



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S.² Parent's Guide Lesson 8 The Persuasion Effect - Media Influences

This week's lesson focuses on the media's impact and role in influencing expectations and distortions of drug use. The homework for this class is all about emotions. Not only have the students been asked to describe an advertisement that they found to be powerful, but the officer has also assigned them to go to www.CDC.gov to view one of the anti-smoking Public Service Announcements. After seeing the video, students were to identify what made the message effective and what feelings were created in them as they watched the video. A key to effective marketing to any age is to create feelings (emotions) regardless of whether the advertisement is attempting to sell you a product or educate you about something.

Media's impact...Commercials and advertising in whatever forms they take have tremendous impact on society, and especially on youth. A national study published in January 2006 concluded that greater exposure to alcohol advertising contributes to an increase in drinking among underage youth.¹ "A review of the neuroscience, psychology and marketing literatures concluded that adolescents, because of how the human brain develops, may be particularly attracted to branded products such as alcohol that are associated with risky behavior and that provide, in their view, immediate gratification, thrills and/or social status."²

Companies who are marketing their products know exactly what they are doing and what audience they are targeting. A study on the responses of young people to alcohol advertising found that "underage youth are drawn to music, animal and people characters, story and humor in alcohol advertising." The ads that were liked by youth in the study were more likely to create responses from youth saying they wanted to purchase the brand and products advertised. The three most popular alcohol ads among youth in the study used animal characters as the leading actors. Is this a coincidence? No way.³

Media sources have tremendous influence on **perception**. Many ads influence our perception by the emotions portrayed. Ads can make you feel happy and excited, slightly depressed and insecure, or curious and inquisitive. We know from academic research that boring, abstract facts don't tend to stick with us, but powerful emotions do. We always remember the way something made us feel.⁴ Messages that link a product, service, or idea with something already liked or desired by the target audience, such as fun, pleasure, beauty, security, intimacy, success, wealth, etc. are extremely successful due to the subconscious emotions they

¹ L.B. Snyder, F.F. Milici, M. Slater, H. Sun, and Y. Strizhakova, "Effects of Alcohol Advertising Exposure on Drinking Among Youth," *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 160 (2006): 18-24.

² C. Pechmann, L. Levine, et al., "Impulsive and self-conscious: Adolescents' vulnerability to advertising and promotion," *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* 24(2005): 202-221.

³ M.J. Chen, J.W. Grube, M. Bersamin, E. Waiters, and D.B. Keefe, "Alcohol Advertising: What Makes It Attractive to Youth?," *Journal of Health Communication* 10 (2005): 553-565.

⁴ Learning Fundamentals, "How Television Commercials Can Help You learn." - <http://learningfundamentals.com.au/blog/how-television-commercials-can-help-you-learn/>

arouse. Many ads use humor because it grabs our attention and is a powerful persuasion technique. When we laugh, we feel good. Advertisers make us laugh and then show us their product or logo because they're trying to connect that good feeling to their product. The hope is that when we see their product in a store we'll subtly re-experience that good feeling and select that product.⁵

So.... how do we deal with the influence of the media? We have to talk with our kids! According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, young people spend an average of nearly 6 hours per day exposed to media. That's approximately 42 hours per week, the equivalent of a full-time job plus overtime! The 6 hours devoted to media compares to: 2 hours spent with parents, 1 hour spent in physical activity, and less than 1 hour spent doing homework.⁶ What do we say? How do we address the media messages? The first thing to do is ask a simple question: What does that ad have to do with the product? Another way to ask is: What does that product have to do with what's happening in the show? Here is an example: *During the first few minutes of the movie "Cutting Edge- Going for the Gold" the scene shows a TV portraying a news program talking about Olympic ice skating. As the camera pans back it shows a partial empty bottle of wine with two glasses on a night stand by the bed. Then it shows a male sitting propped up in bed watching the news broadcast. That's it. The next scene is of a female skater discussing her career with her father.* What does the wine bottle have to do with anything in the movie? Nothing! If we can get our kids to see this and start to ask themselves the question "What was that about?" it automatically moves the mental process from *vicarious learning* to *critical thinking*.

The P.L.U.S.² class engages in a **media campaign** that takes the form of anti-drug posters. The students work in small groups to talk about how they can persuade others to be and/or stay drug free using critical thinking as their process. With advertising, *what we see is not always what we get!* The officer provides the posters and supplies, and the students use a combination of clippings they have been bringing to class, their artistic abilities, and discussion about things they know are harmful about drugs to create the posters. At the end of class, each group presents their project and shares their ideas about how to persuade others to be or stay drug free.

This week's homework: Internet Terms

We are gearing up for the next lesson on internet and technology safety. Students simply need to match the terms with their definitions. Are there any terms that your child does not know? This is a great opportunity to discuss any of these terms with your son or daughter. Make sure to sign the homework when you are done!

My Anti-Drug Assignment

We are nearing the conclusion of P.L.U.S.²! Be on the lookout for the final assignment, *My Anti-Drug*.

Has your child missed any P.L.U.S.² classes or assignments?

*Please remember....you can get homework, Parent's Guides and much more information at our web site:
www.lakecountyohio.gov/lcna.*

You need to log in (top right corner of the webpage) with your username and password to see the homework and Parent's Guides.

⁵ Media Literacy Project, "Language of Persuasion", <http://medialiteracyproject.org/language-persuasion>

⁶ Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds, 2005