

**BODY IMAGE/SEXUAL IDENTITY – Hair Piece, Mirror Mirror – all grades
Hide and Seek, Closer (for grades 10-12 only)**

Despite the advances made by the women’s movement, young women are still being bombarded by exploitative images of women in the media. With all of this to contend with, young women are often confused and conflicted about their self-image and perception. The films and videos in this component challenge these media images and provide positive alternatives to those representations. They also present the difficult subject matter of sexual preference in a realistic and purposeful manner.

QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES: GRADES 6-8

Pre-viewing questions:

- 1) What actress or singer do you admire most today? What makes her attractive?
- 2) What makes a person attractive? Is it mainly based on appearance? [Points to bring up: humor, intelligence, kindness, tact, consideration, patience, determination, compassion, being a good, student, employee, friend or neighbor]
- 3) What is considered today’s ideal beauty? Does this ideal standard represent women from all different cultures?
- 4) Do most women or girls you know conform to this standard?
- 5) Who or what influences how you see yourself?
- 6) Have you ever tried to change your appearance to look like women on television or magazines?
- 7) Can we change parts of our bodies? Which ones and how? Have we really changed when we change these parts of our bodies? Are we better people? What parts of us can we not change? Does our inability to change some parts of our bodies mean we are unattractive? Why not?

Post-viewing questions:

- 1) Why are the women in *Mirror Mirror* able to speak openly about themselves and their feelings about their body? What role do the mannequins and masks play in the film?
- 2) What statements are the women in these films making about body image?
- 3) Do you recognize anything of yourself in how these women feel about themselves?

Activities:

- 1) In *Hairpiece*, the narrator describes a hairstyle called an “Afro”. What are some of the other “trends” we’ve witnessed in popular culture, i.e. tattoos, piercings, colored hair, etc.
 - a. Research the significance of this hairstyle and why it was important to the African-American community.
 - b. List other popular clothing and hairstyles from the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s.
 - c. Find visual examples of each and explain the political or social statements these styles were making during their generation.
- 2) Research the origins of “tattooing”. What culture does it come from? What was its original significance? What does it represent now?

QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES: GRADES 9-12

Pre-viewing questions:

- 1) What influences your personal style, self-image and sexual identity?
- 2) Have you ever tried to change your appearance to look like women on television or magazines?
- 3) Do women of color face different body image issues?
- 4) Is it difficult to discuss issues of sexual identity with your peers? Is there acceptance of alternative lifestyles within your community?

Post-viewing questions:

- 1) In *Closer*, Annelise talks freely about her lifestyle as a lesbian. Is there acceptance for young lesbian women in the US to speak as openly about their sexuality as Annelise? Are people still generally uncomfortable with this issue? If so, why?
- 2) In *Hide and Seek* older women openly reveal their experiences growing up lesbian. Do you think that some of these experiences are similar to those of heterosexuals? How so?
- 3) Regardless of sexual preference, how do you identify with Lou?

Activities:

- 1) Collect ads promoting images of beauty and attractiveness in major fashion and news magazines. Describe and list the physical characteristics in these ads (such as age, weight, race, etc.) and the lifestyles that are emphasized within them.
 - a. In a journal or notebook track down and describe the number of daily ads in newspapers and television that reveal these images.
 - b. While conducting this exercise, ask yourself questions like: Do these ads reflect what real women look like? Are these images harmful to women and girls' self-esteem? Who do you think create these ads – men or women?
- 2) Conduct the same activity as above, but look for images of same sex preferences or bisexuality.
 - a. How are these images portrayed?
 - b. Is there a statement or prejudice that is being implied in the ad?
 - c. Compare and contrast these images with the ones you collected in activity # 1.