

MEDIA RELEASE

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Protecting girls from sexualisation in the media

The Australian Psychological Society has today released a tip sheet designed to help parents deal with the increasing sexualisation of girls in the media.

The tip sheet, *'Helping girls develop a positive self image,'* contains advice for parents on ways to encourage self-esteem, discuss sexuality and identify healthy role models.

Australian Psychological Society president, Amanda Gordon, said, "The increasing prevalence of sexualised images of children and adolescents in all forms of media has caused widespread concern in the Australian public."

"Girls get many messages about how they should look and behave. Many of these messages are telling them that what matters is how 'hot' or 'sexy' they look or dress, and these are very powerful messages.

"The good news is that parents are powerful too. Parents can teach girls to value themselves for who they are rather than how they look, provide healthy role models for their daughters and advocate for change with manufacturers and media producers," Ms Gordon said.

Ms Gordon said recent research shows an association between sexualisation in the media and increases in depression, eating disorders and low self-esteem in girls and adolescents.

"We urgently need to develop strategies to prevent or reduce the amount of sexualisation that occurs, in order to reduce its effects," Ms Gordon said.

The Australian Psychological Society's tips for parents include:

- Tune in to what your daughter watches and listens to, and ask questions about why girls are portrayed the way they are.
- Encourage girls to participate in activities like sport that emphasise skills and abilities over physical appearance.
- Help your daughter find people to admire who have become heroes not because they are rich or thin, but because they have demonstrated more positive values.
- Talk with girls about why they wish to look a certain way.
- Show her that you like her for who she is and how she thinks, rather than what she looks like.

To download the new tip sheet, please visit: www.psychology.org.au

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Media contact:

To set up an interview or photo opportunity with Australian Psychological Society president, Amanda Gordon, please contact Elaine Grant on: 0412 683 068.

The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 15,700 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.