

THE TEEN FILES: The Truth About Body Image

Hosted by Leeza Gibbons

Synopsis

Teens today are faced with many pressures regarding body image, from the muscle men staring at us from the pages of magazines to the waifish women featured in fashion ads. *THE TEEN FILES: The Truth About Body Image* forces the teens in the program and the viewers to confront how popular ideas of "beauty" damage teens physically and psychologically.

First a group of high schoolers is asked to compare themselves to the life-size-and completely unrealistic proportions of Barbie and Ken dolls; the audience experiences first hand how these images contribute to high schoolers' consumption of steroids and diet pills. A step-by-step look at a magazine modeling session clarifies that pursuing a "magazine" look is completely unrealistic and can only hamper high schoolers' growth, while a visit to a computer graphics artist shows the teens how photos are altered to enhance the model's appearance to fit the currently accepted "perfect" image.

An additional inspiration is an appearance by Keena Turner, a former San Francisco 49er, who talks to teens about how he became a Super Bowl champion without steroids; a trainer for the San Francisco 49ers discusses the dangers of steroid use. Magali Amadei,

a former model, also recounts her painful battle with an eating disorder.

In short, *The Truth About Body Image* informs teens that they don't need to conform to social standards of beauty; and that constantly pressuring oneself to look a certain way is no way to live.

Theme

THE TEEN FILES: The Truth About Body Image explores the complex world of social pressures faced by teenagers, caused by body image issues such as bulimia to steroid use. As eleven teens from California spend time getting to know one another, they discover that most people share the same needs, wants, and feelings-even when those people appear to be very different on the outside.

Introduction to Vocabulary

Before starting the program, write the following words on the board. Ask the class to discuss the meaning of each word, and review the terms that are unfamiliar to students.

Image- a popular conception (as of person, institution, or nation) projected especially through the mass media

Bulimia- a serious eating disorder that occurs chiefly in females, is characterized by compulsive overeating usually followed by self-induced vomiting or laxative or diuretic abuse, and is often accompanied by guilt and depression.

Anorexia- a serious disorder in eating behavior primarily of young women in their teens and early twenties that is characterized especially by a pathological fear of weight gain leading to faulty eating patters, malnutrition, and usually excessive weight loss.

Anabolic Steroids- more correctly referred to as anabolic-androgenic steroids, are a class of drugs typically taken by athletes to increase muscle mass, strength and endurance or to improve their appearance.

Peers- those who are in the same group or on the same social level.

Discussion Ideas

Ask students to think about names that people have used to label them or other students based on their looks. Which of the labels are hurtful? Which labels make students feel stressed- like they have to live up to an expectation? Are labels a healthy or unhealthy part of society? Are all labels bad? Ask students to explain their answers.

Ask students what shows they watch on television. What do the people featured on those shows look like? Are they prettier or more muscular than average? How do these images make students feel?

Suggested Activities

Read the following situation to students:

- You have red hair. You go to a new school where everyone hates people with red hair. They think redheads are ugly and unintelligent.

Note ask students to imagine themselves in one of the situations. Have them write a journal entry describing what a typical day would be like for them. What do the situations described have to do with cliques and stereotypes?

Ask students to bring in a few magazine ads featuring attractive people. Have them pass the ads around the class. What aspects of the ads might be fake or "digitally doctored"? Are the people in the ads typical of most people? How can we become more aware of the subtle manipulation that takes place in advertising? If your class has access to a computer, scanner and photography software, scan a few of the pictures and make some digital changes of your own. With students' help make the people in the ads more realistic.

Ask students to discuss the word "stereotype." What does it mean to them? What are some examples of stereotypes that people around them believe and support? What stereotypes are related to beauty and body image? Today, many stereotypes are being challenged. What are some of the ways that people are challenging stereotypes of beauty?

How can students help their schoolmates to be more accepting of each other? What small things can they do to make everyone feel pretty, appreciated, respected and welcome?

Encourage each student to make a list of ideas. Pool the ideas together and create a master list for the entire class. Record the master list on a piece of poster board and display it on the wall. From time to time, talk about students who have tried items on the list. What were the results?

Additional Titles from AIMS Multimedia

2256	<i>"The Teen Files: The Truth About Drinking"</i>
2279	<i>"The Teen Files: The Truth About Hate"</i>
2343	<i>"The Teen Files: The Truth About Sex"</i>
9844	<i>"Suicide: Call for Help"</i>
8904	<i>"Eating Disorders: When Food Hurts"</i>
8158	<i>"Bulking Up: The Dangers of Steroids"</i>

Length

- 21 minutes

Subject areas

- Values and Self Esteem

Audience Level

- Junior High/High School

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 Discussion Guide

THE TEEN FILES: **The Truth About Body Image**

Objectives

- To learn more about the pressures of high school life and what causes those pressures.
- To examine the dangers of diet pills and steroids.
- To examine how today's image of the "perfect" body affects teens.
- To practice using acceptance and respect and honest communication in daily interactions.
- To focus on what we have in common, not on what makes us different.

