



## **Middle School Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Program**

### **Introduction**

*Media Aware-Sexual Health (MASH)* is a comprehensive sexual health, media literacy education program designed for use with middle school students (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades). *MASH* aims to help adolescents become aware of a less conscious influence on sexual behavior choices (i.e., media messages) and develop critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate media messaging.

This overview provides a summary of each of the 10 lessons, along with their goals and objectives. If you have any questions or would like to view the curriculum, please contact your child's health teacher or Linda Rogers, Grant Project Director, at 704-832-2550. Thank you!

## **Program Overview**

### **Lesson 1: Introduction to Media Literacy and Sexual Health Decisions**

#### **Summary:**

This lesson provides students with an introduction to basic media literacy skills and to the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of media messages. Students will learn the key terms used in the field of media literacy and explore how media are related to sexual health decisions.

#### **Goals:**

1. To increase understanding of the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of media messages, especially those about sex and romantic relationships.
2. To increase deliberate, healthy decision making about sexual behavior and romantic relationships.

#### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the possible effects of peers, family, and media on romantic relationships and sexual behaviors.
2. Describe the pervasiveness of persuasive media messages in adolescents' lives.
3. Analyze media messages to identify their sources and goals.

### **Lesson 2: Target Audience and Gender Role Stereotypes**

#### **Summary:**

This lesson examines how gender role stereotypes are used to attract target audiences. Students will learn to identify gender role stereotypes in the media and reflect on the possible effects of gender role stereotyping.

#### **Goals:**

1. To increase self-acceptance and the acceptance of others by broadening students definitions of gender roles and decreasing their acceptance of gender role stereotypes.
2. To reduce perceived similarity to and realism of media messages, particularly those that perpetuate gender role stereotypes.

#### **Objectives:**

Student will be able to:

1. Identify common gender role stereotypes regarding conceptions of traditional masculine and feminine behavior, including those portrayed in media messages.
2. Analyze media messages to identify their target audiences and depictions of gender and sex.
3. Explain the possible effects of media messages that contain gender role stereotypes on adolescents and their romantic relationships.
4. Explain why it is not necessary for a person to fit stereotypical gender roles and why tolerance of diversity is beneficial.



### **Lesson 3: Media Production Techniques and Self-Image**

#### Summary:

This lesson helps students explore physical appearances and lifestyles that are portrayed as “ideal” in the media and compare them to what is realistic and healthy for people in the real world. Students will also learn how images in the media are manipulated using media production techniques (i.e. photo retouching) and identify that these images are often unrealistic, unhealthy, and unobtainable.

#### Goals:

1. To increase self-acceptance.
2. To decrease the perceived realism of physical appearances and lifestyles presented in media messages.

#### Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Assess the realism of media messages containing celebrities and fictional teenager characters.
2. Identify media production techniques that are used to create media messages.
3. Analyze the accuracy of information presented on the Internet, specifically information presented on social networking sites.
4. Explain the possible effects of unrealistic or inaccurate media messages on adolescents and their romantic relationships.

### **Lesson 4: Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships**

#### Summary:

This lesson helps students understand the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy romantic relationships and identify these relationships in media messages. Students will discover that media messages sometimes glamorize unhealthy romantic relationships and dating violence, and will practice locating local resources that can help them cope with unhealthy relationships.

#### Goals:

1. To increase positive expectations about how to be treated and how to treat others in a romantic relationship.
2. To decrease perceived similarity to media messages that glamorize unhealthy romantic relationships and dating violence.

#### Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Describe personal desires and expectations in friendship and romantic relationships.
2. Contrast the characteristics of healthy romantic relationships as compared to unhealthy romantic relationships.
3. Analyze media messages about romantic relationships to determine whether these messages depict healthy or unhealthy romantic relationships.



4. Explain types of dating violence.
5. Identify the signs of dating violence in their own romantic relationships and the romantic relationships of others.
6. Locate local resources that can help them cope with unhealthy romantic relationships.

## **Lesson 5: Implied Messages about Alcohol, Drugs, and Sex**

### Summary:

This lesson provides students with information about the risks associated with substance use and sexual behavior. Students will learn to think critically about media messages that portray substance use as sexy, and explore the impact of substance use on relationships and sexual choices.

### Goals:

1. To increase positive expectancies related to abstaining from alcohol and drugs, especially within the context of avoiding risky sexual behaviors.
2. To reduce the perceived realism of overt and implied messages in the media about sex in relation to use of alcohol and other drugs.

### Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze media messages to identify implied messages about the effects of alcohol and drug use, especially those associated with sexual behaviors.
2. Describe the relationship between alcohol and drug use and risky sexual behavior.
3. Assess the realism of media messages by comparing and contrasting implied messages in the media about alcohol and drug use to the facts about alcohol and drug use.
4. Locate local resources for getting help with alcohol and drug abuse.

## **Web-based Lesson 1: Pregnancy and Contraception**

Summary: This interactive web-based lesson provides students with medically-accurate information regarding conception, common pregnancy myths, and FDA-approved methods of contraception. Students will learn that abstinence is the only 100% effective way to avoid pregnancy.

### Goal:

1. To increase healthy decision making skills regarding pregnancy prevention.

### Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Describe how pregnancy occurs and determine the risks of pregnancy associated with certain behaviors.
2. Identify various methods of contraception.
3. Compare the effectiveness of different methods of contraception in preventing unplanned pregnancy.



4. Identify that abstinence is the only 100% effective method of avoiding pregnancy.
5. Explain how a teenager could obtain contraception.
6. Identify the steps to take if someone thinks that they might be pregnant or might have gotten someone pregnant.
7. Demonstrate communication skills with potential sexual partners, trusted adults, and medical professionals about sex and pregnancy prevention.

## **Lesson 6: Missing Information about Teen Pregnancy and Parenthood**

### Summary:

This lesson teaches students to understand the realities of teen pregnancy and parenthood and to think critically about media messages that perpetuate common myths about teen pregnancy and what it is like to be a teen parent.

### Goals:

1. To increase positive expectancies associated with safe sexual choices, emphasizing abstinence as the safest sexual choice.
2. To decrease the perceived realism of media messages that are missing information about teen pregnancy and parenthood.

### Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze media messages to determine if information is missing about commitment before sexual activity and the possible consequences of sex, specifically unplanned pregnancy.
2. Analyze media messages about teen pregnancy and parenthood to assess the realism of these messages.
3. Describe effective methods for reducing unplanned pregnancy and identify abstinence as the only 100% effective method of avoiding pregnancy.
4. Describe assertive methods to communicate with sexual partners about contraception (i.e., contraception negotiation skills).

## **Web-based Lesson 2: Sexually Transmitted Infections**

### Summary:

This interactive web-based lesson provides students with medically-accurate information about sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including information on rates of infection, transmission, symptoms and effects of infection, methods of prevention and risk reduction, and resources for STI testing and medical care. Students will learn that abstinence from sexual activity is the best way to avoid STIs.

### Goal:

1. To increase healthy decision making skills regarding STI prevention.



Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Define STI and recognize the names of common STIs.
2. Identify the ways that STIs can and cannot be transmitted.
3. Identify FDA-approved methods of reducing the risk of STI transmission.
4. Identify that abstinence from sexual activity is the best way to avoid contracting an STI.
5. Recognize the prevalence of STIs.
6. Explain the short and long-term consequences of becoming infected with an STI.
7. Recall the steps necessary for getting tested and obtaining treatment for an STI.

**Lesson 7: Missing Information about Sexually Transmitted Infections**Summary:

In this lesson, students will explore the realities of sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) and think critically about media messages that leave out this crucial health information. Students will also learn effective communication skills that can be used to refuse sexual activity.

Goals:

1. To increase positive expectancies associated with safe sexual choices, emphasizing abstinence as the safest sexual choice.
2. To decrease the perceived realism of media messages that depict sexually risky behavior (e.g., missing information about commitment and contraception) without negative consequences, specifically STIs.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze media messages to determine the information that is missing regarding sexual health, specifically commitment, consequences (STIs), and contraception.
2. Identify the benefits of choosing to abstain from sexual activity and the consequences of sex, including STIs.
3. Demonstrate effective communication skills for abstaining from sexual activity (i.e., sexual refusal skills).
4. Locate local resources for testing and medical care for pregnancy and STIs.

**Lesson 8: Media Production Activity**Summary:

This final lesson provides students with a review of previous content and offers students an opportunity to personally reflect on the content they learned in the *MASH* program and produce their own media messages.

Goals:

1. To increase self-efficacy in making healthy romantic relationship decisions.
2. To produce a media message advocating healthy romantic relationships.



Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Rewrite a media message that portrays an unhealthy romantic relationship in order to convey accurate information about healthy romantic relationships and sexual health.
2. Evaluate what it means to be in a healthy romantic relationship.
3. Develop a personal plan for engaging in healthy romantic relationships.

