MediaSharp

Analyzing Tobacco and Alcohol Messages

LEADER'S GUIDE

Acknowledgements

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to introduce you to *MediaSharp*, an important new tool for helping young people make healthy, life-affirming choices about tobacco and alcohol.

As someone working with youth on a regular basis, you understand that today's media play an increasingly strong role in transmitting values, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and social norms.

As a member of the media world, I find this an exciting, if bewildering time. We have access to more information about our world than ever before. The newest media developments invite us to be interactive rather than passive users of media. In this fast-forward environment, we owe it to our youth (and ourselves) to provide them with the skills necessary to assess, analyze, and understand the influence of media in their lives. These critical skills will be increasingly important as young people enjoy greater access to tremendous volumes of information and entertainment through countless media outlets.
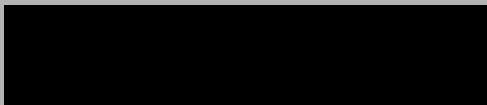
Achieving media literacy is a complex undertaking aimed at ensuring the ability of consumers to make sound choices in today's ever-changing marketplace of products and ideas. Thankfully, there are numerous individuals and organizations dedicated to championing media literacy education. Many concerned educators, youth group leaders, pediatricians, and other health professionals, like yourself, are already working to help youth become critical consumers of media.

This guide focuses on the lifestyle and behavioral choices portrayed and promoted in the media, with specific emphasis on tobacco and alcohol use. Because of the tremendous diversity in the media, its influence on health behaviors can be both positive and negative. This guide is dedicated to providing a forum in which to explore the tremendous variety of media messages about tobacco and alcohol, both directly (through advertising and promotions) and indirectly (through representations in movies and television programs).

The time has indeed come for us to sit down with young people and assess the nature of today's media and their relationship to it. I believe youngsters will explore these issues with eagerness if we come to them honestly and openly, recognizing the ever-changing youth culture as legitimate, challenging, and fruitful. We must encourage their exploration of issues from many perspectives and allow them to discover for themselves how media can distort and manipulate as well as inform and entertain.

There is a great deal to learn about ourselves in this process. Though this guide focuses specifically on tobacco and alcohol, I hope you will discover that conversing with the media is useful for many other issues affecting our youth: other drugs, sexual behavior, violence, broader social concerns, and politics, to name just a few. I wish you well in your continuing efforts to nurture a strong, critically capable citizenry.

Sincerely,

Bill Moyers

MediaSharp
Analyzing Tobacco and Alcohol Messages

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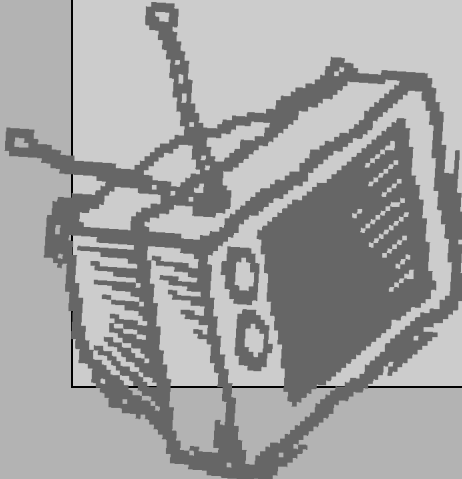
Module 1: *Ready. Set. Action!* should be taught before teaching any of the other individual modules.

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...heir exposure ...o and alcohol ...in ...ent media, ...e positive ...ive role models ...co and alcohol ...n occur in ...ent media, and ...ow entertain- ...gramming ...e" and ...e" tobacco ...ol.	• understand how "news" is defined, • identify different perspectives presented in news stories about tobacco and alcohol in each of the major media—television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and • identify direct and indirect tobacco and alcohol promotion in news media.	• understand the total range of tobacco and alcohol media messages to which they are exposed and • be able to identify "glamorization" and "normalization" across all media formats.
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MediaSharp

Overview

Welcome to *MediaSharp*— a guide for educators, youth group leaders, pediatricians and other health professionals who work with or care for youth ages 11–14. The purpose of *MediaSharp* is to help young people critically assess how media normalize, glamorize, and create role models for unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors. This effort supports the growing national emphasis on **media literacy** —the ability to "read" and produce media messages.

The skills and knowledge emphasized here can be applied to a number of risk behaviors (including sexual activity, violence, nutrition, and physical activity); however, *MediaSharp* looks specifically at tobacco and alcohol, two of the most widely promoted products in the world.

This focus is timely and vital. Alcohol remains the number one drug of choice among youth,[1] and every single day another 3,000 youth become regular smokers.[2] More than one-third of these young smokers will eventually die from their addiction.[3] The short- and long-term costs of these behaviors are substantial, both to young people themselves and to their communities.

> ## Media Literacy —
> *learning to "read" and produce media messages.*

As individuals who influence youth, you play a critical role. By teaching young people to "read" media messages, you can help them resist messages that encourage and reinforce use of tobacco and alcohol. You will also be helping to prepare them to make choices for a healthy life by providing them with critical skills for being smart, thoughtful consumers throughout their lives.

This guide will help you accomplish these goals. Specifically *MediaSharp* and its accompanying video are designed to provide you assistance by offering youth:

- a forum for critically analyzing the messages and techniques used to normalize and glamorize tobacco and alcohol use;

- activities to build media production skills; and

- opportunities to learn from their own experiences.

The glossary on pages 95-96 will help define key terms used throughout this guide. Each key term is bold-faced in its initial use.

Normalizing and Glamorizing

Normalization of tobacco and alcohol use is portraying the use of these products as a routine, natural part of everyday activities. **Glamorization** associates tobacco and alcohol use with desirable qualities such as popularity, success, attractiveness, independence, maturity, fun, celebration, relaxation, and an escape from reality.

The power of these associations is strengthened significantly by the high **frequency** with which they appear in every medium, including television, radio, the Internet, magazines, music, movies, billboards, and in-store promotions at convenience stores commonly frequented by youth.

MediaSharp

Because young people spend so much time with the media (teens ages 12-17 spend 21 hours a week watching television[5]), these compelling tobacco and alcohol messages reach them easily and often. Moreover, as youth strive to develop a valued self-image and establish their independence, appeals based on normalcy and glamour are especially strong.[6]

Media Message Formats

MediaSharp provides a structured approach to analyzing media promotion of alcohol and tobacco products by focusing on the key message formats which directly and indirectly encourage use:

- Marketing
- Entertainment
- News

As you will learn, these are highly interrelated formats, each joined by the common concern of earning monetary profits. **Marketing** seeks profits through higher sales of tobacco and alcohol products. Entertainment and news media make profits by providing companies with opportunities to promote their products to consumers through **advertising** and other promotional strategies. Marketing, entertainment, and news media portray use of tobacco and alcohol as routine and attractive, thereby normalizing and glamorizing these products.

Activities

Two types of suggested activities are provided for each of the three media message formats:

- *Media Analysis* activities help youth understand how the media *normalize* and *glamorize* tobacco and alcohol use. They also provide opportunities to "decode" or analyze messages that promote use of these products.

- *Media Production* activities increase youth mastery of analysis skills by having them create their own messages that *deglamorize* tobacco and alcohol and *glamorize* healthy behavior and lifestyle alternatives.

Each section provides a clear statement of objectives, background information, talking points, estimated time requirements, and activities. In many instances, you'll also find suggestions for expanding each activity. *You are strongly encouraged to adapt all suggested activities to your specific situation.*

Guiding Principles

MediaSharp can be easily integrated into existing curricula and youth programs. For educators, it applies to national health education standards and school health education guidelines for the prevention of tobacco use (see left sidebar). Additionally, the skills emphasized here—critical thinking, analysis, effective communication, and problem-solving—apply across the curricula, making *MediaSharp* a useful unit for interdisciplinary courses for 5th and 6th grades and middle and high school programs.

"Despite the frequently cited negative influences of media on youth, never have the media had more potential than they do today to affect positively the lives of young adolescents...they can also be powerful tools for teaching a wide range of cognitive and social skills. They can promote compassionate understanding, nonviolent problem-solving, and decent intergroup relations. They can portray human diversity while highlighting shared human experience. They can provide models of healthy development in childhood and early adolescence that increase public understanding of what it takes to raise competent youth."

— 1995 CARNEGIE REPORT ON ADOLESCENTS

1 *MediaSharp* does not assume that media are inherently bad and manipulative. We get most of our information from media, which can promote healthy as well as unhealthy lifestyles.[9] In addition to alerting us to products and services that can make life easier and more enjoyable, media provide us with many benefits, including entertainment, relaxation, information, drama, excitement, and laughter. Rather than deny these benefits, *MediaSharp* works to provide an approach to recognize media's potential and shortcomings.

2 Most importantly, *MediaSharp* seeks to meet youth on their own ground, acknowledging and respecting their interests, needs, and values. *It does not try to tell them what to do, think, or feel about the media, or even about tobacco and alcohol.* We cannot make decisions for young people, but we can give them the facts so they can make informed choices.

3 Media education works best if you focus on the media that youth use and value and not attack or reject their media preferences. The suggested activities in *MediaSharp* have been developed for maximum flexibility so you can adjust them to the needs of youth. Team learning is an important way to build on youth's natural media interests and involvement. You can extend this involvement by encouraging them to share relevant media examples, such as favorite music videos, advertisements, and promotions.

4 Finally, it is critical that media education remains current. The short life span of any single message and the rapid evolution of media companies and technologies result in fast-moving targets.

You are strongly encouraged to visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Tobacco Information and Prevention Source Page on the Internet: **http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco** and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's (CSAP) Web site: **http://www.health.org** prior to beginning *MediaSharp*. These resources also will allow you to keep *MediaSharp* activities updated and relevant. Other helpful media education resources and Internet sites are provided on pages 93-94.

MediaSharp Guiding Principles

- Reflect that media are not inherently bad,
- Meet youth on their own ground,
- Focus on media that youth use and value, and
- Stay current with changes in media content and technologies.

Youth, Media, Tobacco, Alcohol

Analyzing media is a complex task. The media are such a big part of our daily lives that it can be difficult to step back and assess their influence. To simplify this task, the following is a basic road map for examining how tobacco and alcohol are promoted through the media.

Youth, Tobacco, and Alcohol

Adolescents face many developmental challenges, including:

- adjusting to changing body images,

- achieving strong, meaningful relationships with their peers,

- developing a sense of identity, and

- establishing independence.[10]

The choices youth make in responding to these challenges will significantly shape how they see themselves and their world. Anything or anyone who can ease the transition to emotional independence and a valued self-identity is particularly attractive to young people. The most persuasive tobacco and alcohol messages play directly to these needs, promising fun, popularity, relaxation, and escape.

Tobacco and alcohol are also seen as "forbidden pleasures" and their use as a "rite of passage" into the adult world.[11] Many youth also believe that tobacco and alcohol represent low-risk forms of rebellion against adult authority, a belief that is encouraged by adults who argue that these are less dangerous than other drugs.[12] This "relative risk" argument, however, ignores the very real and fatal costs associated with tobacco and alcohol use.

Key Facts about Tobacco

Tobacco kills more people every year than AIDS, car crashes, suicide, alcohol, illegal drugs, fires, and murders combined.[13] The average age at which young people start smoking is 14, but many begin much younger.[14] Youth who smoke or use chewing tobacco become addicted just like adults. Though those who start often express the intention to quit "eventually," they typically find it hard to stop.[15] In addition, tobacco use is highly associated with the use of stronger, more dangerous drugs and other risk behaviors.[16] While some youth view spit tobacco (or dip) as a safe alternative to cigarettes, it is not. In fact, its use is associated with cancer and can lead to disfigurement and death.[17] For more information, see *Teens and Tobacco: Fact Not Fiction,* page 18.

Key Facts About Alcohol

The average youth takes his or her first drink between ages 12 and 13,[18] usually without any understanding of alcohol's intoxicating effects or the relative strengths of different alcoholic beverages.[19] While alcohol is not generally as addictive as tobacco, its consequences can be immediate and deadly. Alcohol-related car crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers and young adults.[20] The additional costs of long-term disability, higher insurance rates, and medical expenses reach into the billions of dollars.[21] Young people who drink are also more likely than their non-drinking peers to experience serious problems such as depression, suicide, delinquency, and violent behavior.[22] For more information, see *Teens and Alcohol: Fact Not Fiction,* page 19.

Normalization

Presentations of alcohol and/or tobacco as a routine part of social situations.

Glamorization

Presentations of tobacco and alcohol use as glamorous—sexy, romantic, popular.

Young people smoke, dip, and drink for a variety of reasons, including being influenced by peers, family, and the media.[23] However, there is no ignoring the intensity with which tobacco and alcohol companies promote their products as normal and glamorous, as ways to alternatively *celebrate* life's joys and *escape* its frustrations. The suggestive power of these messages is particularly evident in that the major benefits of these products as perceived by youth are exactly those portrayed so frequently in the media (see box at right).

By the time children enter middle school, they have well-developed patterns of media use. They have spent tens of thousands of hours watching television, listening to the radio, watching movies and videos, and playing video and computer games as well as "surfing" the Internet. Even teenagers who enjoy increased freedom of movement and activity outside the home continue to be heavy media users, spending more than 40 hours a week watching television and videos; listening to the radio, CDs, and cassette tapes; and reading magazines, newspapers, and books.[24]

As youth enter adolescence, media help them define who they are, what they want to become, and the nature of their world. Today's media meet youth head-on. They teach without preaching and provide acceptance, encouragement, excitement, and fun, such as the ads on this and the next page demonstrate. They show a range of lifestyles and behaviors to choose from and indicate which are valued, desirable, important, and worthwhile, as reflected by the ads on pages 14, 15, 16, and 22 depicting humor, being cool, tough and/or sexy. In short, they demonstrate what is normal and what is glamorous. No wonder, then, that the media are so powerful a force in the lives of youth.

Because of the power and presence of media, it is essential to help youth understand what they do and don't tell us—to help them distinguish fiction from fact. In the case of tobacco and alcohol, a *lot* of facts are left out, and a *lot* of fiction is created.

The Five Most Commonly Perceived "Benefits" of Tobacco and Alcohol[25]

1. **Use Is a Rite of Passage** — a way to enter adulthood, be grown up.

2. **Use by Successful, Attractive People** — a way to be popular, glamorous, sexy, charming, tough, independent, strong.

3. **Use Is Normal** — a sense that "everybody's doing it."

4. **Use Is Safe or Not Harmful** — a sense that it can't be that bad or so many people wouldn't do it, or that use isn't dangerous in moderation for just a few years.

5. **Use Is Relaxing in Social Settings** — a way to feel at ease in a group or a crowd; to relax, escape, and celebrate.

"Collectively, the various media are among the most pervasive influences in the lives of young adolescents. Media literacy education provides the opportunity for young adolescents to be active, critical consumers of media's messages. Together with families, community organizations, and schools, media-savvy adolescents may shape their own media environment in the next century."

— 1995 CARNEGIE REPORT ON ADOLESCENTS [26]

Types of Media

Prior to exploring exactly how tobacco and alcohol are promoted, it is useful to examine some basic aspects of media. All media are defined and shaped by their production techniques. Understanding these techniques is critical to analyzing media messages in both print and electronic media.

JUST ADD BACARDI

© 1996 Bacardi-Martini U.S.A., Inc.

Print media use printed text and photographs to inform and entertain. This covers a tremendous variety of books, magazines, newspapers, catalogs, brochures, billboards, point-of-purchase displays, in-store advertising, and even **brand** names or logos on T-shirts and other products.

Print media rely on images and words to convey their messages. They lack moving images or sound, but capture attention and convey excitement through use of *color, lighting, layout, type styles,* and *carefully crafted wording.* The clear advantage of print media is that they are tangible products, able to be possessed and reused more easily than electronic media.

Electronic media's predominant forms include television, radio, recorded music, videos, film, and computers (computer games, online communication services, and Internet/World Wide Web connections). All of these media provide news and entertainment, typically supported through advertising.

Electronic media messages are more complex than print media because they provide dynamic images and sound. *Movement, setting, music, dialogue, camera angles*, and *editing techniques* are important elements used to create attractive, interesting, and compelling media messages.

Tobacco and alcohol companies, seeking to sell their products, rely on every form of media to normalize and glamorize them. Every possible production tech-nique is used to attract attention and create awareness of, interest in, and, ultimately, use of their particular brands.

Major Message Formats

Normalizing and glamorizing tobacco and alcohol in the media occur in three critical message formats—marketing, entertainment, and news.

Marketing *is the most obvious and intentional* form of tobacco and alcohol **promotion**. Drawing on a host of strategies (advertising, promotional contests and giveaways, and **sponsorship** of community and sporting events), tobacco and alcohol companies spend huge sums of money every year to surround us with images of these products as healthy, fun, and exhilarating. The tobacco industry spends $6 billion a year on promoting its products;[27] the alcohol industry spends another $4 billion.[28] The stated purpose of these promotions is to persuade current adult users of tobacco and alcohol to switch brands. However, these messages easily reach and influence young people who develop (1) strong brand awareness, (2) beliefs that "everybody" uses tobacco and alcohol, and (3) perceptions that tobacco and alcohol use are associated with personal success and attractiveness.[29]

Entertainment media include television and radio programming, movies, recorded and live music, magazines, books, games, and computers. These media serve two critical functions: (1) to provide audiences with entertaining content and (2) to provide companies with opportunities to promote products and services to these audiences.

Promotion of tobacco and alcohol use in entertainment media occurs in two ways. First, these media are heavily used to

advertise tobacco and alcohol—particularly beer and wine. Second, tobacco and alcohol are regularly used in entertainment programs, particularly in television programs, films, and music.[30] These portrayals are more subtle than advertising because they occur *within* a **storyline** or song and commonly are used as props to establish characters as tough, independent, attractive, and mature.

The line between entertainment and marketing is blurred by the practice of **product placement** in which companies arrange to have their specific brands used in a particular TV program or film. Such placement may be arranged and paid for through brokers or through donating products for use by set designers.[31] The use of brand name products by popular media characters, as well as the actors who portray them, builds upon the well-established practice of celebrity product endorsements.

News media —primarily television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and computers—are a primary source of information about our community and the wider world. Because of this, it is necessary to understand how news media impact our perceptions of tobacco and alcohol use.

In general, news media are the least obvious sources of tobacco and alcohol normalization and glamorization messages. This is largely due to the fact that news media cover more of the negative consequences of tobacco and alcohol use than do marketing and entertainment media. The more "balanced" nature of reporting is important, but news media can contribute to the normalization and glamorization of tobacco and alcohol use in at least three ways.

First, news media focus on the rare more than the routine. As such, the "routine" nature of tobacco and alcohol-related illnesses, injuries, and deaths make them less "newsworthy." An airplane crash that kills 400 people will get a lot more coverage than the fact that smoking kills more than 400,000 Americans every year. Tobacco and alcohol issues are typically covered only when:

- a new study is published on the health effects or consequences of tobacco or alcohol use,

- a new study is published showing changes (either up or down) in rates of use,

- a national or local celebrity gets involved in or is affected by the issues, or

- a court case related to tobacco or alcohol begins or ends.

Second, the profit interests of news media may influence the amount and nature of news stories about tobacco and alcohol.

© 1996 R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.

MEN ARE FROM EARTH.
WOMEN ARE FROM EARTH.

END OF STORY.

JOHNNIE WALKER RED LABEL
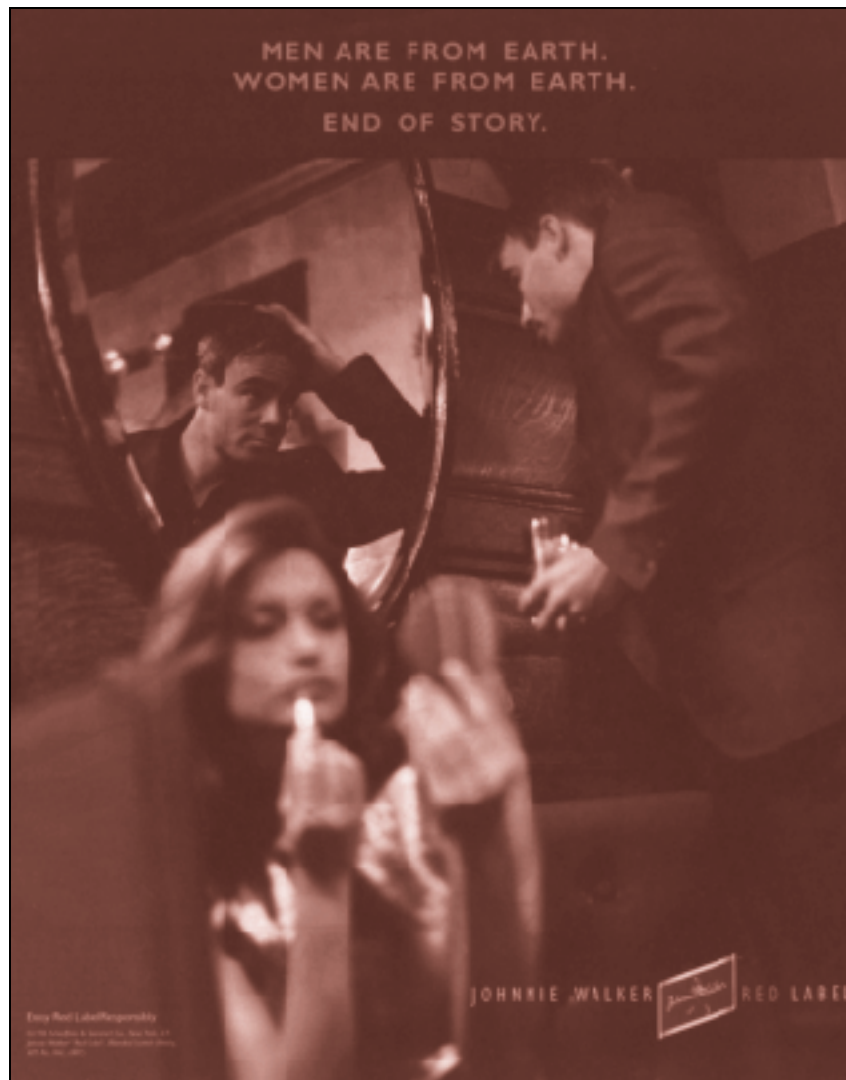
Negative coverage of these products or industries may result in the loss of important advertising budgets. In rare cases, it also may lead to costly lawsuits or threats of lawsuits by tobacco and alcohol companies.

Third, the news media contribute to the association of tobacco and alcohol with celebrations when they broadcast live from smoke-filled bars on New Year's Eve and cover champagne celebrations in the locker rooms of championship sports teams. In addition, sports **footage** during newscasts may include tobacco and alcohol product logos that are displayed in sports arenas and on player uniforms and sporting equipment (such as NASCAR automobiles).

Questioning the Media

Decoding media messages can be complex yet ultimately engaging and fun, much like a detective sifting through clues at a crime scene. To sort through all the data at the crime, a detective follows standard procedures for collecting, recording, and storing evidence. Media analysis follows a similar set of procedures using seven critical questions to analyze every media message (see next page). Each question draws attention to the underlying purposes and contexts of media messages, allowing us to see through the glitz and power of messages that promote tobacco and alcohol use.

The Seven Critical Media Questions

Knowing the answers to these questions is key to understanding media messages.

1 Who is communicating and why?

Every message is communicated for a reason—to entertain, inform, and/or persuade. However, the basic motive behind most media programs is to profit through the sale of advertising space and sponsorships.

2 Who owns, profits from, and pays for media messages?

Media messages are owned. They are designed to yield results, provide profits, and pay for themselves. Both news and entertainment programming try to increase listenership or viewership to attract advertising dollars. Movies also seek to increase box-office receipts. Understanding the profit motive is key to analyzing media messages.

3 How are media messages communicated?

Every message is communicated through sound, video, text, and/or photography. Messages are enhanced through camera angles, special effects, editing, and/or music. Analyzing how these features are used in any given message is critical to understanding how it attempts to persuade, entertain, or inform.

4 Who receives media messages and what sense is made of them?

Messages are filtered through the "interpretive screens" of our beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors. Identifying the target audience for a given message and knowing its "filters" and the way in which it interprets media messages help make you media sharp!

5 What are the intended or underlying purposes and whose point of view is behind the message?

Behind every message is a purpose and point of view. The advertiser's purpose is more direct than the program producer's, though both may seek to entertain us. Understanding their purposes and knowing WHOSE point of view is being expressed and WHY is crucial to being media sharp.

6 What is NOT being said and why?

Because messages are limited in both time and purpose, rarely are all the details provided. Identifying the issues, topics, and perspectives that are NOT included can often reveal a great deal about the purposes of media messages. In fact, this may be the most significant question that can uncover answers to the other questions.

7 Is there consistency both within and across media?

Do the political slant, tone, local/national/international perspective, and depth of coverage change across media or messages? Because media messages tell only part of the story and different media have unique production features, it helps to evaluate multiple messages on the same issue. This allows you to identify multiple points of view, some of which may be missing in any single message or medium. This is typically referred to as the "**multi-source rule**."

■ Every day in the United States, 6,000 young people try smoking. More than 3,000 become regular smokers—that's more than one million new smokers a year.[a]*

■ The prevalence of cigarette smoking among young people has remained virtually unchanged over the past decade, and the most recent data show an actual increase in teen smoking. In 1995, 21.6% of high school seniors smoked daily—up from 17.2% in 1992. Between 1991 and 1995, the percentage of eighth graders who smoked increased 34%.[b]

■ Spit (smokeless) tobacco use among youth is a growing problem. Data from recent school-based surveys indicate that about one in every five male students in 8th through 12th grades uses spit tobacco.[c] Spit tobacco can cause gum disease and cancer of the mouth, pharynx, esophagus, and pancreas.[d] It may also increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.[e]

■ Each year, more than 947 million packs of cigarettes and 26 million containers of spit tobacco are sold illegally to youth younger than 18. These products account for $1.26 billion in annual sales and generate $221 million yearly in tobacco industry profits.[f]

■ It is estimated that young people have a 73% success rate in buying tobacco over the counter and a 96% success rate in buying cigarettes through a vending machine. Three-fourths of 8th graders and 90% of 10th graders say it is fairly or very easy to get cigarettes.[g,h]

■ Several studies have found nicotine to be addictive like heroin and cocaine.[i, j, k]

■ In a government survey, about three-fourths of daily cigarette smokers (73.8%) and daily spit tobacco users (74.2%) reported that they continue to use tobacco because it is really hard for them to quit. About 93% of daily cigarette smokers and daily spit tobacco users who previously tried to quit reported at least one symptom of nicotine withdrawal. Young people who try to quit using tobacco suffer the same withdrawal symptoms as adults who try to quit.[j, k]

■ For the tobacco industry to preserve its market status, it must attract 2 million new smokers each year.[l] In 1993, tobacco companies spent an estimated $6 billion—or more than $16 million a day—to advertise and promote cigarettes.[m] The same year, an additional $119 million was spent to advertise and promote spit tobacco products.[n] About 90% of all new smokers are young people ages 18 and younger.[o] A government survey found that about 86% of adolescent smokers who bought their own cigarettes preferred Marlboro, Camel, or Newport cigarettes—the most heavily marketed brands.[p]

■ Teen smoking is one of the few early warning signs we have in public health. Teens who smoke are three times more likely than nonsmokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine. Smoking is also associated with a host of other risk behaviors, such as fighting and engaging in unprotected sex.[q]

■ Each year, more than 400,000 Americans die prematurely as a result of tobacco use—more than those who die from AIDS, homicide, suicide, drug abuse, car crashes, and fire combined. This number represents one of every five deaths in the United States. These premature deaths also represent a yearly loss of 5 million years of life.[r]

* See Endnotes, "Tobacco References," on page 98.

MediaSharp

TEENS AND ALCOHOL:
FACT NOT FICTION [* (a)]

- The average youth who drinks is 16 years old, in the 10th grade, and took his/her first drink between the ages of 12 and 13.

- Fifty-one percent of junior and senior high school students have had at least one drink within the past year. Nearly 40% of all young people report drinking weekly.

- Junior and senior high school students drink 35% of all wine coolers sold in the United States and 1.1 billion cans of beer each year.

- More than 5 million young people have "binged" (consumed five or more drinks in a row). Nearly 500,000 report binging almost every week, consuming an average of 15 drinks weekly.

- More than 3 million young people drink alone; more than 4 million drink when they are upset; and nearly 4 million drink because they are bored.

- Many young people receive their information about alcohol from unreliable sources. More than 4 million learn about alcohol from their friends; more than 5 million say they "just picked up" their knowledge without anyone's help.

- Nearly two-thirds of young people report being able to buy alcohol in stores. They use fake identification and/or buy from stores known to sell to young people or which employ young clerks. Friends, parties, and stores are the main sources for alcohol.

- Young people lack essential knowledge about alcohol and its effects. Nationwide, 5.6 million young people are unsure about the legal age to purchase alcohol. A third of all youth do not understand the intoxicating effects of alcohol, nor the relative strengths of different alcoholic beverages. More than 2.6 million do not know a person can die from an overdose of alcohol.

- Young people accept rides from friends who have been drinking.

- Parents, friends, and alcoholic beverage advertisements influence youth's attitudes about alcohol.

- In 1994, the alcohol industry spent approximately $1 billion in alcohol advertising, of which $708.7 million was spent by beer marketers. In contrast, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's 1993 budget was only $176 million, used primarily for basic and clinical research.

- Brewers and beer distributors spend millions of dollars each year sponsoring college events including sports events, rock concerts, and spring break promotions. In 1993, brewers spent an estimated $407 million for sponsorships of sports, music, cultural, and other special events.

MediaSharp

Getting MediaSharper

T he following steps are provided to help you plan the best way to use *MediaSharp.*

Implementation Steps

STEP 1 Assess the time, skills, and production resources available in your community. This includes such organizations as your local television and radio stations, public service stations, advertising agencies, and university or college media departments. Whatever your resources, you can incorporate media education into your current activities. For example, you can invite a local news anchor to speak to your social studies class, have students design counter ads in health class, write and act out a talk show in language arts, or organize a teen news or advertising team for after-school fun.

If you are a pediatrician or other health professional, you can speak at a PTA or other school function, provide the handouts included in this guide to your patients, discuss the guide's core messages with parents and their children, and host *MediaSharp* seminars. If you have a Web page, you can link it with CDC's media literacy or kids' tobacco home page. Further, you can have copies of *"The Seven Critical Media Questions"* available in your waiting room for parents and patients to read.

STEP 2 Familiarize yourself with the five learning modules of *Media-Sharp.* The *Learning Modules Grid* provides a brief overview of each module, related activities, objectives, and suggested content areas in which *MediaSharp* can be taught. You should particularly focus on the **Media Mapping** activities. These activities allow

youth to identify the amount and type of tobacco and alcohol messages that reach them every day through marketing, entertainment, and news media. Completion of all four mapping activities will provide youth with a comprehensive picture of the pervasive presence and appeal of messages that promote tobacco and alcohol use in their community.

STEP 3 Decide which specific *MediaSharp* modules you will conduct. If you do not have the time to implement all five, consider the following suggestions:

- **Coordinate *MediaSharp* with others.** If you are a teacher, give the modules to teachers of different subjects. This allows the modules to be taught in many subject areas, reduces the work for any one teacher, and provides more multidisciplinary, concentrated learning. If you are a youth group leader, explore a cooperative approach with other youth groups or with educators at a local middle or high school.

  If you are a pediatrician or other health professional, work with schools or community groups to incorporate the modules into your talks with school children about alcohol and tobacco use. You also can use the modules in your seminars.

- **Implement the first two modules**—*Ready. Set. ACTION!* (page 25) and *It's All in the Marketing* (page 39). The first module provides youth with

basic skills required for media analysis and production. The second allows youth to practice these skills by focusing on marketing messages which are often easier for youth to "decode" than the more subtle messages in entertainment and news media.

- **Focus on media and message formats youth pr efer.** This gains immediate interest, automatically focuses on how youth currently interact with media, and provides the most impact in the shortest time.

- **Focus only on the messages in a *single medium* (such as TV or magazines).** This will allow youth to study how tobacco and alcohol are presented across the three media message formats (marketing, entertainment, and news), enabling them to examine the nature and effect of supporting and conflicting messages.

- **Focus on a *single message across dif ferent media formats*** *(such as a contest that is promoted on TV, radio, billboards, magazines, and store displays).* This provides more time for an in-depth assessment and places greater emphasis on understanding how different media each contribute to the normalization and glamorization of tobacco and alcohol use.

STEP 4 For media mapping activities, think about which areas in your community will

be easiest for youth to map. They may be the neighborhoods where youth live or a popular area in your community where youth spend their time. Key points to consider are (a) the ability of youth to map the area with little or no adult assistance and (b) the concentration of tobacco and alcohol messages there. Locations can be selected in advance, but ideally you should involve youth in making the choice.

It is important to be sure the selected neighborhood is large enough to include a range of media and messages, but not so large that youth cannot easily complete the mapping assignment. The neighborhood may be as small as a 10- to 20-block area in cities or a 10-mile area in rural regions. If you select a larger area, you may need to solicit parents'/guardians' assistance.

Alternatively, you can focus on only the messages youth encounter on their way to and from school, at youth group meetings, while shopping, or in their homes. You may also consider arranging a field trip with youth for the purpose of completing the mapping exercise.

Mapping activities can be done in teams or as a class/group. However, it is useful and more efficient to *assign half the class/group to focus on tobacco messages and the other half on alcohol messages.*

STEP 5   Review the video and discussion questions. Following a brief introduction that defines the concept of media literacy education, Part I provides examples of persuasive tobacco and alcohol messages. Part II showcases youth-produced counter ads which present a more questioning, critical reading of tobacco and alcohol messages. The guide contains suggested areas where each video segment may be useful. Decide where you feel the video segments will best complement the *MediaSharp* activities you choose to implement. The video may also be good to show to parents/community groups interested in youth media education.

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Strengthening the Effectiveness of *MediaSharp*

The dynamic and ever-changing nature of the media ultimately requires community involvement. In particular, parents, community organizations, pediatricians and other health professionals, and media groups with access to new information technologies can be tapped to increase the reach and effectiveness of *Media-Sharp*. Such efforts also ensure that media education continues beyond a single classroom or group activity.

Partnering with Parents

Parents and guardians should be invited to participate in their children's exploration of the media. This will help reinforce and sustain media literacy education at home. To facilitate this invitation, we have provided a *Letter to Parent(s)/Guardian(s)* and a *Media Tips for the Home* handout that can be sent home with youth.

Connecting with the Community

Nurturing the next generation of safe, healthy, media-savvy citizens is everybody's business. Reaching out to others in your community will broaden the media-learning partnership you forge with parents. These partnership activities include:

- **Developing joint efforts between youth groups and schools** to reinforce learning. Identify potential partners such as the PTA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, the YMCA and YWCA, and local chapters of MADD and SADD. Participating in a wider community partnership will make it easier to bring *MediaSharp* knowledge and skills to youth in your community without demanding too much from any one person or organization. Also explore whether there are local media literacy groups in your community. The national media literacy education organization sites listed in the appendix (page 93) can help you identify such partners.

- **Tapping media professionals in your communities** —reporters, television producers, copywriters for advertising agencies—who can enrich your *MediaSharp* activities by providing "real world" media insights. Their organizations can also sustain the momentum of *MediaSharp* by publicizing, supporting, and showcasing youth media productions.

- **Involving pediatricians in educational and community efforts** —As doctors who are concerned about the overall health and well-being of children and adolescents, pediatricians appreciate how media can affect children's development and behavior. They also have knowledge about children's substance use. Involve pediatricians in your media education efforts by inviting them to speak to your school, youth, community, or parent groups. They enjoy working with children, and their regular contact with families provides yet another avenue by which to expand the impact of *MediaSharp* messages.

And the Wider World. . .

You'll also find a list of key references and resources in the back of this guide (pages 93-94). These include books, articles, and experts you can consult. The list also provides online information resources available through the World Wide Web, including more *MediaSharp* information and activity suggestions. See CDC's Tobacco and Prevention Source Page at http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco and CSAP's Web site at http://www.health.org.