

BSL tool 3: Role model promoted by the digital culture

Introduction into the subtheme

We are all influenced by the digital culture that we are a part of. From early childhood, children observe people (including parents) engaged in different activities using digital devices. Adults, therefore, become digital role models for our children. If digital media takes up most of our time, it distances us from our children and harms our relationships. Children will also start to imitate adults' behaviour. Children may distance themselves not only from their own parents, but also from their peers.

As a part of the wider culture, digital culture can be nurtured in a meaningful way in family life. Digital content and communication can be used to bring together different generations, rather than divide them. It can provide great material for discussions about both positive and negative things that impact on our own thoughts, decisions and behaviours. Parents (grandparents) can discuss different hot topics – stereotyping, bullying, commercialization, manipulation, etc. In this section we provide an example on how to talk about the benefits and harm of advertisements.

The benefits and Harm of Advertisements

Description

Advertisements are everywhere and demand the attention of even the youngest of children. They can shape children's opinions, habits and choices. Here's an example to illustrate how to discuss the meaning of an advertisement and what it does effect.

Age range

From kindergarten to upper secondary school.

Learning objectives

To develop critical analysis skills - careful and attentive observation, attention to detail etc.

To develop critical questioning skills - to raise open questions.

To develop critical interpretation skills –to interpret content/plot referring to the facts/evidence.

To develop critical reflection – to evaluate one’s habits, way of thinking, approaches.

Preparation for the activity

- Before discussion with children, parents/grandparents have to choose an ad and be prepared to raise questions and start discussions.
- Choice of ad and way of discussing will depend on age and situation/context.
- Parents/grandparents have to choose the best time for such activity. For example, after watching a film/movie; before going to buy something; waiting for public transportation and looking at outdoor ads/billboards.

Activity step-by step

Step 1. Think, remember the ads you like or dislike. Ask for examples and justify your assessment. Possible questions for parents/ grandparents:

- What kind of advertising do you like the most / don't like it and why?
- What makes advertising special and eye-catching?
- Why do you think so, on what basis do you say so?

Discuss and evaluate specific ads selected by children in more detail.

- Are they really persuasive, what message do they convey, what values do they demonstrate? Do they display stereotypical approaches? If so, what stereotypes are there?

Step 2. Let’s analyze a specific advertisement, its purpose, nature, aesthetic and ethical aspects based on specific episodes, details. Possible parents’ questions:

- What does an ad want you to know? What is it for? What details are important, beautiful, interesting?
- How to make sure the information in it is correct? How does / does it help to understand, decide, choose?
- Do they use stereotypical thinking, persuade or mislead?

Finally, consider what the children think would be the best (or perhaps worst) advertisement. For example, encouraging nature conservation, sorting rubbish, reading, studying, being careful on the road, consuming healthy products, behaving safely online, choosing quality goods, services, and so on.

Ask the children to justify their choice and list the features of the best / worst advertising.

Step 3. Encourage children to imagine and name, in their opinion, the best / worst advertisement by presenting specific features of good and / or bad advertising.

Possible parents' questions:

- What do you think is the best advertisement? What does it need to be and what should it not be? Why?
- What would be the worst ad? Why? How do we recognize good or bad advertising?

With this task, we want to say that it is suitable for teaching children to look more closely at the mass product of public opinion formation, to analyze and evaluate advertising in various aspects, and to rely on specific examples.

A closer look will help reflection on children's pre-formed attitudes and opinions.

Evaluate advertisements not only in isolation but also in terms of the wider society. It is possible to discuss with older children how similar and different commercial and social advertisements are.

Some doubts that may arise

- *Is it a good example to discuss?* – a good example is one that interests children, draws their attention;
- *Is it a good time to discuss?* – you can use any opportunities that arise when with your children to discuss an advertisement or/and you have to make choices based on an advertisement;
- *Are we competent enough to discuss?* - what matters is not professional competence but the discussion itself.

Questions for reflection, self-assessment and conclusions

- What do you think your children have learned?
- What did you learn?
- What was most difficult?
- What would you do differently next time?

Recommendations on how to adapt to different age-groups

It should be kept in mind that the types of advertisements used will vary according to each child - their age, experience, hobbies, tastes, has his/her own concept of "good" or "bad" advertisements.

It is recommended to refer to personal experience – share how advertising has impacted your own thoughts and behaviour in any time of your life.

References

Bakonis, E., Indrašienė, V., Penkauskaitė, U., Penkauskienė, D., Rakovas, T. (2014). Rekomendacijos tėvams apie vaikų ir jaunimo kritinio mąstymo ugdymą [*Recommendations for parents on developing critical thinking in children and young people*]. Vilnius, Šiuolaikinių didaktikų centras. ISBN 978-609-95515-3-1.