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// Bathing Suit Season //

Another reason to turn off the TV and go play.

With the abundance of summer sunshine welcoming us all to the great outdoors, it seems silly to need yet another reason to turn off the TV during this time of year. But indeed there is another good reason.

Bathing Suit Season.

We all know that images of unrealistically thin models constantly appear on television and in magazines, and that advertisers frequently alter photographs to enhance the appearance of models' bodies. We also know that with the summer and bathing suit season comes an even greater bombardment of such unrealistic images. But most of us don't know that such alterations and fallacies directly contribute to the unrealistic expectations we hold of an appropriate body image – these unrealistic expectations being especially high for impressionable children and adolescents. Numerous studies and articles link exposure to media-altered images of unrealistic bodies to eating disorders and other child and adolescent health problems.

According to studies by the National Institute for Media and the Family, the amount of time a child watches television is proportional to his or her degree of body dissatisfaction. One study found that teenage girls who view commercials depicting unrealistically thin women, report feeling less confident, more angry and less satisfied with their weight, when compared to those girls who had less exposure to such advertising. As stated by American Medical Association spokesman Dr. McAneny, "We must stop exposing impressionable children and teenagers to advertisements portraying models with body types only attainable with the help of photo editing software."

As we have learned, shame is one of the most counterproductive emotions our children can hold when it comes to their self worth and body image. Whether struggling with or working to prevent obesity or traditional eating disorders, children and adults must feel pride, not shame. Sadly a vast majority of today's media images promote shame. So turn off the TV, turn off the negative messages and go outside and play!

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