

Social Media

AMERICANS AND MEDIA CONSUMPTION

- Over 80% of Americans watch television daily. On average, these people watch over three hours per day.
- On a typical day, 8 – 18-year-olds are engaged with some form of media about 7.5 hours. Most of this time is spent watching television, though children play video games more than an hour per day and are on their computers for more than an hour per day.
- A content analysis of weight-loss advertising in 2001 found that more than half of all advertising for weight-loss products made use of false, unsubstantiated claims. (Hobbs, 2006).

THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA

Mass media provides a significantly influential context for people to learn about body ideals and the value placed on being attractive. Whenever you use media, think about who is paying for your attention. Consider how the message might affect someone's body confidence and if it is a message you want to support.

- Numerous correlational and experimental studies have linked exposure to the thin ideal in mass media to body dissatisfaction, internalization of the thin ideal, and disordered eating among women.
- Of American elementary school girls who read magazines, 69% say that the pictures influence their concept of the ideal body shape. 47% say the pictures make them want to lose weight. (Martin, 2010).
- Pressure from mass media to be muscular also appears to be related to body dissatisfaction among men. This effect may be smaller than among women but it is still significant.
- Conversely, Black-oriented television shows may serve a protective function; Hispanic and Black girls and women who watch more Black-oriented television have higher body satisfaction.

5 TIPS FOR MEDIA SELF CARE

1. **Choose and use media mindfully.** Be selective about your media use and choose media that supports your values and builds self-esteem and body confidence.
2. **Limit screen time and social networking.** Researchers studying body concern issues have found that the more time we spend in the media world, the more we are exposed to body perfect images, and the more vulnerable we are to compare our appearance to unrealistic body standards. Protect your self-image by monitoring the quantity and quality of your mainstream and social media time.
3. **Test the message for body positivity.** Use media literacy strategies to think critically about messages you consume and content you create on social media. Test for body positivity by asking key questions: Are the body depictions realistic or digitally altered? What does the message really mean? Why are they sending it? How might it affect someone's body acceptance? Who created and profits from the message? Before you text, tweet, post

comments, and share photos and videos, ask yourself why you are sending the message, who you want to reach, and analyze its body positivity.

4. **Talk back to media about body image.** Tell people who profit from media and establish policies what you like and don't like about their body representations, why you feel this way, and what you plan to do about it — take a stand and refuse to read, view or listen to media or buy advertised products until they make changes.
5. **Advocate for positive body talk.** Use your social media capital to inspire others to use their voices to compliment authentic and diverse body messages, criticize unrealistic body ideals, and report body shaming. Shout out to media outlets, retailers, advertisers, and celebrity product endorsers who celebrate natural looks, healthy body size, and diverse body shapes, and call out ones that continue to promote unhealthy and artificial body norms. You can make a difference!

TIPS FOR BECOMING A CRITICAL VIEWER OF THE MEDIA

We spend more time than ever using media and everywhere we turn there are messages telling us how we should look that can make us feel less confident about our appearance. While we're probably not going to use less media, we can protect our self-image and body confidence from media's narrow body ideals that reinforce the appearance ideal.

Media messages about body shape and size do not need to affect the way we feel about ourselves and our bodies. One of the ways we can protect our self-esteem and body image from the media's often narrow definitions of beauty and acceptability is to become critical viewers of the media messages we are bombarded with each day. When we effectively recognize and analyze the media messages that influence us, we remember that the media's definitions of beauty and success do not have to define our self-image or potential.

- All media images and messages are constructions. They are **not** reflections of reality. Advertisements and other media messages have been carefully crafted and are intended to send a very specific message.
- Advertisements are created to do one thing: convince you to buy or support a specific product or service. To do this, advertisers will often construct an emotional experience that looks like reality. Remember, you are only seeing what advertisers want you to see.
- Advertisers create their message based on what they think you will want to see and what they think will affect you and compel you to buy their product. Just because they think their approach will work with people like you doesn't mean it has to work with you as an individual.
- As individuals, we decide how to experience the media messages we encounter. We can choose to use a filter that helps us understand what the advertiser wants us to think or believe and then choose whether we want to think about or believe that message. We can choose a filter that protects our self-esteem and body image.

**These statistics have been taken from www.nationaleatingdisorder.org