the physical appearance of the person or people in the ad.
- What does the ad suggest will happen if you buy this product?
- Do you think this will really happen? Why or why not?
- Write a one-sentence rebuttal to the ad. What would you say to the ad if you could “talk back?”