



SPEED PROJECT

Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

THEMATIC AREA 2

Examples and reflections on body image models proposed by the media

The media and social networks promote aesthetic models that are often unrealistic and standardised. These cards offer food for thought to recognise how such images are constructed and why constantly comparing ourselves with them can negatively affect self-esteem, especially among younger people.

IN THIS AREA:

- Card 1** The images proposed by the media
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AREA 2 • MODELS PROPOSED BY THE MEDIA — CARD 1

The images proposed by the media

The media promote body-shape models with very specific parameters and characteristics.

Thinness is presented as a fundamental quality for defining a person's beauty, especially for women.

The proposed standards do not suit everyone's body structure and, in order to reach them, harmful behaviours may be adopted, such as excessive dieting or almost complete food deprivation.

The proposed models often do not match an athlete's body shape because, for women, they feature slender, barely muscular bodies. Male models, on the contrary, often feature excessive muscle mass and likewise do not suit every man's body structure.

It can happen that young people in particular are strongly influenced by the models proposed by the media and social networks, and that they set themselves the goal of resembling these models as closely as possible — spending a great deal of energy, adopting unhealthy behaviours and often feeling frustrated at failing to reach the goal.



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AREA 2 • MODELS PROPOSED BY THE MEDIA — CARD 2

Conforming to the proposed image

The images proposed by the media and social networks are standardised: they do not take into account individual differences in body structure, age or the sport practised.

There are precise parameters for every part of the body, considering only its aesthetic aspect and not its function.

The images of influencers on social media are presented as a representation of everyday life — spontaneous, simple shots — but they are in fact constructed with lighting, make-up and carefully studied framing that create the illusion of authenticity.

The message conveyed is that, in order to be beautiful, one must conform to the proposed standards, which are often unattainable because they do not take into account people's uniqueness and their different characteristics.

Conforming is very dangerous because it strips away the value of each person's uniqueness and imposes aesthetic standards that are often unattainable, creating the basis for dissatisfaction with one's own body.



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AREA 2 • MODELS PROPOSED BY THE MEDIA — CARD 3

Comparisons with the proposed models

The aesthetic models spread on social media lead to strong exposure — especially of young people — to certain body characteristics.

Comparison is a mechanism that comes into play very frequently, especially at an age when self-esteem is not yet solid and well developed and when acceptance by others is very important.

Comparison is dangerous because it leads people to use as a benchmark someone they always judge to be better with respect to the parameters they are comparing themselves on.

The consequence is that, in most cases, people come out of the comparison as “losers”, and this is negative for self-esteem and can push them to adopt unhealthy behaviours to try to resemble more closely the model they are comparing themselves with.

It would be best to avoid comparing oneself with others and not to encourage this behaviour within the family, because it can lead to dissatisfaction and to the feeling of not being good enough, both aesthetically and in other respects.



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