

# A Body Image / Media Literacy Study Guide For



## Wet Dreams and False Images A Documentary Film



**Winner**  
Jury Award – Short Subject  
**2004 Sundance**  
Online Film Festival



**Winner**  
**2005 YALSA Award**  
Top Video For Young Adults



**Winner**  
**LUNA FEST**  
5th Anniversary Film  
Series Selection



**Winner**  
Grand Prize  
Kodak Film Award  
Chicks With Flicks Film Festival



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## **Study Guide**

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## **Wet Dreams and False Images (the documentary)**

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### **Film Synopsis:**

Dee-Dee, a Brooklyn barber, covers his wall with magazine pin-ups of women. He wishes that real women could look more like the images on his wall of beauty. However, when Dee-Dee is introduced to the art of photo-retouching, his perceptions of beauty are called into question.

**Wet Dreams and False Images** is a *Sundance* award-winning documentary film that uses humor to raise serious concerns about the marketplace of commercial illusion and unrealizable standards of physical perfection.

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## **Introduction / Director's Statement:**

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### **Director's Statement:**

The goal of **Wet Dreams and False Images** is to show the process of someone learning something new. It is meant to explore, ask questions, and start discussions about body image and media-manipulation. As a director, I am not interested in telling people that it is wrong to try to look beautiful, or to strive to be fit. But, I do mean to uncover how advertising is creating impossible standards, which no one is able to live up to in real life, expectations that if held onto, can prevent us from being truly happy in the bodies we live in.

I believe that body image issues are public health issues, and that feeling good about ourselves and our bodies is a key ingredient in making healthy choices in our lives.

### **About the Filmmaker:**

Jesse Erica Epstein is a documentary filmmaker and youth media educator who lives in New York City.

## **Using the Film in the Classroom:**

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The purpose of screening the film and following the screening with activities in this study guide is to facilitate the examination of images that we are exposed to on a daily basis, and to develop a deeper understanding of the role that media images can play in our lives.

This film can be used as part of a class on media, gender, health, or sexuality education, or it can be used on its own. It is recommended for high schools, colleges and universities, after-school programs, body image organizations, community-based organizations, and faith communities.

## Screening Activities

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### Introducing the Video:

Before viewing the film it might be helpful to read aloud the synopsis of the film on page 2, and to briefly talk about the differences between fiction filmmaking and documentary; for instance mention that the people in the film are not actors like in Hollywood movies, but rather are real people going through an experience. Non-fiction filmmaking is aptly described by J. Gierson as “the creative treatment of actuality.”

### ***Screen the Video***

(12 minutes)

### Discussion Guide:

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**Goals:** To facilitate a discussion regarding the issues that the film raises and have students examine their own experiences.

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**Materials:** Newsprint or blackboard, and writing tools.

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**Questions:** This can be a student-run activity in which students take turns reading questions and writing the brainstorm session responses on the paper or blackboard.

The following questions are open-ended designed to raise discussion and don't have to be answered “by the book.” If the conversation is flowing well after asking the first few, keep it going. Provided are some suggested questions, but you might want to elaborate.

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### Discussion Questions:

- How did learning about photo-retouching affect Dee-Dee the barber? Did you see a change in him over the course of the film? If so, what changed?
- In the film, what are some of the specific things that the photo-retouchers altered in the magazine images?

- Did watching the film change the way you think about magazine images? How? Did it change the way you think about physical "perfection?" How?
- What are some different kinds of media -- i.e., billboards, T.V.?
- How many media images do you think you see in a day?
- What are some of the messages that these images and ads tell us about what is attractive? Do you have expectations about how you should look, or how others should look, based on these messages? What are these expectations?
- Have you ever tried to change the way you look? If yes, did this have anything to do with images you see in the media? What did you change?
- What are your cultures' expectations of what beauty is supposed to be? Do you get messages at home that are different from those you get at school?
- Do you know people who feel confident about the way they look -- about their bodies?
- What choices do people make (good and bad) based on how they feel about themselves and their bodies?
- Have you ever felt really good about the way you look? When do you feel the strongest or the healthiest? The most confident?

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### **Notes to teachers about closure:**

Discussions about body image can get intense. You may want to establish "safe space" by setting some ground rules like: "use 'I' statements," "one person talks at a time," and "anything personal that is discussed should stay in this room."\* Please also make time to wrap up the discussion, and provide a sense of closure at the end of the session.

Resources for more information about body image issues, and specifically about eating disorders, are provided at the back of this study guide. Having an eating disorder is often about more than just body image and should be taken seriously. Please provide the students with some relevant resources.

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\* It can be useful to have the students come up with their own list of what constitutes "safe space" for them, which they write out on a flip chart or blackboard.

## Post Screening Lesson Plans: Body Image/ Media Literacy Activities

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### Activity 1) Dissecting Magazine Images

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**Goals:** To closely examine advertising images and their messages.

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**Materials:** “Beauty” magazines, paper and pens. (Suggested magazines: *Seventeen*, *Lucky*, *Glamour*, *GQ*, *Details*, *Men’s Fitness*. Please use materials that are relevant to the age, culture and interests of the group.)



Divide the class into small groups and give each group a page from a magazine that contains an advertisement. Have each group analyze and write down some of the messages that the ad contains -- answering the following:

#### Discussion Questions:

- What is the profession of the person in the ad? (Answer: an actor or a model.)
- Can you tell if the photo has been retouched? How?
- What company and product is the ad trying to sell?
- How are they trying to sell the product? -- What are they trying to get people to think about the product? What is it supposed to do?
- If the ad is for a “beauty product,” how does it define beauty?
- How does the ad make you think/ feel about yourself? Do you relate to it?

*Have each group present the ad and their findings to the class.*

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## Activity 2) Body Image Oral History Art Project <sup>1</sup>

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**Goals:** To explore messages about beauty and body image and to facilitate a way for students to share their experiences.

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**Materials:** Origami squares of many colors but equal sizes. Additional origami paper with patterns and any other paper that is available. Scissors, glue sticks and Scotch tape.

**Explanation of Materials:** Students should use one equivalent sized origami square as a background, and the rest of the paper is to be cut up and pasted on the square to create an image.



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*Ask students to close their eyes while you slowly read the following:*

Think of a time when you received a message about your body—or there was an expectation about how you "should look." It could be a positive or negative message. How does this message relate to your cultural background? Think of the details -- How old were you? Who was there or was around you? What time of day was it? What colors were there? Which smells? What season was it? If you think of the experience as having a beginning, middle and end, how would you describe the story?

When you have the details in your mind and have thought through the experience with as many visual details as possible, open your eyes and take one origami square. Then, with the rest of the paper, cut and paste to create a visual image that represents the experience.

*Allow 20 minutes for the art project.*

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *A Patchwork of Our Lives: Oral History Quilts in Intercultural Communication*, Cynthia Cohen, Cambridge Oral History Project (1999).

When people are finished with their squares, have them pair up and take turns sharing stories. Emphasize "active listening" and instruct the students to ask questions because they will later be recounting the other person's story.

When they are finished, tape the squares to a wall or blackboard, and have the students take turns getting up and telling the story that they heard. After each story is told, make sure to ask the person whose experience it was, "do you have anything you want to add?"

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### **Wrap-up Discussion Questions:**

- Was there anything you learned from the stories as a whole? What were the similarities and differences?
  - Did this activity change the way you think about beauty in any way? How?
  - How did it feel to have someone tell your story?
  - How was it to tell someone else's story?
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## **Resources**

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### **Body Image Curriculum:**

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#### **National Eating Disorders Association**

[http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage\\_ID=346](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=346)

### **Body Image Organizations:**

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#### **About-Face**

<http://www.about-face.org>

#### **Adios Barbie: A Body Image Site for Everybody**

<http://www.adiosbarbie.com>

#### **Association for Size Diversity and Health**

<http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/counseling/ASDAH.htm>

#### **HUGS: A Premier Source for Programs and Support for a lifestyle without diets.**

<http://www.hugs.com>

#### **Largesse: the Network for Size Esteem**

<http://www.largesse.net>

#### **National Association for Advance Fat Acceptance**

<http://naafa.org>

#### **Size Wise: Your World Your Size**

<http://www.sizewise.com>

#### **Something Fishy**

<http://www.something-fishy.org>

#### **Soy Unica, Soy Latina.**

<http://www.soyunica.gov/mybody/default.aspx>

#### **Women's Campaign to End Body Hatred and Dieting**

<http://www.overcomingovereating.com>

### **Media Criticism:**

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<http://adbusters.org/home>

<http://www.mediawatch.com>

### **Books:**

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#### **Books about body image:**

**The Beauty Myth: *How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women***

Naomi Wolf (Random House, 1992)

**The Body Project: *An Intimate History of American Girls***

Joan Jacobs Brumberg (Vintage 1998)

**Body Outlaws: *Rewriting the Rules of Beauty & Body Image***

Ophira Edut (Seal Press, 2004)

**Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: *A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships***

Ruth Bell (3rd Edition, Times Book, 1998)

**Ophelia Speaks: *Adolescent Girls Write About Their Search for Self***

Sara Shandler (HarperCollins, 1999)

**Our Boys Speak**

John Nikkah (St. Martins Press 2000)

**School Girls: *Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap***

Peggy Orenstein (Anchor Books, 1995)

**Books about Media and Advertising:**

**All Consuming Images: *The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture***

Stuart Ewen (Harper San Francisco, 1999)

**Deadly Persuasions: *Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising***

Jean Kilbourne (The Free Press, 1999)

**No Logo: *Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies***

Naomi Klein (Picador 2002)

**Ways of Seeing**

John Berger (Penguin Books, 1990)

**Hotlines for help with Body Image:**

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**1-800-931-2237**

Eating Disorders Information and Referral Line

**1-800-248-3285**

National Eating Disorder Hotline

**1-800-366-8288**

Hotline for Teens Who Cut

**1-800-448-3000**

National Teen Emergency Hotlines

**Sexuality Education Resources:**

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**Advocates for Youth**

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/lessonplans/index.htm>

**The International Women's Health Coalition's *Positively Informed:***

*Lesson Plans and Guidance for Sexuality Educators and Advocates*

[www.iwhc.org/resources/positively\\_informed/index.cfm](http://www.iwhc.org/resources/positively_informed/index.cfm)

**Coalition for Positive Sexuality**

<http://www.positive.org>

**Path: A Catalyst for Global Health**

<http://www.path.org/files/gamesbook.pdf>

**Planned Parenthood Federation of America**

<http://www.ppfa.org/pp2/portal/medicalinfo/teensexualhealth>

**Scenarios USA: Sex Ed Films Written by Youth**

<http://www.scenariosusa.org>

**Sex Etc.: A Website by and for Teens**

<http://www.sexetc.org/index.php?topic=Sex+Ed+Lessons>

**The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States:**

*Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*

<http://www.siecus.org/pubs/guidelines/guidelines.pdf>

**Youth Web Sites:**

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**Advocates for Youth**

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org>

**Families are Talking**

<http://www.familiesaretalking.org>

**Sex Etc: A Website by and For Teens**

<http://www.sexetc.org>

**Teen Wire**

<http://www.teenwire.com>

**Youth Communications**

<http://www.youthcomm.org>

**Youth Media Sites:**

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<http://www.alternet.org/wiretap>

<http://www.freshangles.com>

<http://www.listenup.org>

<http://www.mediarights.org>

<http://www.youthoutlook.org/news>

<http://www.youthmediacouncil.org>

<http://www.unicef.org/magic>

**Young People's Media Network**

<http://www.ypmn.blogspot.com>

**Youth Media Distribution**

<http://ymdi.org>

**Additional Media Resources:**

Action Coalition for Media Education, ACME

<http://www.acmecoalition.org>

**The Free Child Project**

<http://www.freechild.org/YouthMediaResources.htm>

**National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture**

<http://namac.org>

**Youth Media Organizations:**

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**Apple Shop, Eastern Kentucky**

<http://www.appalshop.org/ami>

**Blunt Youth Radio, Portland, ME**

<http://www.bluntradio.org>

**Spy Hop, Salt Lake City, UT**

<http://www.spyhop.org>

**Downtown Community Television, NYC**

<http://www.dctvny.org>

**Radio Rookies: National Public Radio, NYC**

<http://www.wnyc.org/radiorookies>

**Reel Stories: Sundance Institute's Youth Documentary Workshop, SLC, UT**

[http://institute.sundance.org/jsps/site.jsp?resource=pag\\_ex\\_programs\\_geny\\_filmcamp&sk=cGMJAtilO6KwPCaZ](http://institute.sundance.org/jsps/site.jsp?resource=pag_ex_programs_geny_filmcamp&sk=cGMJAtilO6KwPCaZ)

**Reel Works: HBO Young Filmmaker's Lab, Brooklyn, NY**

<http://www.reelworks.org>

**New Orleans Video Access Center, LI**

<http://www.novacvideo.org>

**The Producer's Project, NY**

<http://theproducersproject.org>

**Educational Video Center, NYC**  
[http://www.evc.org/evc\\_home.html](http://www.evc.org/evc_home.html)

**Manhattan Neighborhood Network Youth Channel, NYC**  
<http://www.youthchannel.org>

**Papertiger TV, NYC**  
<http://www.papertiger.org>

**Bay Area Video Coalition, CA**  
<http://www.bavc.org>

**Youth Media, Oakland, CA**  
<http://www.youth-media.org>

**Just Think, San Francisco, CA**  
<http://www.justthink.org>

**911 Media Arts Center, Seattle WA**  
<http://www.911media.org/youth>

### **Youth Film Festivals:**

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**Locomotion International Film Festival, SLC Utah**  
<http://locomotionfilmfestival.org>

**National Youth Video Film Festival, Boston MA**  
[www.doityourdamnsself.org](http://www.doityourdamnsself.org)

**Rooftop Films**  
<http://www.rooftopfilms.com>

**Urban Visionaries**  
<http://www.urbanvisionaries.org>

### **Filmmaker's Contact Information:**

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Jesse Erica Epstein  
Jesse@Ohmsmedia.org  
Office: 212.807.1400 x 238

### **To Request a Copy of The Film Contact:**

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**New Day Films**  
<http://www.newday.com>

**Film Page (includes reviews and teacher's quotes):**  
<http://www.newday.com/films/WetDreams.html>  
Orders@Newday.com, **1-888-367-9154**

**Feedback Form:**

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As an independent filmmaker committed to producing more educational films, I greatly appreciate any feedback you may have. I would like to know how the screening went, and what discussions were raised by the film and the study guide. If you could take a moment to write down any comments or suggestions, that would be great. You can either email them directly to me at [Jesse@Ohmsmedia.org](mailto:Jesse@Ohmsmedia.org), or send this form to:

Jesse Epstein  
C/O AIVF  
304 Hudson St. Floor 6  
New York, NY 10013  
Office: 212.807.1400 ext. 238

Thank you for your time!

**Comments/ Suggestions:**

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