MEDIA PIE

At Northern Illinois University, we, like many of our colleagues, have to evaluate flyers, ads, posters, CD-ROMs, and other health messages to use with our students. Often, we find materials lacking or problematic. Many materials use scare tactics, talk down to or cause students to feel bad about themselves. PIE can be used to evaluate media which you are considering for your wellness program. Media which fails to meet any one of these criteria could be "illness" media and should be avoided.

POSITIVE

beneficial, constructive, affirmative, hopeful, optimistic

Positive media contain achievement messages and define what the population should do. They demonstrate protective strategies and model healthy behaviors. They describe a reward or benefit for those who participate in the behavior. These messages nurture and support. They leave the audience feeling good about themselves and the message content.

INCLUSIVE

incorporating, embracing, involving, comprehensive

Inclusive media has a message for everyone in the target population. No one is excluded from access to wellness. There is intentional wording and choice of graphics to include the entire cultural and behavioral spectrum represented in the target population. Special attention is given to separate wellness messages from personal morality, partisan politics, legal arguments and sectarian religion. There are non-judgmental protective messages for abstainer, user, and abuser; for celibate, monogamous, and promiscuous; for skinny, fat, and in-between.

EMPOWERING

them / potent, controlling, energizing, strengthening

A compound word meaning to provide for them command over their condition. Empowering media encourages people to act on their own behalf to solve problems and supports them in taking charge of the problem solving process. Messages should identify resources and access to self-care. Wellness media provide models; people just like the target population, who demonstrate health positive behaviors. Avoid health messages that tell people they are powerless victims. These messages drain energy, eliminate power, and neutralize strength.

Michael P. Haines, MS
Northern Illinois University