

## **Media Literacy Roadmap**

**Topic: Body Image & Social Media - Target Audience: Grades 6-9**

**Materials needed:** Printout of numbers “1” to “10” for rating system; Chart paper and markers for pie graphs; Sticky notes; iPads or iPhones (enough for groups of 2 students); Student journals

### **Introduction & Setup:**

Introduce the main topics to be explored over two half-day sessions:

- Understanding media bombardment and how our favourite media (movies, TV shows, video games, music videos, websites, social media and merchandise) can influence values and beliefs;
- Learning how to analyze media using shot types & visual/audio/story analysis to better determine hidden messages and marketing strategies (especially in relation to body image);
- Exploring how media both connects and separates us, and how this can impact friend and family relationships (including through parental monitoring);
- Better understanding how to be a discerning and self-aware consumer of popular culture and social media by unpacking feelings and responses to media.

Introduce **Courageous Conversations** framework and the idea that these discussions may be sensitive, and that we need to agree to certain rules to proceed:

1. Stay engaged: Staying engaged means “remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue.”
2. Experience discomfort: This norm acknowledges that discomfort is inevitable, especially, in dialogue about difficult and personal topics, and that participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open. It is not talking about these issues that create divisiveness. The divisiveness already exists in the society and in our schools. It is through dialogue, even when uncomfortable, the healing and change begin.
3. Speak your truth: This means being open about thoughts and feelings and not just saying what you think others want to hear.
4. Expect and accept non-closure: This agreement asks participants to “hang out in uncertainty” and not rush to quick solutions, as understanding requires ongoing dialogue.

Give students a moment to discuss these agreements, and to work as a class to add any agreements they wish. Ask all students to make a pledge and sign the Courageous Conversations agreement sheet.

\* Courageous Conversations framework is borrowed from Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton’s **Courageous Conversations About Race**.

**Warm-up Activity:**

With the printouts of numbers 1 (never) - 10 (always) placed in a spectrum across one side of the room, ask students to rank themselves by moving towards each number. After each statement, turn and talk and explain to the person next to them how they ranked themselves.

- I love media (movies, TV shows, video games, music videos, websites, advertisements) and I consume or play with them every day.
- The media I watch and play make me feel happy.
- I identify or connect to the stories in the media I consume.
- I am inspired by my favourite characters and stories in the media I consume, and want to be more like them in some way.
- Being like the characters and stories in the media I consume makes me feel happy.

Small (then full) group discussion: What did you notice as the self-assessment proceeded? What observations did you have about how your class reacted in general? How much of you feels like you were being totally honest with yourself, and with your answers?

**Activity #1:**

Individual activity: Writing on chart paper, ask pairs of students to think about an average day that includes an average amount of media use. Ask students to create a pie chart and divide up their day in chunks, deciding how much of their day is devoted to each activity they pursue (e.g. 8 hours sleeping, 4 hours TV, 6 hours phone, etc.) ensuring that they account for overlapping activity (ie. instances when they do more than one activity, like watching a movie and texting with a friend).

As a class, do a gallery walk to view the charts, and then in small groups discuss the following:

- How do you feel during each of these activities? Think especially about your energy level, emotions and relationships with others.
- What impacts does this media usage have on you, both positive and negative?
- When in your life are you free from mass-produced media? Do you feel you are you bombarded by media? Why or why not?

As a full class, discuss the following:

- Why do you think media has become such a major part of many people's lives? What about it draws you in, and keeps you on a webpage, social media platform, video game or TV show/movie?
- When do you think you've become addicted to a form of media? What does it feel like and how do you know? How do your thoughts and feelings change?

**Activity #2:**

Share with students the idea that media doesn't captivate us by accident: every frame, colour and shot are carefully planned to be as exciting, interesting and often as addictive as possible. Share the images of different camera shots (<http://www.thewildclassroom.com/wildfilmschool/gettingstarted/images/Camera-Shots.jpg>) and discuss audio (dialogue, ambience, narration, sound effects, music), explaining how all elements work together to tell a story or communicate a key message.

- Screen body-image related ads and have the students analyze them, keeping in mind both story and technical elements. Consider primarily, what elements did you see, what did you hear, and together, what (often hidden) message did they

communicate? Do you agree with the message? How were these companies trying to connect to you in terms of body image? Did it work?

- Old Spice Ad ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaOz\\_pFnX38](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaOz_pFnX38))
- Yoplait Commercial (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdRLYqP7ZoM!>)
- Planet Fitness (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqkQKZYDI mM>)
- Kia Sorrento Pierce Brosnan (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSqqCI0LNHs!>)

### **Activity #3:**

Ask students to discuss: What about social media keeps us engaged? How does it work? Screen the following video and discuss how students feel this might impact themselves and their community, especially when these images are related to body image and self-esteem:

- 5 Crazy Ways Social Media Is Changing Your Brain Right Now ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HffWFd\\_6bJ0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HffWFd_6bJ0))
- The Innovation of Loneliness in Social Media (<https://vimeo.com/70534716>)

Using chart paper, ask students to create a chart with the following three column headings: Connection – Debatable – Disconnection. In their charts, ask students to indicate all the ways that social media use either connects or disconnects us (e.g. texting, posting to Instagram, Snapchat), and in cases where it does both, write under “Debatable.” After charts are complete, engage in a full-group discussion about the results.

### **Activity #4:**

Share with the students that most of the messaging around body image is so constant and commonplace that we have stopped actively noticing or analyzing it. Instead, we take for granted that we are living in a sea of messages without questioning the values behind them. Small group activity: Using chart paper, ask students to spend just 5 minutes brainstorming all the places in their lives they are reached by advertising and messages that ask them to conform to a gender or body image norm like those seen in the previous ads, or in an even more sneaky way. Ask students to share their results and reflections with the class. *(N.B. Ensure that the class discussion includes physical venues like buses and billboards, traditional media, as well as social media, targeted and tracked advertising, and algorithmic ads.*

Using iPads or phones, ask students in pairs to log into their own social media accounts and to reexamine them. Ask students to discuss what posts, ads, and sites they may have on their accounts that contain body image or behavioural norms or expectations, discussing this with their partners. How much are we trying to please others?

Ask students to spend a few minutes journaling their thoughts about the previous workshop topics. What did they consider that perhaps they hadn’t before? What did they find on their own social media accounts that they might now want to remove?

### **Activity #5:**

Screening and small group discussion for each clip: How do these clips make you feel? Do you think these issues play out in your own life? If yes, how do you experience the kind of gender policing and negative reinforcement these ads try to unpack?

- The Mask You Live In trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc45-ptHMxo!>
- Dove Onslaught: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ei6JvK0W60I!>

Ask students: Based on the videos presented and your own experiences, what solutions or strategies are helpful in dealing with gender stereotyping and gender policing?

**Activity #6:**

Small group discussion: Discuss the difference between easy answers and real life solutions. Based on your own experiences, how would you describe each?

Videos and viral ads often seek to navigate the space between easy answers and real life solutions in a short format that can go viral. After each video, discuss its effectiveness. What alternatives exist for us? What ways can we take the initiative presented and move it from an easy answer to a more complex, real-life solution?

- Coca Cola - Make It Happy (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibgvkXm9Qkc>)
- Kids Read Mean Tweets: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2f\\_kavukuKl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2f_kavukuKl)

Full class discussion: How can we help others who may be trying to cope with these issues? How can we seek support for ourselves if these issues arise - who is there to help? (*Discuss parents and family, school counsellors, principals, close friends, and the Kids Help Phone: [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca), 1-800-668-6868*)

**Session Conclusion:**

Small (then full) group discussion: Writing on sticky notes, students should write three ways that they can work to reduce the negative impacts (and increase the positives!) of social media in their lives and amongst their friends and communities. (*Ensure that conversations about finding other ways to make meaning in life, and other non-media activities are included in the discussion*).