

Keeping Girls Media Smart

Tips for Girls

www.cybersafegirl.ca

In our daily lives, we are exposed to thousands of images through various types of media. These images can be healthy, positive, and accurately portray real people or they can be unhealthy, negative, and unrealistic portraits of young women and men¹. Media can affect how we view ourselves and others, so it is important for all of us to be aware of the messages and how they affect us.

✓ **Question**

Media is a type of communication that aims to reach and influence people. Be aware and question media messages. For instance, question the messages of TV commercials.

✓ **Understand Stereotyping**

Be aware that media use images that support gender stereotypes. Stereotyping means judging a person or group based on an oversimplified image of the whole group. Some common stereotypes include: girls wear pink and boys wear blue; and girls play with Barbie and boys play with G.I. Joe. Question the stereotypes that you are exposed to.

✓ **Understand Your Feelings**

You are subject to unreal images of girls. Many pictures are air brushed to take out pimples or make girls look unnaturally thin. Think about how you feel when you look through a magazine or watch a video. Are these images real? Is this how people behave in real life? Is this how you think people should behave?

✓ **Be Yourself**

There are things about you that make you unique and special. Be proud of them. Explore what you think, feel, and value. Talk to your friends about it.² Your values reflect who you are and what you stand for. We can control our own actions and reactions. Be responsible for what you do. Treat yourself and others with respect, fairness and equality. Do not follow the crowd. Do not give in to peer pressure. Be who you are!

✓ **Use Your Voice**

Talk to trusted people if you feel that a media source is using a stereotypical portrayal of girls or is too focused on looks. Start a petition or write a letter. Speak up if you see something that makes you feel uncomfortable.³ Being vocal may encourage others to speak out or change their minds. You have the power!

✓ **Respect Yourself**

You cannot control what others think about you. People will always have opinions about others. You can control what you think about yourself and how you present yourself. Be comfortable with who you are and what you stand for. Respect yourself!

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✓ Understand Media

Marketers may use images of girls and women to sell products. Question why. Research this topic to become empowered. Think about media images that contradict what is real. You probably know girls who enjoy and are good at math and science. You probably know women who are doctors or engineers. Women and girls are diverse, and are not limited to those shown by the media.

✓ Enjoy Being You

Be proud of who you are! Be yourself. Do not let your clothes or appearance be the sum of who you are.⁴ Explore different things that you enjoy and are interested in. Learn about your heritage, your culture, and history, for example. Daily discovery is part of the journey of being you!

✓ Talk to your friends

Talk to your friends about how you feel about sexualized content. Understand media messages. Pay particular attention to those that over-sexualize females and target girls as naive consumers. This can protect you from harm.⁵

✓ Use Resources

Talk to safe and trusted adults whose opinions you value about popular music, books, magazines, and shows. Remember that they were young once too. They have likely experienced (and still experience) the pressures of media messaging, not just about looks but also expectations on how to act and what to think.

1. The Advocates for Human Rights. Challenge the media.
2. American Psychological Association (2007). What girls can do.
3. Ibid
4. Hardy Girls Healthy Women. Packaging girlhood: 10 tips for girls
5. Girls Action Foundation (2013). Beyond appearances. Montreal: QB

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