

## LESSON PLANS

# Setting the Record Straight: Public Service Announcements on Mental Health



**Duration:** 2–3 hours

### Overview

This lesson starts with a slideshow featuring both commercial advertising and public service announcements (PSAs) to help students learn the differences and similarities between the two. After the class has come to an understanding of the purpose and definition of public service announcements, they study several examples in order to identify the elements that contribute to a successful public service campaign.

Once this is done, students will apply what they've learned by creating public service announcements aimed at correcting misperceptions about mental illnesses. To prepare for this, teachers will lead students through guided discussion on some of the common stereotypes associated with mental illnesses to help them develop a more accurate understanding of the nature of mental illnesses and the origins of these stereotypes, including media portrayals. The teacher leads the class in considering some of the effects of these stereotypes such as stigma and patronization towards people with mental illnesses.

Finally, groups of students draw on their understanding of the elements of successful public service campaigns and their newfound knowledge of mental illnesses to produce a plan for a public service announcement (done either in print or video) aimed at correcting common misperceptions of mental illnesses.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Identify similarities and differences between commercial advertising and public service announcements
- Identify the elements of a successful public service announcement or campaign
- Identify and correct common misperceptions of mental illnesses and their negative effects
- Create a public service announcement on a mental health topic

## Preparation and Materials

To prepare for this lesson, please ensure you:

- Read the *Let's Talk: Finding Reliable Mental Health Information and Resources Teacher Training Guide* [[http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/Lets\\_Talk\\_Teacher\\_Training\\_Guide.pdf](http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/Lets_Talk_Teacher_Training_Guide.pdf)]
- Review the *Let's Talk: Finding Reliable Mental Health Information and Resources Teacher Training Presentation* [<http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/tutorials/teacher-training-presentation/index.html>]
- Review the *Let's Talk About Mental Health* student presentation [[http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/Lets\\_Talk\\_Student\\_Presentation.zip](http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/Lets_Talk_Student_Presentation.zip)]

For the lesson:

Prescreen and load to a computer or digital whiteboard the following videos or alternatives you have chosen (see under "Procedure" below):

- **E-I-E-I-O:** <http://www.thedigitalage.com/gallery/Lightlife-E-I-E-I-O/5183051>
- **House Hippo:** [http://www.cca-kids.ca/psas/media\\_literacy.html](http://www.cca-kids.ca/psas/media_literacy.html) or <http://vimeo.com/3947135> (full-screen is available only at the second link)
- **5 Gallons:** <http://vimeo.com/25108291>
- **Evolution:** <http://www.dove.ca/en/Tips-Topics-And-Tools/Videos/Evolution.aspx>
- **Let's Call Bulls#!t:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcWI2Fc\\_zhQ&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcWI2Fc_zhQ&feature=plcp) (Note: Although there is no inappropriate language in the video, the title may cause some reaction among students. You can discuss with them why the makers of this PSA might have used (implied) profanity as part of their campaign (possible answers include: to get viewers' attention, to seem more relevant to young viewers, to communicate the seriousness of the message.) Students may discuss how effective and appropriate it is in each case.)
- **Let's Talk:** <http://letstalk.bell.ca/en/media.php#video>

If you are unable to show videos:

- Photocopy *A New Breed of Veggie Burger* (page 9) as a handout or overhead
- Photocopy the *Print Public Service Announcements* (pages 10-12) as handouts or an overhead

For all classes:

- Review the *Let's Talk About Mental Health* student presentation.
- Print the handouts:
  - *What Makes a PSA Work?*
  - *Common Misconceptions About Mental Illnesses*
  - *Public Service Announcement Assignment Sheet*



## Procedure

Begin the class by showing the commercial “E-I-E-I-O” or an alternative commercial of your choice. (Note: If you are unable to access this commercial or find it unsuitable for any reason, you may use any other recent ad. The website *Advertising in the Digital Age* [<http://www.thedigitalage.com>] is a good source for commercials online, as are the “Ad of the Day” selections on the *AdWeek* [<http://www.adweek.com/advertising-branding>] website. If you are unable to show videos, display or photocopy the print-based ad *A New Breed of Veggie Burger*.)

After viewing the video, ask the class to identify the product (vegetarian meat alternative) and briefly discuss the ways in which the ad gets you to understand and remember its message. Students will likely mention the humour and inventiveness of the animated animals made of vegetables and the use of a well-known song; you can also point out that the use of children’s voices and the imagery of a farm are a good way of making a non-traditional product seem more mainstream, and that animating the animals might make viewers more prone to buy a vegetarian alternative rather than meat.

Now show the public service announcement *House Hippo*. If you are unable to show videos, display or photocopy the print-based PSA *Don’t Try This At Home* (p. 10).

After viewing the video, ask the class to identify ways in which the PSA was similar to and different from the ad. Likely similarities will include the use of humour and special effects to get their points across, and using animals to be more appealing; differences may include the use of music in *E-I-E-I-O*, the use of faux-documentary style in *House Hippo* and, most importantly, the fact that *House Hippo* is not intended to sell a *product* but to promote a particular *behaviour* (viewing media critically). In addition, the ultimate purpose of *E-I-E-I-O* is to make money for the sponsor for the ad, while the ultimate purpose

of *House Hippo* is to educate the public. (However, it should be noted that PSAs are not always made by governments or non-profit organizations: they are often produced by for-profit companies or by industry groups that represent for-profit companies.)

If the term has not already come up in the discussion, explain to students that an ad like *House Hippo* or *Don’t Try This At Home* is called a PSA because it performs a public service rather than sells a product. Ask students if they can recall any PSAs that made an impression on them: what was it that made them memorable? Is being memorable the same as being effective? Can they think of any PSAs that have ever inspired them to take action or change their behaviour?

Distribute the handout *What Makes a PSA Work?* and explain that successful PSAs share the following characteristics:

- **They select and appeal to their target audience.** Generally, PSAs (like ads) are more successful if they can target their message to a narrower audience (teenage boys or girls, parents, seniors, etc.).
- **They give a reason why the audience should care about the issue.** A PSA is sometimes the first time a viewer will have even heard about an issue so it’s important to make an impression and show why it’s important.
- **They give viewers clear steps to take to address the issue.** The most effective PSAs are aimed at convincing viewers to do a specific thing or take a first step towards a particular behaviour (for instance, call a cab or a friend/parent instead of driving drunk).
- **They leave viewers feeling empowered and better-informed instead of guilty or depressed.** Although PSAs often address very serious issues, it’s important that they leave a viewer feeling as though they can do something to make a difference.

Using the *What Makes a PSA Work?* handout, have students evaluate the *House Hippo* or the *Don't Try This At Home* PSA together as a class. You will likely come to the following conclusions:

### **Does it select and appeal to the target audience?**

**House Hippo:** The target audience isn't clear from the PSA itself, but the other PSAs on the website for Concerned Children's Advertisers (which produced it) would suggest it is aimed at kids. The faux-documentary narration is more likely to appeal to older audiences, but the imagination and cuteness of the visuals will probably appeal to kids as well. This might work as a PSA aimed at getting kids and parents to talk about the issue.

**Don't Try This At Home:** This public service campaign is aimed at tweens or teens, who will enjoy its absurd humour. This particular PSA is aimed at boys so we see a boy both playing a sport and being silly.

### **Does it give a reason why the audience should care about the issue?**

**House Hippo:** This demonstrates effectively that what you see on TV may not be true, but it doesn't clearly communicate why this is important.

**Don't Try This At Home:** It's not immediately clear what the issue is in this PSA.

### **Does it give viewers clear steps to take to address the issue?**

**House Hippo:** The next steps are clearly stated but somewhat vague: "Think about what you're watching on TV and ask questions." (But *which* questions?)

**Don't Try This At Home:** The next step (get out of the house and exercise) is implied in the tag line, but it's only clear once you understand what the topic of the PSA is.

### **Does it leave viewers feeling empowered and better-informed?**

**House Hippo:** This PSA definitely leaves viewers feeling as though they are "in the know." It's easy to imagine someone sharing this video with a friend and watching them try to decide if it is real or not.

**Don't Try This At Home:** Not really.

Now show the remaining videos or print PSAs and have students analyze them using the work sheet *What Makes a PSA Work?* (You do not have to show all of the videos or ads if you have concerns about time or content.) You may choose to have students do their analysis in pairs to provoke further discussion.

When students have finished analyzing the videos, discuss their evaluations and ask them to defend their judgments.

Now explain that the class will be creating public service announcements aimed at correcting public misperceptions of mental illnesses. Ask students what they think they know about mental illnesses based on media portrayals and other sources: what are some common beliefs that may or may not be true? After a brief discussion, distribute or project the handout *Common Misconceptions About Mental Illnesses* and go through it with the class.

Ask students what effects these misconceptions might have on either people with mental illnesses or the general population. Make sure that the ideas of a **stigma** towards people with mental illnesses, a sense that it's not everyone's problem and reluctance among people with mental illnesses to talk about their conditions, are included.

Before continuing with the lesson, present the slideshow *Let's Talk About Mental Health* student presentation [[http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/Lets\\_Talk\\_Student\\_Presentation.zip](http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/Lets_Talk_Student_Presentation.zip)] to the class to help students deepen their understanding of mental health and understand the context of the lesson.

Distribute the *Public Service Announcement Assignment Sheet* and have students work in pairs or small groups to prepare a PSA poster or video aimed at correcting a popular misconception about mental illnesses.

Tell students to draw on their analyses of the PSAs they have looked at to plan how they will appeal to their target audience, make the target audience care about the issue, provide the audience with clear first steps to take and make the audience feel empowered and better-informed. (Though you should ensure that students are respectful, don't feel the need to steer them away from using humour: focus groups held with students who had experienced mental illnesses showed that they thought humour was an appropriate tool for reaching young people.) Depending on the time and equipment available to you, the PSAs can either be done as posters or videos.

**If students are filming their PSAs**, explain that careful planning is the key to making a good video. Before they start production, have students consider the following points:

- What is the message you want to convey?
- What visual and technical elements, such as sound and camera angles, will help to get your message across?
- What other elements may help get your message across? Consider locations (where you will film), people and props. If any of these are central to your message it's a good idea to plan around them.



Next, have each group develop a script for their video (you may wish to review each group's script before allowing them to start filming). Before students begin filming, have them consider the following points:

- Where are they filming?
- Do they have permission to film there?
- Will they have room for the camera and any other equipment?
- Will there be any problems with sound (background noise, people walking by, etc.)?
- If filming outdoors, will weather be an issue?
- Always consider safety first. Students shouldn't do anything that will put them or anyone else in danger.

Depending on the equipment available to you, the PSAs may be edited "in camera" (with the film shot in sequence so that no editing is necessary) or may be edited with editing software such as iMovie or MovieMaker.

Tell students they will be evaluated on:

- Their understanding of the elements of a successful public service announcement
- Their understanding of mental health issues
- How well their PSA appeals to their target audience
- How engaging their PSA is for their target audience
- How well their PSA educates and empowers their target audience
- The creativity and technical sophistication of their PSA

	INSUFFICIENT	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b>	<p>PSA shows little or no understanding of the elements of a successful PSA</p> <p>PSA shows little or no understanding of chosen mental health issue</p>	<p>PSA shows a beginning understanding of the elements of a successful PSA</p> <p>PSA shows a beginning understanding of chosen mental health issue</p>	<p>PSA shows a developing understanding of the elements of a successful PSA</p> <p>PSA shows a developing understanding of chosen mental health issue</p>	<p>PSA shows a competent understanding of the elements of a successful PSA</p> <p>PSA shows a competent understanding of chosen mental health issue</p>	<p>PSA shows a confident understanding of the elements of a successful PSA</p> <p>PSA shows a confident understanding of chosen mental health issue</p>
<b>Inquiry and Analysis</b>	<p>PSA contains no elements that make it appeal to the intended audience</p> <p>PSA fails to educate or empower audience</p>	<p>PSA contains one element that makes it appeal to the intended audience</p> <p>PSA educates and empowers audience with limited effectiveness</p>	<p>PSA contains two elements that make it appeal to the intended audience</p> <p>PSA educates and empowers audience somewhat effectively</p>	<p>PSA contains three elements that make it appeal to the intended audience</p> <p>PSA educates and empowers audience effectively</p>	<p>PSA contains four or more elements that make it appeal to the intended audience</p> <p>PSA educates and empowers audience very effectively</p>
<b>Application of Skills and Knowledge</b>	<p>PSA has four or more major technical flaws</p> <p>PSA contains elements plagiarized from another source</p>	<p>PSA has three major technical flaws</p> <p>PSA shows little creativity</p>	<p>PSA has one or two major technical flaws</p> <p>PSA shows some creativity</p>	<p>PSA is technically competent, with no major flaws</p> <p>PSA shows significant creativity</p>	<p>PSA is technically skillful, with no major flaws and some particularly effective use of technology</p> <p>PSA shows a great deal of creativity</p>

## A NEW BREED OF VEGGIE BURGER



INTRODUCING THE NEW LIGHTLIFE VEGGIE BURGERS.  
MORE PROOF THAT EATING WELL AND LIVING WELL CAN BE ONE AND THE SAME.

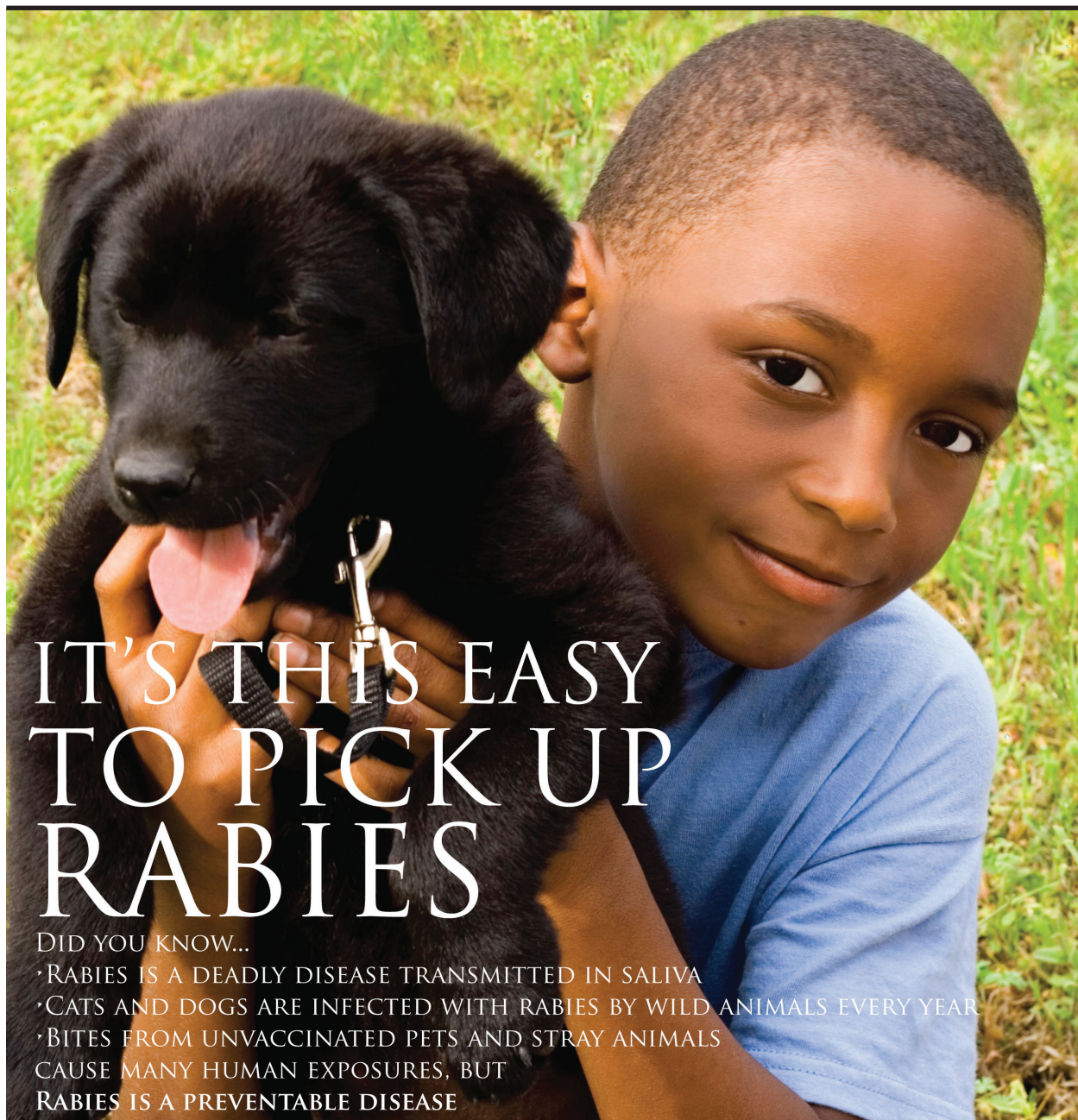
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Live In Good Taste.

## PRINT PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS







# IT'S THIS EASY TO PICK UP RABIES

DID YOU KNOW...

- RABIES IS A DEADLY DISEASE TRANSMITTED IN SALIVA
- CATS AND DOGS ARE INFECTED WITH RABIES BY WILD ANIMALS EVERY YEAR
- BITES FROM UNVACCINATED PETS AND STRAY ANIMALS CAUSE MANY HUMAN EXPOSURES, BUT RABIES IS A PREVENTABLE DISEASE

Protect yourself, your pet and your community:

- Vaccinate all dogs, cats and ferrets against rabies
- Avoid contact with wildlife and stray animals
- If bitten, wash the wound thoroughly, see your doctor

*Working Together to Make Rabies History!*



[WorldRabiesDay.Org](http://WorldRabiesDay.Org)

We thought you should know:  
2 in 3 people suffer in  
silence fearing judgement  
and rejection

We thought you should know:  
Mental illness is the #1 cause  
of workplace disability.

We thought you should know:  
1 in 3 people don't get the  
care they need.

**Bell**  
Let's Talk

## WHAT MAKES A PSA WORK?

Use this chart to judge the effectiveness of each of the public service announcements you watch. Be ready to defend your answers in class discussion.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT	DOES IT SELECT AND APPEAL TO THE TARGET AUDIENCE?	DOES IT GIVE A REASON WHY THE AUDIENCE SHOULD CARE ABOUT THE ISSUE?	DOES IT GIVE VIEWERS CLEAR STEPS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE?	DOES IT LEAVE VIEWERS FEELING EMPOWERED AND BETTER-INFORMED?

## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESSES

There are a lot of mistaken beliefs about mental illnesses that we may have gotten from friends, family, the media or just “what we think is true.” Here are the most common ones that were identified by a group of youth who are dealing with mental illnesses.

**Mental illnesses are contagious.** It’s impossible to “catch” a mental illness.

**Mental illnesses are “all in your head.”** People with mental illnesses are often told things like “You can control your mind” or “Just think of something else.” Although mental illnesses can be treated, they cannot be overcome just by “trying harder.”

**People with mental illnesses are just looking for attention.** In reality, people with mental illnesses will often try to *hide* their illnesses. When people with a mental illness do try to draw attention to their condition, it’s usually because they recognize that they need treatment and support.

**Listening to depressing music makes people depressed.** There’s no evidence that listening to sad music makes people more depressed, or even that people with depression prefer to listen to sad music. Rather, music can give people ways of understanding, dealing with and expressing emotions that we all have from time to time.

**People with mental illnesses are likely to be violent.** The most common media stereotype of mental illnesses is that they are tied to violence: one study in 2010 found that almost half of TV characters with mental illnesses were portrayed as violent and two-thirds of stories featuring characters with mental illnesses showed them hurting themselves. The truth is that people who suffer from mental illnesses are much more likely to be *victims* of violence than to be violent themselves.

**Most people with mental illnesses are also developmentally delayed.** Developmental disabilities and mental illnesses are two separate things. There is evidence that people with developmental disabilities are at a higher risk of developing mental illnesses, but the vast majority of people with mental illnesses are not developmentally delayed.

**Mental illnesses cannot be treated.** There are effective treatments for many mental illnesses and knowing that it is possible to recover is important in getting people with mental illnesses to get help.

**You can tell just by looking at someone if they have a mental illness.** Few mental illnesses have symptoms that you can spot just by looking at someone, especially if the person with the mental illness is receiving treatment.

**You can tell when a friend or family member has a mental illness.** It’s not at all unusual for even friends and family of a person with a mental illness not to know about it. In particular, young people with mental illnesses are often unwilling to talk to their family and friends about what they’re dealing with.

**Mental illness doesn’t affect me.** Mental health challenges touch all of us. One in five Canadians will suffer from a mental illness each year and one in three young people between the ages of 15 and 24 has experienced a mental health challenge. Even someone who has never had to deal with mental illnesses will almost certainly have friends or family members who do. More importantly, we as a society have a responsibility to make sure that everyone with mental or physical health challenges are given support and access to treatment.

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT ASSIGNMENT SHEET

For this assignment you will be preparing a public service announcement (PSA) poster or video aimed at correcting a popular misconception about mental illnesses.

Draw on your analyses of the PSAs you have looked at in class to determine how to:

- appeal to your target audience
- make them care about the issue
- provide them with clear first steps to take
- make them feel empowered and better-informed

For this assignment, you will be evaluated on:

1. Your understanding of the elements of a successful public service announcement
2. Your understanding of mental health issues
3. How well your PSA appeals to your target audience
4. How engaging your PSA is for your target audience
5. How well your PSA educates and empowers your target audience
6. The creativity and technical sophistication of your PSA