Sex & Relationships in the media

 TIME	50 minutes
 NO.	At least 8 participants
 MATERIALS	• Markers • Flipchart and big papers
 OBJECTIVES	• To help participants reflect on the images and information (re)produced through the media regarding sex and relationships. • To invite participants to understand the role media play in shaping mainstream narratives around sex and relationships and to challenge harmful or reductive stereotypes.
 INSTRUCTIONS STEP BY STEP	1. Start by asking participants to form smaller groups of 3-6 (depending on the total number or participants). 2. Each participant is asked to take a couple of minutes to think individually about a scene (or more if they want) from a movie, TV/web series, music video or any other visual media, around sex or relationships in general that stuck with them. It could be something they found interesting, something you they had never seen or heard before, something that made them feel uncomfortable, or something

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exciting. Some media scenes may be too emotionally triggering or they may be too personal to share. Ask participants to think of something that they will feel comfortable enough to share in their groups.

3. After all participants have taken the time to think of at least one scene, they can start discussing in their smaller groups for **20 minutes**. Below are some questions that facilitator(s) can share with participants to help them guide the discussion and reflect on their thoughts and feelings. They can note down their answers on a paper.
    a. What was the scene about? Could you describe briefly what was happening or what was the main topic addressed?
    b. How did you feel? What was it that brought up this emotion?
    c. What stereotypes or misinformation can we find in media?
    d. What positive or accurate information can be found in the media?
4. After the time for the smaller groups is over ask participants to come back to the big group. A representative from each group will share their group's list with positive and negative examples of representation of sex and relationships in the media, as well as the feelings and emotions that were associated with each one: what emotions were associated with seeing stereotypes or misinformation? What emotions were associated with positive/accurate portrayals? *(20 minutes total -divide time based on number of groups)*
5. Facilitator(s) note down answers in a flipchart divided in two columns (positive +/ negative -).
6. Leave space for questions or final comments.
7. After the end of the discussion participants can come up to blank flipchart and write down recommendations for movies, TV or web series that portray relationships and sex in positive and accurate way.

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 DISCUSSIONS	• Facilitator(s) should guide the discussion connecting the participants responses to how media impact the way we think and feel about sex and relationships, and why it is important to question and challenge what we see. • Although participants are not asked to share their personal experiences or emotions in the big group, even thinking about some images/scenes or hearing other's experiences can bring up strong feelings. Take a couple minutes to check in if there is anything that needs to be addressed before closing off the session. If there is not enough time, invite participants to reach out to you one-to-one during a short break, if they need support.
 HINTS	N/A
 THIS ACTIVITY ONLINE	• To implement this activity online use break-out rooms to divide participants in smaller groups. Each group will discuss separately the questions they are given and create a list with examples of positive and negative representation of sex and relationships in the media. The facilitator(s) should encourage participants to ask for help if needed while they are in the break-out rooms. • After taking the time to discuss in the smaller groups, all participants will come back to the bigger group. A representative from each group will share the list that their group created as well as anything else that may have come up during the group's discussion. • The facilitator(s) can note down the examples using an online board tool (e.g., https://miro.com/) so that they are visible to all participants. • At the end of the activity participants are encouraged to share in the chat movies, TV or web series or any other kind of media

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	that they believe capture issues around relationships and sex accurately and in a positive or educational light.


THEORY
	• The media play a very important role in promoting ideas about sex and relationships. Through movies, TV/web series or even music video clips we are exposed to images and narratives on how sex and relationships can or should be. In many cases the way relationships and sex are portrayed in the media is reductive, oversimplified, promoting stereotypes or negative and shameful views.
	• Although media are not aimed to be used as educational resources, the overall lack of other sex-ed resources and programmes often leads children and youth to use media as their main way to learn about sex and relationships. This is also true for older adults, who may have had even fewer resources to turn to while growing up (e.g., only through cinema or TV).
	• The portrayals seen in the media - as well as those excluded from them - create expectations of how sex and relationships should be. Some reflection-questions we can consider:
	  ○ How is sex portrayed on the media? Is it always spontaneous? Are there prior negotiations or discussions after?
	  ○ What gender stereotypes are engrained in these images? Are men always the “pursuers” and women the ones “pursued”? Are different sexual roles or acts expected from men and women? Are there any portrayals of people outside the gender binary?
	  ○ What about same-gender relationships? Are the portrayed and how?
	  ○ Are all relationships portrayed monogamous? What about other types and forms of relationships?
	  ○ Are sexually active people always young and able-bodied?
	• Having a certain idea can impact our relationships and the way we approach and experience sex: if we constantly see images that do

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	not align with the way we feel we may come to feel shame and push ourselves to conform to what we think is ”normal” or the way we “should” be in relationships. • It is important to understand that both students and teachers have these images, and to be able to challenge the stereotypes and misinformation.

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