**Activity introduction:**
We have all seen it, it is everywhere in the media – “advice” about how to get a good night’s sleep. Commercial advertising for sleep aids is wedged into regular programming. One might draw the conclusion that very few people rest well at night in America. These media commercials are often formatted as ‘infomercials”, in other words, factual information presented in an objective manner. Upon close examination, however, there is a persuasive bias. In this activity, you will become a “critical user” of advertising about sleep aids. Get ready to think!

**Activity Background:**
Information previously learned about sleep, media, and advertising will be important to remember as you move through this activity.

Media and the messages they send are all around us. Analyzing how media influences consumer-citizens is crucial to an enlightened society. Understanding the difference between fact, non-fact, fiction, persuasion, bias, propaganda, brainwashing and mind control is essential to this purpose. Having cognitive recognition of media messages and making positive choices as consumers promote an informed citizenry. Commercial advertising is sometimes disguised as factual, scientific information, designed to influence the consumer.

Some information on sleep patterns: In the adult population, more than 90% view a lack of sleep as impairment to work performance; 85% say it has negative effects on their ability to get along with others; 37% say that sleepiness gets in the way of their daily activities; 62% say that listening more carefully is much more difficult with less sleep. Fatigue plays a role in over 100,000 police reported highway accidents, leading to 1,500 deaths each year.

In 2002, a poll showed that 74% of all children experienced some sleep problem at least a few nights per week; in 2004 it was 69%. The 2006 poll indicated that only 20% of adolescents get the recommended nine hours of sleep. About 45% said that they sleep less than eight hours on school nights. More than half of those polled go to bed after 11 p.m. More than 28% reveal they are too tired to exercise. Insufficient sleep has a connection to lower, rather than higher grades in school. At the high school level, 28% of students report falling asleep in class; 16% think they have sleep problems. Contributing factors to insomnia in teens are many, including a change in circadian rhythms, consumption of caffeinated beverages, pressures of everyday life, and the presence of stimuli (97% have at least one electronic item in their bedroom, and many have two or more). No wonder the American population in general, and the adolescent population in particular suffers from sleep deprivation.
Activity Materials:
• Student Data Page #1
• Internet access

Activity Instructions: Read all steps and check off as completed.

1. Think for a bit about how you slept last night. Answer these questions in an oral exchange:
   a. When did you go to bed?
   b. How long did it take you to get to sleep?
   c. Did you wake up any time during that sleep?
   d. Did you dream?
   e. How many hours did you sleep?

2. In this ‘jigsaw’ activity, groups will work on one part of a ‘puzzle’ of information gathered from a website. Your essential questions to keep in mind during this activity are:
   a. Do we need sleep aids?
   b. Is one sleep aid more beneficial than another?
   c. How does advertising influence our feelings about sleep?

3. As a class, your task is to analyze and compare/contrast website about sleep.

4. You will form an original group of four. Each group member will go to work with an expert group and return to explain what he or she learned about sleep aids and sleep.

5. Use your computers to go to the website on sleep that your teacher assigns to your group.

6. Fill out the Student Data Sheet with the information you find.

7. Remember to investigate the website thoroughly, to include exploring links.
   a. Read to see how scientific data, persuasion techniques and design influence the website information.
   b. Be sure everyone in your group writes down information on the Student Data Sheet notes other information that the original group might find interesting.
   c. When groups have finished doing research, student experts will return to share with their original group.
   d. Assign someone to be your group leader. This person will ask each expert to share information retrieved about their sleep aid.
   e. As “experts” report to the group, note features of each website that are similar. Also note what differences are present.
   f. Discuss the direct and inferred messages of each website.
   g. With the help of your teacher, organize your group session into a whole-class graphic organizer to compare/contrast your conclusions.
“Myth-Adventures in Advertising” – Truth About Sleep Advertising
Student Data Page Activity 2A

Refer to the Media Evaluation Unit on the Teacher Enrichment Website ([http://teachhealthk-12.uthscsa.edu](http://teachhealthk-12.uthscsa.edu)) for more detail on how to analyze media. Complete this analysis with information from your website:

1. **What product name is featured on this website?**

2. **Describe your website in words (two or three sentences discussing what kinds of features are on the site)**

3. **After exploring four or more links, describe what two of them contain:**

4. **Who is the target audience? (age, gender, income, cultural group, geographic information)**

5. **What persuasion appeal is used (lifestyle testimonial, or slice of life)**
6. How is art design used? (line, texture, shape/form, size, space)

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7. What colors are used and why?

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8. What is the slogan and/or logo?

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9. What is the direct message? Inferred message?

   Direct

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10. After your analysis is complete, discuss the reliability of the information provided on this website?

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