

Junior Soldiers

Unit 3 : Lesson 5



Free to be you!

PURPOSE : For children to understand that they are unique and loved creations of God, and should be happy being themselves.

'You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body. How you made me is amazing and wonderful. I praise you for that. What you have done is wonderful. I know that very well.'

Psalm 139:13-18

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Psalm 139

Read the JustSalvos' booklet 'Sexualisation of Children: What you need to know.' (*This booklet gives you some great background to the issue as well as some things to think about and some things to do—this will give a great basis for you for this lesson with your Junior Soldiers*)

http://salvationarmy.org.au/justsalvos/up/downloads/Sexualisation_of_Children/infoBook.pdf

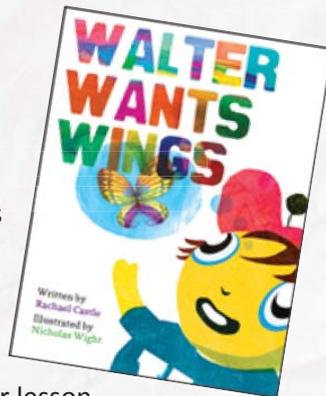
Today's lesson is based around the JustSalvo's children's curriculum that has been put together to address the sexualisation of children.

It is an alarming trend that children are wanting to become more and more like the adults they idolize in the media. This is having devastating effects on their development later in life. However, even in children, we are starting to see serious health and wellbeing issues. Children have the right to be protected, and should be allowed to develop their body, soul and mind in a healthy and supportive environment. As adults, we must begin to tackle and be aware of the aggressive actions of media and advertising targeting our kids, simply to make a profit. We must also begin to prepare and safeguard our children so they are able to withstand the pressures that are placed upon them.

From this lesson, we hope children will learn that they don't need to try to become like the people they see on TV; that they don't need to talk and act in ways adults do in the media; that they don't need to wear the clothes they see adults wear in magazines; that it is right for them to behave and want to behave as children. Above all we hope that children can gain a sense that they are unique and loved creations of God, and should be happy being themselves.

You will find the JustSalvos children curriculum for 'Sexualisation of Children' in this lesson. It is also good to have a look at some other resources available where there might be some things that are helpful for projects or other lessons that you are preparing:

You will also need a copy of *Walter Wants Wings* for this lesson. This is a special children's book that has been written specifically for use with this resource pack and works great with children of all ages (even grown-ups too). It really helps the children to engage with this challenging topic. If your corps does not have a copy of this book then you can buy one from Salvationist Supplies for \$7.50 (order at www.salvationarmy.org.au/supplies).



Things you will need:

- Choose what activities you are going to use for your lesson.
- Source a copy of *Walter Wants Wings*.
- Gather all that is needed for the activities/games/stories you are going to use.
- Print of cards for the Junior Soldiers with the 'Home & Beyond' information on them for each of the Junior Soldiers to place them in their notepad or journal for this weeks challenge.

Home & Beyond

Print off the Home & Beyond cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journal or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

The next lesson for Junior Soldiers is going to be a focus on 'clean in thought'. So, building on the lesson that they have just participated in and in preparation for next time, encourage the children to stop and think about the things they say in their everyday environments and the things they access on television or other forms of media.

Challenge for all ...

Reflect this week on the things that you see...

- On television shows
- In television advertising
- Magazines or 'junk' mail that is delivered to your letterbox
- Signs that you see
- On the internet
- Things that you read
- Games that you play

Stop, think, reflect...

- Are these things that realistically portray children?
- Are these things that God would be happy with me seeing/watching?
- Is this who God created me to be?

Play the 'It's fun to be me' game from the children's curriculum with some people in your family.

- Talk constantly for 30 seconds naming all the things that are amazing and wonderful about you.
- Who can list the most?
- Maybe your family would like to add some other things to your list.



kids just SALVOS

CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

THEME:

FREE TO BE YOU!

SCRIPTURE:

'You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body. How you made me is amazing and wonderful. I praise you for that. What you have done is wonderful. I know that very well.'
Psalm 139:13-18

It is an alarming trend that children are wanting to become more and more like the adults they idolize in the media. This is having devastating effects on their development later in life. However, even in children, we are starting to see serious health and well-being issues. Children have the right to be protected, and should be allowed to develop their body, soul and mind in a healthy and supportive environment. As adults, we must begin to tackle and be aware of the aggressive actions of media and advertising targeting our kids, simply to make a profit. But we must also begin to prepare and safeguard our children so they are able to withstand the pressure that are placed upon them.

In the media, that they don't need to wear the clothes they see adults wear in magazines; that it is right for them to behave and want to behave as children. Above all we hope that children can gain a sense that they are unique and loved creations of God, and are free to be happy being themselves.

SONG:

Have the children come up with a chant or song or cheer that celebrates how good it is to be a child.

STORY

What's all the fuss?



CHOCKY CHALLENGE: BEST ANSWER

Ask for three volunteers to come to the front. A leader needs to act out a peer group pressure scenario, and one at a time, the volunteers need to give their response (use a different scenario for each child so the third respondent does not have more time to prepare an answer than the first child). At the end, choose the child that everyone agrees gave the best response.

Scenario One: Leader says "Don't you know that the only way to be cool is to wear your skirt up really high?" (the child has to respond with an answer)

Scenario Two: "Don't you know that to be friends with me, you need to have a girlfriend?" (the child has to respond with an answer)

Scenario Three: Don't you know that it's un-cool to do well in

school?" (the child has to respond with an answer)

Remind the children that peer group pressure is something they will have to learn to deal with. It doesn't just come from friends at school. It will also come from advertising and TV and magazines. It is important to remember that advertising and the media make everything look wonderful and fun, even though often it is just a trick so you will buy whatever it is they are selling. Let the children know how

important it is to value who they really are, and not to try too hard to look and act like people on TV or in magazines. You were made to be you, and not made to be the person on the TV.

The purpose of the chocky challenge is simply to have fun, and bring the activity back to the theme.



more over...

GET CRAFTY!

YOU WILL NEED:.....
Empty CD boxes, scissors and glue, craft supplies and household bits and pieces (see suggestions below). *We always seem to have empty CD boxes lying around—and if you don't, you can buy them very cheaply at computer or record stores.*

- INSTRUCTIONS:**.....
1. Open your CD box and take out the paper inserts and the molded plastic piece into which the CD itself fits.
 2. Cut your photo to just smaller than the box. You will be fitting it into the back of the box with the hinged edge at the top, so about 10 cm wide and 12 cm high is perfect, but don't worry too much!
 3. Fix the photo against the plastic with a few small pieces of sticky-tape.
 4. Find a nice piece of cardboard, gift wrap or fun foam which will complement your design and cut this to fit snugly behind the photo and to the edges of the frame (12 cm wide, 13.5 cm high).

5. Fix with glue or sticky-tape with the pattern, if any, facing into the box.
6. When your frame is finished you will open the box out to stand it up, so this backing protects your photo.
7. Now all you need to do is draw a line of glue on the outside edges of the front of the CD box and start decorating! Use whatever you have to hand.

You can build on the theme of the photo, the season, or the particular interests of the recipient. Our examples above are obviously on a Christmas theme.

have some fun!

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Kids of all ages may try some of these different suggestions with their class or families.

1. Tell the story of *Walter Wants Wings* to others, and get a copy of the book for your school and local library.
2. Make a poster that shows all of the fun activities kids can do.
3. Watch the youtube clip "dove evolution" and you will see just how they change people in magazines to get them to look the way they do. Sometimes we feel like we need to improve the way we look, but often we are chasing a picture that doesn't really exist!
4. Write a poem about all the good things about you.
5. Make up a song, a rap or a cheer/leading chant that teaches others the importance of feeling good about who you are.
6. Write a letter to a TV channel or your local government when you see an advertisement, music video clip, or TV show that you don't think is good for kids to watch.
7. Complete a project for school on how to be "healthy" rather than just being skinny
8. Organise a debate in your class with the topic "The most important thing in life is how you look."



LESSON:

You can use the 'understanding the story' section of *Walter Wants Wings* to explain the story.

In addition, explain how precious and unique each person is to God. In Psalm 139 we read how God put us together when we were still in our mum's tummy. God knows us so well because he is the one who made us. God made you as a child in such a special way so that you could learn and do things that only children can do. In time, you will get bigger and grow up and God will help you to do the things you need to do as an adult. But as a child, we need to use the time God has given us to enjoy all that it means to be a kid!

GAME TIME:

These games will help illustrate the importance of knowing you are special, and then staying true to who you are.



GAMES WITH PURPOSE

Have one of the leaders stand at the front of the group performing actions that the children must follow exactly when they say "Simon says put your hands on your.... Head or knees, or toes". Or, "Simon says jump up and down, or cluck like a chicken, or....". The last child to perform the action correctly will sit out and become the audience. Tell the children that if they don't want to do the action, they can opt out and become part of the audience.

SIMON SAYS

Start with the normal actions that children would expect, but then move onto more unusual actions that they must follow... "Simon says do a silly dance, or pick your nose, or sing like an opera singer." With more and more children out, the children playing will feel more silly performing the unusual tasks.

At the end of the game, talk to the children about how silly it is to follow a person when that person is doing something you feel uncomfortable doing. Remind them, that in life there will be times they feel pressure to follow someone who is doing something they might not want to copy, and that it is perfectly ok to not go along with them.

IT'S FUN TO BE A KID!

Split the children into groups of no more than five. Let them know that they have three

minutes to come up with as many fun activities kids like to do. (eg. play in the park, get money from the tooth fairy, entre colouring competitions) After the time is up, have the groups read out their activities and have the winning group celebrate their victory.

Remind the children how fun it is to be a kid. Sometimes we wish we were grown ups, and that we could do all the things grown ups can do. It is important to remember that while we can pretend to be an adult while we play, it is healthy to play and behave like a child

You could do this game like in "categories" style where you have to cross the activity off your list if someone else listed it. The winner will be the group that has the most unique activities.

GOD MADE ME SPECIAL

IT'S FUN TO BE ME!

Ask for volunteers one at a time. The child needs to talk constantly for 30 seconds naming all of the things that are amazing and wonderful about them. Get the group to count as they name each quality. The child who can name the most wins!

Remind the children that God thinks they are wonderful. Sometimes we think that we need to be more like people we see on TV, or in music videos, or in magazines, or the popular kids at school. God wants you to value the things he made in you, not the things he made in someone else.

Have a chair in the centre of the room with the children sitting in a large circle a distance away from the chair.

Call out an item or a body part/feature. To win the round, the child with that item/part/feature needs to be the first one sitting on the chair.

Continue calling out items/parts/features making sure some are common (shoe, watch, hair tie, freckles, feet, right-handed etc) and some are unique (ear-rings, red hair, left handed, glasses, lactose intolerant etc)

ITEMS

Make sure you respond positively to the unique traits to make that child feel extra special that they are unique/different from the crowd.

**SEXUALISATION
OF
CHILDREN:
WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW**

**Just
Salvos** 
justsalvos.com



Sexualisation of children– Why should we care?

While victims of injustice and poverty have always had trouble being heard, none have had more trouble, historically, than children. In the Bible, we are told specifically to care for children as they are listed among the most vulnerable victims of injustice. In fact, we are instructed to make this act a sign of true worship to God.

Whether exploited in child labour or prostitution, drafted as young teenagers into armed forces, forced as young girls into a lonely life as domestic workers, deprived of an education to work on the family farm, or denied adequate nutrition and health care, children need help and protection from an adult world that perpetrates most of the abuse.¹ And while we may feel immune to many of these injustices in the developed world, the sexualisation of children by all facets of society is generating a new form of oppression for our children.

Adults are charged with the responsibility of caring for the rights of children, yet laws are failing to protect vulnerable young people who are increasingly being subjected to sexualised imagery. Their inability to process these images has led to

generations of children who feel required to be admired for their beauty and sexuality, not just as adults, but while still children. Sexualising material serves to normalise adult sexual themes to children; this is a major contributing factor to the genesis of problem sexual behaviour in adolescents and young adults.²

We must begin to understand just how pervasive and abusive sexualising children has become, and then we must unite to force the regulations and changes required to protect our children. Too long have we accepted that the innocence of childhood is a value of yesterday, and not only have we failed to protect that innocence, we have become a society that profits from its destruction. Pressuring and exploiting children into cognitively destructive behaviours for financial gain is one of the most harmful practices of the western world, and it is largely ignored by all who have the power to intervene. Children have a right to develop and mature without complex adult themes thrust upon them. Children have a right to develop and mature in a state of innocence. Children have a right to their childhood, and we must ensure that we afford them this right.

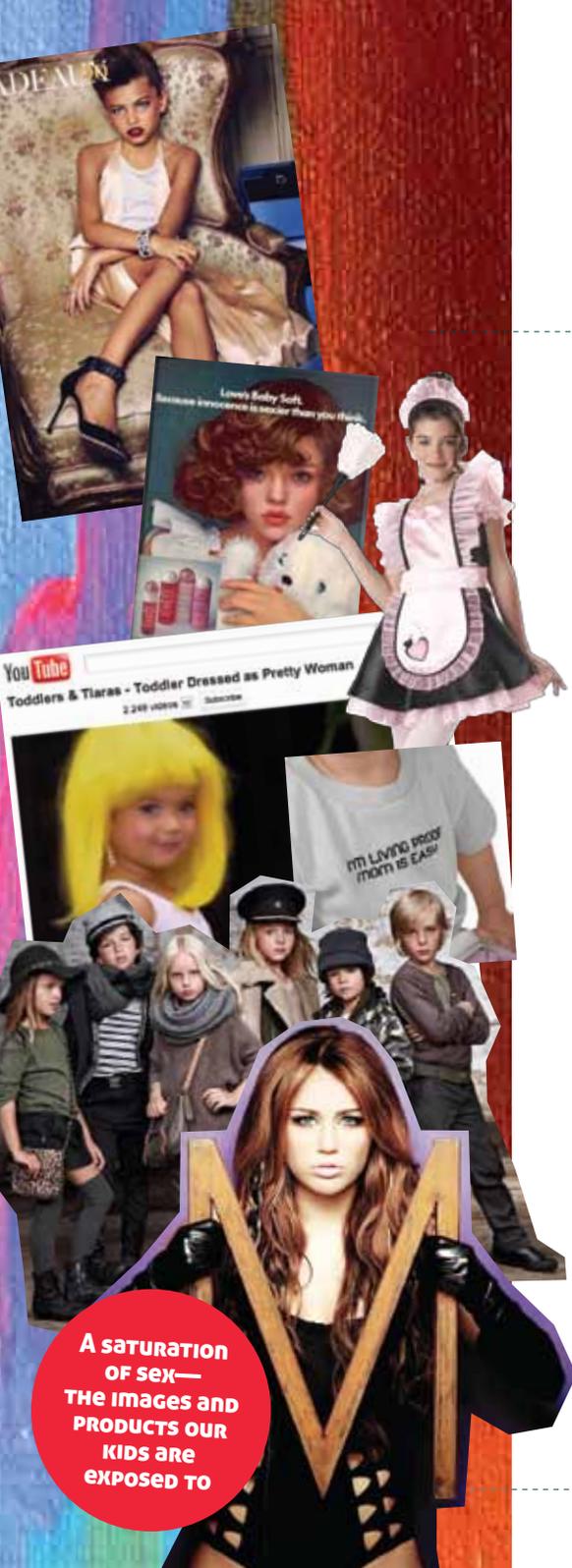
¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, United Nations. ² Women's Forum Australia.

What do we mean by sexualisation?

Let's clarify, this issue is not a product of conservative and puritan values that urge children to be seen and not heard.

Justice for children is not that they would be clothed head to toe and banished from viewing television or any other form of popular culture. This issue is very much about the exploitation of children for financial gain. It is the exploitation of children who have no ability to comprehend how sexualized images attack their cognitive and physical development. While many parents view sexualized content for children as 'just a bit of fun', few fail to realize just how destructive this 'fun' will be for their child.

It has never been unusual for a young child to dress up in mum's make-up and high heels, or to dream of being a firefighter or police officer. Children often live in an imaginary world where they play the roles of adults, and this is a normal and healthy part of their development. However, in recent decades, we have seen a move away from this innocent play toward a more dangerous and sexualised form of play.



**A saturation
of sex—
THE IMAGES AND
PRODUCTS OUR
KIDS ARE
EXPOSED TO**

**CHILDREN see
THEMSELVES as
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PRETENDING TO
BE ADULTS**

We see children adopting stereotypical forms of adult sexuality when they play, rather than simply carrying out stereotypical gender roles. For example, one kindergarten teacher observed that Bratz dolls have changed the way little girls play with dolls: 'They no longer play mother and care for and play with their doll in that nurturing way. They become one of the dolls when they play with them'.³

It is not uncommon for children to affirm that they are 'dating' another child, and the reference to having a boy or girlfriend for a child in preschool is increasingly common. Similarly, the exposure to adult themes in music video clips has had an obvious effect of the way children dance, where sexualised moves are simulated and choreographed. Perhaps the most alarming is the marketing of sexualised products and clothing directly to children, and often by children.

Children are being presented in images or directed to act in advertisements in ways modelled on adult sexual behaviour.⁴ Hipster jeans and

brassieres for toddlers, 'g-strings' for six-year-olds, high heels as everyday wear for small children, and boy clothes that match identically with clothes worn by adult males or that have adult themed slogans upon them—we have moved into an age where the products for children and adults are indistinguishable.

The major difference in play, dance, conversation, clothing and accessories is that instead of the child entering into the adult world as a form of play and imagination, the child begins to live there permanently. Children see themselves as adults, and not as children pretending to be adults. This is not a question of whether children should have some knowledge or understanding of sex. It is a question of whether children should see it as appropriate and necessary to be presented as sexually available, alluring and active.⁵

³ Maggie Hamilton, *What's Happening to Our Girls?*, p.18. ⁴ Rush and LaNauze, 2006, 1. ⁵ Glen Cupit, 'Bratz, Brittney and Bralettes' lecture.

What is happening to our girls?

It has been said that 'one barometer of the health of society is the measure of mental health of our children and young people'.⁶

This measure does not bring us good news. While boys are not immune, social statistics reveal the depth of concern for girls, from physical and mental health to hyper-sexual activity. Strong empirical evidence indicates that exposure to ideals of sexual attractiveness in the media is associated with greater body dissatisfaction among girls and young women, leaving girls feeling 'ugly' and 'gross' or 'untouchable'.⁷

While it is impossible to prove that the facts above are directly correlated to sexualised imagery, researchers are confident that this is a major influence on the mental health of girls. 'A US study of nearly 7,000 girls aged 9 to 14 found that the risk of beginning purging behaviour (vomiting or use of laxatives) increased along with the importance girls placed on looking like females on television, in movies or in magazines.'⁹ And in Australia,

'Studies of body image have now established that 'girls as young as 6 to 7 years of age desire a "thinner ideal body"'.¹⁰

Body image is not the only side effect of sexualisation. The increase in sexual activity among adolescents is at an alarming rate, and the age of sexual activity is ever decreasing. Sex with three or more partners while still of school age has increased dramatically to 25% of all girls, and the number of sexually active girls who have had a bad experience is at 38%.¹¹ It is now 'common' for girls as young as 15 to be sexually active with a partner of 22 years.¹²

Children and young people are not mature enough to understand the complexity of sexual relationships, and yet the portrayal of young people engaging in sexual activity gives the impression that it is not only desirable, but also healthy. Images that portray children as sexual agents who accept or even desire sexual interaction suggest, if only implicitly, that children are

⁶ Anglican Dude, 'Bratz, Brittney and Bralettes' lecture. ⁷Faking it – Women's Forum Australia p31.

⁸ *body+soul* SNS 26/6/11, p13. ⁹Field et al. 1999, p. 35. ¹⁰Dohnt and Tiggemann 2006, p. 141.

^{11,12} Glenn Cupit, *Bratz, Brittney and Bralettes*. ¹³www.tai.org.au/documents/dp_fulltext/DP90.pdf

¹⁴ Glenn Cupit, *Bratz, Brittney and Bralettes*.

capable of meaningfully consenting to such interaction in the way that adults do.¹³

The results are devastating. 'Never have we had so many young people that are anxious, depressed and lonely.'¹⁴ We must act now, or continue to see our young people suffer unnecessarily.

'Never have we had so many young people that are anxious, depressed and lonely.'

A summary of some of the research below gives a painful snapshot of the harmful effects of sexualising girls:

- * 1 in 4 teenage girls in Australia want to have plastic surgery.
- * Self harm is the highest cause of hospital admissions in the 13–19 age bracket. It is estimated at 7% with about ⅓ of admission directly related to depression.⁸
- * 70%–76% of Australian high school girls consistently choose an ideal figure that they wish to have that is thinner than their own.
- * Only 16% of young women are happy with their body weight.
- * 1 in 100 adolescent girls are anorexic
- * 1 in 5 are bulimic
- * Body dissatisfaction has been shown to be directly related to declining self-esteem among girls, negative mood and mood disturbances.
- * 90% girls say they have been on a diet.

What is happening to our boys?

Too often we believe that the sexualisation in the public sphere is only affecting girls and women.

However, if we were to believe that, we would have to believe that our boys are villains, naturally seeking sex and pornography and fulfilling their sexual and violent desires against innocent and unsuspecting girls. If it is true that our girls are being sexualised, then it is also true of our boys.

The consequences of these influences can be devastating. One Australian study¹⁵ showed that 57% of women had experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence over their lifetime, and that more than a third of women experience violence from a former or current partner. In the study, 18% of women reported being sexually abused before the age of 16. Only 1% of the women surveyed identified having been raped by a stranger.

These results are typical across the country, and reveal that males are

perpetrating crimes against women they not only know, but know intimately. We have created a society in which men and boys believe it is acceptable and normal to exert violence against women. We don't excuse the behaviour and we know where this lesson is being taught.

'A five-year-old boy can buy a lad mag and learn that women are only sex objects and he has entitlement to their bodies. If he logs on to Zoo magazine's website, he can watch videos of girls stripping and lap-dancing, one set up as if the woman is being stalked and secretly filmed in her bedroom while she strips, another of a "ridiculously hot" girl being so frightened, she is screaming and crying uncontrollably in a ball. This is not just about sexualisation. Sexual harassment is being eroticised.'¹⁶

Boys are being violated and warped as they grow into men, and leaving the problem and the consequences of the problem in their hands is unfair, and unrealistic. We are not

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women

doing women any favours by ignoring this issue as it relates to boys.

'Boys who are not enthusiastic about (sexualised culture), or speak out against it, run the risk of being ignored or ridiculed, of being labelled "gay", "unmanly" or not liking sex. Boys and young men are under pressure to act out a model of masculinity in which power and control over women, and men, is normal. In which violence is normal.'¹⁷

Speaking out against the sexualisation of boys is incredibly important, not just for the health and well being of girls and women, but for the protection of boys from abusive and/or adult acts they have no natural desire to perform. We must begin to see young boys just as vulnerable to abuse and malformation, as we see young girls, and advocate for their freedom from sexualisation.

Strategies for protecting your child

- 1.** Tell your children from a very early age, and often, that they are loved for who they are, not for how they look.
- 2.** Be open and firm about your personal values and limits, explaining these to your children.
- 3.** As they get older, help them understand that beliefs that link 'beauty' with happiness and success are mistaken. Talk through the opportunities that do lead to happiness and success.
- 4.** Talk about the role of advertising with adolescents. Explain that ads are designed to make you think that being sexy is the same as being successful. Discuss why advertisers (and society) would want us to believe that.
- 5.** Minimize children's exposure to commercial media and kids' magazines, and find alternatives that they can enjoy.
- 6.** Don't buy skimpy clothing or adult clothes for young children.
- 7.** Shop wisely—simply refuse to support a company that uses objectifying images to sell their product.

¹⁵ www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/statistics.html

^{16,17} www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/rachel-bell-our-sexual-obsession-damages-boys-as-well-as-girls-437307.html

Becoming parents to a society of children: Ways you can get involved in the solution

It has been said that the standard you walk by is the standard you accept.

There are multiple ways we can begin to turn the tide on the sexualisation of children, and many of the activities take less than 15 minutes out of our day. We encourage you to look through the following list and become active in this issue, either as an individual, or as a community group.

- 1.** Visit the Collective Shout website for easy ways to get involved in this kind of advocacy (collectiveshout.org).
- 2.** Write to department stores to complain, and applaud where good clothing choices are offered.
- 3.** Write to politicians, and local

business owners expressing your concerns.

- 4.** Write to advertisers, media outlets: newspapers, radio and television networks to tell them how you feel about the message of their products. Advertisers need to be convinced that there is a groundswell of community attitudes on this issue.
- 5.** Find out what advocacy is already happening in your community and join in with their work.
- 6.** Advocate for more research to be performed in this area.
- 7.** Find ways to promote the image of women and children we do want to see.

"There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace."

—Kofi Annan

Resources*

Books to Read:

The New Manhood: the Handbook for a New Kind of Man, Steve Biddulph — Finch
Raising Boys, Steve Biddulph — Finch
What's Happening to our Boys?, Maggie Hamilton
Getting Real—Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls, Melinda Tankard Reist
The Butterfly Effect. A Positive New Approach to Raising Happy, Confident Teen Girls, Danielle Miller
What's Happening to Our Girls?, Maggie Hamilton
Adproofing Your Kids, Tania Andrusiak and Daniel Donahoo
This Little Kiddy Went to Market: The Corporate Capture of Childhood, Sharon Beder (with Wendy Varney & Richard Gosden)
So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualised Childhood, and What Parents Can Do To Protect Their Kids

Research Links:

Letting Children be Children—UK Report of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood.

www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/CM%208078

US Study. Young girls clothing sexualised: Too much Too young.

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/05/110509091420.htm

Films hypersexualise teen girls most.

www.annenberg.usc.edu/News%20and%20Events/News/110422smith.aspx

Impacts of music videos. 2007 Study.

www.sussex.ac.uk/press_office/bulletin/15jun07/article1.shtml

UK Home Office Report on the Sexualisation of Young People.

www.webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/sexualisation-young-people.html

Children Viewing Adult-Targeted TV May Become Sexually Active Earlier in Life

www.prweb.com/releases/2009/05/prweb2386804.htm

Does Watching Sex on Television Influence Teens' Sexual Activity?

www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9068/index1.html

The new American Psychological Association report on the sexualisation of girls

www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html

Corporate Paedophilia by Dr Emma Rush & *Letting Children Be Children* by Dr Emma Rush

www.tai.org.au/index.php?search=letting+children+be+children&act=search&q=node%2F19

Australian Psychological Society Parent Guidelines

—Protecting girls from sexualisation in the media (1)

www.psychology.org.au/news/media_releases/20Oct2007

—Protecting girls from sexualisation in the media (2)

www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/girls_positive_image/