

Youths need to avoid being molded by the media

Have you noticed changes in media images over the past few decades?

Over the years, the definition of what is acceptable has changed. On one hand, important social issues are being given more attention; on the other hand, many television shows, movies, music, and other media have become more graphic.

Have you ever thought about the role that media play in shaping public perceptions? Have you talked to your teens about it?

They face a barrage of messages from television shows and movies, video games, music and the Internet—all packed with ideas about what it means to be young, how to handle interactions with others, how to have fun and how to gain status as an adult.

Yet, teens may not be as equipped as we are to critically examine the parts of the message — its meanings, intent, context and impact. And, because of teens' extensive use of media and other technology, media have far-reaching potential to influence their values and culture — perhaps more than ever before.

Media literacy can help youth recognize and understand messages — subliminal or direct — delivered



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in song lyrics, television shows, movies, advertisements or depicted on T-shirts and jewelry.

The influence of the media should not be underestimated. By mid-adolescence, teens have watched about 15,000 hours of television, more time than they spend with teachers in school. Add to that figure the hours devoted to surfing the Internet, playing video games, watching videos and DVDs, listening to the radio and attending movies, and the media's impact becomes clear.

Encourage your teen to analyze information in the media message. In other words, he can make comparisons, link cause and effect, distinguish fact from opinion and investigate bias and slant.

In doing so, your teen may begin to understand how messages are constructed to shape meaning and how the construction process itself

is shaped by assumptions about culture, gender, race, social class and age.

Ask him to draw conclusions and

form opinions about the media message. Is the message accurate and complete, or is important information missing from the message? You and your teen can discuss the latest movie, breaking headline, a favorite music video, hit song, or advertising campaign.

A recent study showed that almost all of the movies evaluated (98 percent of the 200 most popular movie rentals of 1996 and 1997) depicted substance use. Illicit drugs appeared in 22 percent of the movies, and alcohol and tobacco appeared in more than 90 percent of the movies.

More than one-fourth of the movies that depicted illegal drugs contained graphic portrayals of drug

preparation and/or ingestion.

One thousand of the most popular songs from 1996 and 1997 were also assessed, and 27 percent of them were found to contain a clear reference to either alcohol or illicit drugs.

Only 2 percent of the songs had substance use as a central theme. Substance use was rarely associated with any motivations or consequences, and only 19 percent of songs mentioned any negative consequences from drugs.

But illegal drug use was associated with wealth or luxury in 20 percent of the songs in which drugs appeared; with sexual activity was in 30 percent and crime or violence in 20 percent.

A striking finding from the song analysis study was the dramatic difference among music categories — substance use references were more common in rap music (63 percent of all rap songs) than any other type of music, including alternative rock (11 percent), top 100 (11 percent), heavy metal (9 percent) and coun-

try-western (1 percent).

By helping our teens become media literate, we can help protect them from pressures from advertising and other media forms to smoke, drink, use drugs, have sex or eat unhealthy foods.

We also can help them build communication skills, encourage them to consider multiple interpretations of media messages, put portrayals of themselves and others in perspective and improve media use habits, such as changing ritualistic viewing behaviors.

In addition, we can improve the media use habits of the entire family and promote more proactive behavior among all family members.

Media literacy is not media bashing; the goal is not to ridicule the media. Media are dominant forces in our culture and an important part of our teenagers' lives. It should be evaluated fairly.

Media literacy is also no silver bullet or magic wand; it will not instantly solve all of our problems. But it is our best defense in resist-

ing manipulation and keeping a perspective on the images and messages that are a part of media and youth culture.

Nothing is more important than talking with youths about what we watch, hear and read. Keep discussions relaxed; this takes the pressure off of teens to get the "right" answer.

Draw out their ideas and guide them to critically examine what they see and hear. Remember to probe into their answers, as this helps young people expand their thoughts.

This helps them focus and helps us understand how they perceive what they view. It doesn't matter so much what questions you ask; the important thing is to get youths to express themselves and to challenge what they see and hear.

Young people can learn how to read between the lines so that they can understand exactly what music videos, movies and other forms of communication that reach youth are saying to them.

Girl Scout Week celebrates history of group

The Goodland Girl Scouts of Sunflower Council are celebrating the history and future of girl scouting this week.

Girl Scouts is for girls of ages 5-17 and was designed to provide them with skill-building activities to enhance their self esteem. This year, the organization has focused

on nurturing girls' early interest in math, science and technology.

The Girl Scouts of Sunflower Council serves more than 980 girls in northwest Kansas. Linda Mills, the executive director of the council, said Girl Scout week is a time to renew the club's commitment to making sure every girl in northwest

Kansas has the opportunity to grow strong and realize her potential.

The club needs help, she said, from everyone over 18 years of age. Even if an individual is only able to volunteer for one hour once a year, Mills said, it will make a difference in the lives of Kansas girls.

The annual Girl Scout week com-

memorates the 1912 founding of girl scouting in the United States by Juliette Gordon Low. In the 90 years since, the club is estimated to have helped shape the lives of over 50 million women.

Girl Scouting has the goal of cultivating values, social conscience and self esteem in girls.

Methodist women meet; birthday to be celebrated

The Brewster United Methodist Women met in the fellowship hall for their monthly meeting Wednesday, Feb. 26, with six members present. Wanda Fulwider presented the program on "Compassion and Solidarity."

Joyce Crabtree gave the report from the *Response* magazine. Vice President Bonnie Reid, conducted the business meeting. Everyone enjoyed the refreshments served by the hostess, Joyce Crabtree.

The next meeting will be at 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 26, with Eva Lou Selby as the program leader.

Everyone is invited to an open house for Lore Depe's 80th birthday from 1-4 p.m. Saturday, March 22, at the Brewster Community Church, 511 Third St.

It is good to have Lore home, and



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we look forward to seeing her out and about.

Paula and Cliff Fox returned home Sunday, March 2, following a trip to the southwest for several weeks. They enjoyed an air show at Quartz City, Ariz., and toured many interesting sights in California, Arizona and New Mexico.

Roger and I want to wish Lucille

Lewallen the very best on her decision to move to Holyrood later this month.

We hope she finds everything is just great, although we want her to know she will be missed.

The Brewster Bulldog girls are to be congratulated on their fine season. All the young folks that go out for sports do so with a sacrifice of their time and a lot of practice.

Brewster Grocery will be having its grand opening on Saturday, March 22, so be sure to mark your

calendar. There will be prizes and refreshments, and the ribbon cutting will be at 11 a.m.

Duane Jones will be celebrating his 82nd birthday this weekend. Ruth said some of the family couldn't make it because of health, but there were several folks who plan to stop in and wish him well.

The week is about over, and we are winding down with some beautiful weather.

There is a last minute announcement. Pam Bremenkamp will be sponsoring an Avon spring open house Friday, March 21, at the Senior Center. Be sure to come in and see the new products. See you then!

Party favors



Nolan Deeds, son of Jeff and Jill Deeds, handed a balloon to a resident at the Good Samaritan Center at the party for Leona Smith's 95th birthday this week. He helped his mother and other P.E.O. club members pass out balloons and snacks at the party and was a hit with the residents.

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