

## Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week

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### Alcohol Awareness - Media Literacy Activities

#### SUBJECT AREA APPLICATION:

Health, Guidance, Language Arts (Visual Literacy), Life Skills

#### INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY:

#### Alcohol - Activity 1

- ★ Raise student awareness of “subliminal” media promises having students identify ads they really like. Brainstorm with them why these ads are appealing and what are the underlying messages these ads are sending.
- ★ Have students gather 5 to 10 ads for various products from magazines. (They should try to find ones where the product has little obvious relationship to the hidden promises, share some examples.)
- ★ For each ad, have them cover all the print text and glue the ad into a notebook.
- ★ Using their notebooks they must then survey 10 students/staff, asking them if they can identify the product being sold and what they think the ad is promising.
- ★ The survey results can then be presented, discussed, charted and published.

**HAVE INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OR GROUPS COLLECT EXAMPLES OR CREATE FACSIMILES OF ALCOHOL-RELATED MEDIA MESSAGES. HAVE THEM LOOK FOR ADVERTISEMENTS IN MAGAZINES OR ON TELEVISION.**

#### GRADES 4 - 6

#### Alcohol - Activity 2

##### *Step 1*

Have students/groups create and present message montages out of the ads they have collected.

##### *Step 2*

As part of their presentation have students:

- ★ Describe to; or question their audience about, the “promises” implied in the ads, e.g.: beauty, health, wealth, fun, and popularity....
- ★ Explain or discuss if/how the purchase or use of the product might create the “promised” benefits.
- ★ Rate each promise described on a scale of 1 to 10, the lowest being fancy to the highest being fact.

##### *Step 3*

- ★ Have students create their own product ads in keeping with what they feel are the more likely “factual outcomes” of purchase and use.

**Option:** Invite students to demonstrate their ads by presenting them at a school assembly or to other classes, or displaying them in the school, local community club, library or mall.



## GRADES 7 - 9

## Alcohol - Activity 3

*Step 1*

- ★ Start with Steps 1 & 2 as described Activity A.

*Step 2*

- ★ Have students to work in groups to design an effective counter-advertising campaign that would allow them to share their knowledge of the negative aspects of alcohol use/abuse.
- ★ Their "**TRUTH IN ADVERTISING**" campaign could be presented via satirical skits, posters, videotaped ads, school home page ads and shared school and/or community-wide venues.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If students are uncomfortable with the topic of alcohol and are unable to stay focussed on the task, it might be more useful to move the focus of attention to the feelings that underlie the distraction. You could point out to students that their reactions are normal and are part of a larger sense of discomfort felt by adults. Ask the students to speculate on why talking about alcohol causes people to feel uncomfortable. Introduce the word "ambivalence" and define it as being attracted and repelled by something at the same time. Part of sorting out our ambivalent feelings has to do with recognizing what it is we feel are the good things and the bad things about alcohol use and then looking at how that information can guide us through some of the uncomfortable situations that may arise later (e.g. experiencing the discomfort of peer pressure/influence). Remind students to consider how people are affected by someone else's use of alcohol as part of their "good things - bad things" brainstorming exercise.

## GRADES 9 - 12

## Alcohol - Activity 4

*Step 1*

- ★ Television shows, advertising, movies, songs and magazines all convey attitudes and behaviours with respect to drinking, smoking and drugs. Discuss this with your students, encouraging them to talk about how they see different role models that are in the media.
  - ⊛ Examples of television programs such as: "The O.C.", "The Simpsons", "Dawson's Creek", "Gilmore Girls", "ER", "The Family Guy", "Grey's Anatomy", "House", etc.
  - ⊛ Examples of song lyrics: "What Happened to You?" by The Offspring, "Shooting Up in Vain" by Eagle Eye Cherry, "Alcohol" by Barenaked Ladies.

*Step 2*

- ★ In the week following your first discussion, ask students to pay special attention to and record journal entries describing how drinking, smoking and drugs are portrayed in television shows, movies, ads or songs.

*Step 3*

- ★ The following week, draw up a list of the shows, songs and movies noted by the students and discuss them. You may decide to listen to a song together and discuss the lyrics.

**Discussion Themes:**

- ⊛ What is your opinion on the behaviours portrayed in the media?
- ⊛ Do these behaviours reflect real life? Your experience?
- ⊛ Do you think these examples can influence your behaviour?
- ⊛ In "What Happened to You" by The Offspring, the main character tells a friend how much he has changed since he started taking drugs. What kinds of changes does he describe? Is he worried about his friend? What could he do to help him?
- ⊛ "Alcohol" by the Barenaked Ladies, seems to praise alcohol. But, in fact, the lyrics say a lot about the negative aspects of drinking. Have students analyze the lyrics. What does the song say about self-esteem in connection with alcohol?