

Fashion and beauty as health promotion tools

Fashion has links with many key health promotion lifestyle issues such as

- Sexuality e.g. clothes or makeup to attract sexual partners
- Emotional wellbeing e.g. around body image
- Adolescence e.g. identity
- Obesity e.g. around body shape
- Cancer e.g. sun safety and cancer awareness
- Falls e.g. around safe slippers

It also ties in with many of the wider determinants of health both in the UK and in the Third World such as

- Sustainability
- Sweat shop labour

These therefore offer health workers a range of opportunities to engage target groups interested in fashion and beauty, as well as some direct challenges that may need tackling. Below are some possible examples.

Hands on

- Run art on prescription classes in knitting, textiles etc

‘Going anywhere nice for your holidays?’

- Train hairdressers to pass on health messages in conversation e.g. around sun safety

Use of clothes themselves

- Get fashion students to design stylish T-shirts or accessories promoting health images
- Also get them to design fashionable falls protection underwear as an awareness raising stunt

Clothes as a peg to hang health on

- Run Ann Summers type parties on sex and relationship issues
- Have fashion shows around sun safety
- Have sessions on bra fitting and underwear generally, as a way of also looking at breast awareness, breast feeding etc
- Hold pamper days including makeup and sun safety advice
- Have advice sessions on what clothes suit different shapes, and also address diet and exercise issues. Charity shops might be an interesting partner here
- At health fairs, try using large jigsaws of health and fashion images as a way of attracting people over. Doing the puzzle together also gives you an excuse to talk to people. Many photographic stalls will now produce individual jigsaws quite cheaply

Values and the fashion world

- Produce magazines on fashion and also look at it in terms of eating disorders, self esteem, sexual stereotypes etc. Some audiences might also be interested in issues around fur, leather and healthy vegetarian eating
- Talk to fashion museums. They may be able to interest schools etc in the history of fashion in terms of health and social issues. Possible topics include restrictive clothing preventing wealthier women exercising or clothes as a symbol of identity e.g. Mods and Rockers
- Have fashion parties around recycling or modifying clothes for babies, children or adults. This addresses some of the wider issues of health such as sustainability and consumerism
- Be aware of different standards of dress amongst different cultural religious groups and any bearing that might have on health issues
- Ensure that some target groups aren't put off going to the gym through not having all the trendy gear. Have separate sessions for different groups

Fashion's victims

- Raise the issue publicly with stores of the sexualisation of young children's clothes
- Tackle the issue of supermodels and its impact on anorexia through joining national campaigns
- Cover international public health issues in terms of sweat shop labour in a romantic novel format

Other

- Use the links between football shirts and fashion to involve a wider group of people in the football and health promotion activities in this website
- Also consider the links that music often has with fashion e.g. punk or rave, to look for health education opportunities there too

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