

# A Teacher's Guide

Here are a few activities and discussion points that can help your 6th-8th grade students get the most out the sensitive topics covered in *TeenZine: Issue 3*.

## Class Discussion Questions:

1. What are the differences between friendship, love, and dating? How are they similar?
2. What can students your age do to resist peer pressure on a day-to-day basis? What works? What doesn't?
3. What types of obstacles exist for students your age in making good decisions?

## Creating Positive Messages (from Planned Parenthood)

The objectives of this activity are for participants to be able to critically look at advertising and media messages, to display knowledge about the differences between positive and negative media messages and their impact on our choices and decisions, and to demonstrate the ability to create positive messages and images of their own. You will need 45 minutes for this activity. For materials, you will need a variety of current magazines, a few examples of positive and negative ads, scissors, clear tape, drawing materials (markers, pencils, etc.), and large sheets of paper for each participant. To collect enough media material, you might ask students beforehand to bring in their favorite teen magazines.

- **Part 1:** Begin with a discussion. Brainstorm with students about media and advertising, and how youths are portrayed in pop-culture. In what circumstances are teens portrayed in a positive light? In what circumstances are young people portrayed in a negative light? A great way to get the conversation started is to begin by talking about an ad that you saw recently that had an effect on you.

**Example:** "I saw this commercial the other night in which all of these little kids were in front of the mirror in their underwear. The boys were trying to act strong and confident, and the girls were practicing their smiles. I was so upset by how young the kids were and how they were already in the mirror evaluating they way they looked. What kind of ads have you seen lately that affected you?"



- **Part 2:** After the initial discussion, distribute a variety of current magazines around the classroom. Participants can work alone, in pairs, or in small groups. Keep a couple magazines for yourself (facilitator). Have the participants look through the magazines and find advertisements or pictures that get their attention. Show the group examples of advertisements, both positive and negative. Discuss with the group the prevalence of negative ads and the lack of positive ones. Explore the reasoning behind this, and its connection to teen stereotypes, peer pressure, and decisions about friendship and dating.
- **Part 3:** Next, distribute all of the craft supplies to participants. Explain to the group that they will be creating positive media messages around friendship and dating, peer pressure, and making healthy decisions. Let the group develop their own method, whether it is changing the words on an existing ad, or building their own words and images using magazine cut-outs. As facilitator you can join the group and contribute to the discussion, or you can walk around and help participants process the activity. Allow time for the activity, and have participants share their ad, their reasoning, and what they learned from the activity. Post the ads around the classroom or in your office as a reminder to students about the importance of positive messages.

### **Identifying Positive Messages on the Internet**

Students are exposed to a vast array of media through internet sites like MySpace and YouTube. If you have access to the internet in the classroom, the *Positive Messages* activity could be adapted to take advantage of the internet.

Rather than focus on negative images (which could be problematic!), ask students to search for healthy images or messages that address teen friendship, dating, peer pressure, and making healthy decisions. Ask students to find resources on the internet that can help teens stand up to negative peer pressure.

#### **Safe sites to explore include:**

- The Cool Spot: [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)
- Teenwire: [www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com)
- I Wanna Know: [www.iwannaknow.org](http://www.iwannaknow.org)
- Freevibe: [www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com)

**For more fun classroom ideas, visit:**

**[www.thecoolspot.gov/teachercorner.asp](http://www.thecoolspot.gov/teachercorner.asp)**