

Keeping Girls Media Smart

Media Smart Families: Tips

www.cybersafegirl.ca

The Canadian Women's Network defines hypersexualization as "...girls being depicted or treated as sexual objects. It also means sexuality that is inappropriately imposed on girls through media, marketing or products directed at them that encourages them to act in adult sexual ways."

- **Limit Exposure**
Hypersexualization may occur at a very young age. Studies show that a child is exposed to 16,000 images per day. These are found in ads, logos, labels and announcements. Be aware of how much time your children are spending watching TV, surfing the Web, playing games or looking at magazines.
- **Be Realistic**
You can only limit so much sexualized content to your children. They will still be exposed. Talk to them about what they are seeing and hearing. Let them know that you are there to listen and answer questions. Ask them what they think about what they are seeing and how it makes them feel.
- **Teach**
Teach your children about media and how it is used to sell. Explain to them how it can affect their feelings about themselves. Encourage them to question and talk about what they are seeing. Help young girls develop positive self images as competent, rather than stereotypical images from media.¹ Teach young boys to respect young girls and women. Teach boys to accept females for who they are not what they think they should be.
- **Healthy Relationships²**
Help your children build positive relationships. Let them know that they are cared for and loved. Encourage them to achieve their goals and become healthy adults.³ Ask your children what a healthy relationship looks like.
- **Model**
Be a role model for your children. Model desired values in what you do and say. Share your feelings. Discuss media and its effects on you. Allow young children to ask questions and tell you what they think.
- **Be Current**
Accept that the world today is not the one you grew up in. Technology has increased access to all kinds of information including inappropriate images and content. Talk to your children about the types of technology they are using and how they are using it. Encourage them to use technology for good. As a parent, research the technology your children are using; talk to other parents about it to ensure you have a clear understanding of the technology.

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- **Engage & Understand**

Discuss age-appropriate sexual health information with your children, and how media could manipulate sexual content. Create a safe environment to question and discuss issues.

Discuss why media portrays women in certain ways and how this differs from reality. Ask your child, "Would this really happen?" Reality TV is NOT reality.

- **Connect**

Talk with your children about what they watch or wear. Ask them what they think about a TV show, internet video or clothing. Encourage them to think about what they are seeing. Help them to make wise choices. Think about what you watch and wear and how that can impact your children.

- **Be Open**

If talking about sex is stressful for you, the less likely your children will talk to you about it. Promote open communication. Let them know that it is safe to talk. If they are uncomfortable talking to you, agree on another safe and trusted adult.

- **Reach Out**

Talk to other parents, teachers and the community about hypersexualization. Learn from one another about effects and influences.

1. Hardy Girls Healthy Women (2005). Preventing the sexualization of childhood: what adults can do.
2. Canadian Red Cross. Healthy relationship tips.
3. American Psychological Association (2007). What parents can do.

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