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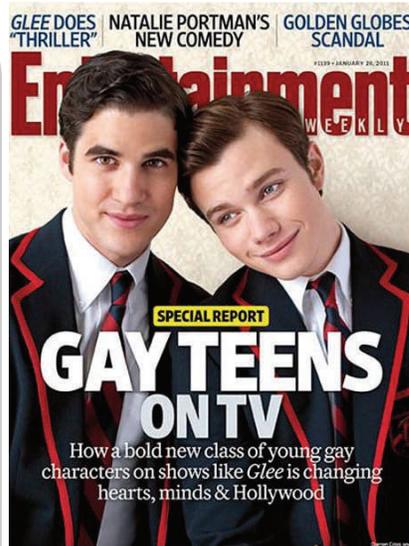
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TIMES HAVE CHANGED...

In January Entertainment Weekly released a magazine with the headline “Gay Teens on TV... How a bold new class of young gay characters on shows like Glee is changing hearts, minds and Hollywood.” The idea of openly gay teens on TV is a relatively new one. In 1992 “One Life to Live” made history by having the first gay teen character on their show. This happened one or two more times in the 90’s and wasn’t very common for most of the 2000’s. Very few shows addressed the topic or even had gay teen characters. However, in 2009 we were introduced to Kurt Hummel, his openly gay teen character on hit show “Glee” seems to have set a new standard for Hollywood. Since 2009 many popular teenage shows such as “Secret Life of the American Teenager,” “Heroes,”

“90210,” “Huge,” “Pretty Little Liars” and “Skins” all have openly gay teen characters. There are currently over two dozen gay and lesbian teen characters on TV. That’s over twice the amount of openly gay teens on TV than all the years before combined!

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU AND YOUR TEEN?

It is crucial for parents to understand that this topic is no longer taboo! Hollywood producers say that the influx in gay teen characters on television is their attempt to accurately portray what is happening in the life of real teens. This is partially based off of recent studies that show schools with Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs is up from 25 percent in 2001 to 45 percent today indicating the increasingly visible role that gay kids are playing in the high school landscape. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force says that the average age of coming-out is now 16 (down from 19-23 in the 80’s). The ETW article suggested that the increase of gay characters on TV is helping teens who are gay to embrace their sexuality and also encouraging parents to respond to their gay teen in a supportive way. It is important that we understand that this is more than just Hollywood’s attempt to accurately portray teenage life. These characters are playing a crucial role in influencing the sexual decisions of a generation. In another ETW article written in 2010 Kris Colfer who plays Kurt on Glee said that he has received letters from 8 year old boys who told him thank you for his character, it has helped me to embrace who I really am. It concerns me to know that impressionable young children and teens are turning to fictional characters for life advice on who they really are. It is imperative that parents understand that teens are being bombarded with a message that says “being a gay teen is a natural part of life.” Don’t leave it to Hollywood to educate your child on God’s standard for relationships.



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RACY NEW MTV SHOW PREMIERED TO OVER 3 MILLION VIEWERS

“it is about the wild ride of being a teenager in America today. Sex, Drugs, friendship and heartbreak.” Producer of Skins

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

This new MTV show has struck a chord with many people across the country. Some are saying it's approaching the point of being child porn. Others are saying it's innovative and provides a real look at where teens in America are at today. After airing to an audience of over 3 million viewers, one thing is for sure, young people will be watching. The premier episode introduces us to several teens who are aimlessly wandering through life trying to figure out who they are. In their attempt to find their identity they are shown seeking escape through drugs and sex. The content has included scenes of wild partying, drug and alcohol abuse, lesbian sex scenes, teens masturbating, looking at porn and plenty of sex. It is a bit of a stretch to say that this accurately defines all American teenagers. However, this show resonates with many teens because they can relate to searching for fulfillment in all the wrong places. Parents should be concerned that young viewers who are in search of their identity may be tempted to follow the lead of Skins.



LOSS OF ADVERTISERS

Skins has received a TV-MA Rating and includes the appropriate disclaimer before each show. This rating is the equivalent of an R rating and means the show is not suitable for teens under 17. However, unless a parent has properly set up the parental controls on their televisions this rating will not stop anybody under the age of 17 from watching it. In fact, many of the actors on the show are under the age of 18. Because of that, The Parents Television Council asked the Department of Justice to investigate whether the 3rd episode of this show violates federal child pornography statutes. This episode shows underage actor Jesse Carere running down the street naked. It shows him from behind and does not show any frontal nudity. However, this uproar has caused many advertisers to pull their commercials from the MTV Show. Shick, Wrigley, Taco Bell and Subway have all pulled their advertisements due to the overt sexualization of teens on "Skins." MTV Spokesperson, Jeannie Kedas issued this statement: "Skins is a show that addresses real-world issues confronting teens in a frank way. We review all of our shows and work with all of our producers on an ongoing basis to ensure our shows comply with laws and community standards. We are confident that the episodes of Skins will not only comply with all applicable legal requirements, but also with our responsibilities to our viewers. We also have taken numerous steps to alert viewers to the strong subject matter so that they can choose for themselves whether it is appropriate."

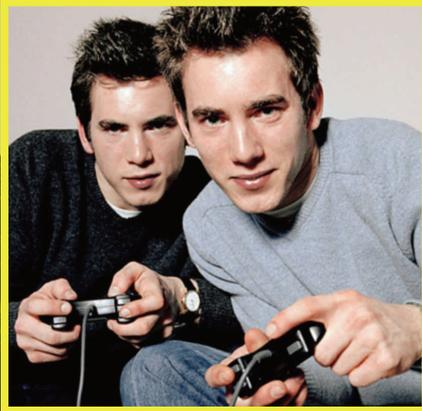


DO TEENS REALLY ACT LIKE THIS?

MTV recently added a new section to their Skins homepage called "Where it Went Down" this is a link to the website whereitwentdown.com. This site displays a world map that is being updated in real time with icons and accounts posted by real teens who anonymously post real stories about themselves for all to read. These stories are short and to the point. The website describes itself like this: *Leave your mark on where it all happened!*

Browse and share the places where memories were made - and the scattered pieces of nights you can't really remember. Post the truth about the biggest parties, heartbreak, friends, sex, and every kind of trouble. It appears that MTV is promoting the destructive behavior that is shown on Skins by encouraging teens to act wild, then tell the world about it. This site should serve as a reminder that our teens are desperately searching for truth and identity. They are not a lost cause but somebody other than skins needs to be their main source of influence.

DEPRESSION and ANXIETY AMONG THE CONSEQUENCES OF GAMING ADDICTION



“It is not a short-term problem, once they get into a problematic pattern, it seems to stick with them.” Douglas A Gentile PhD

IS MY KID A VIDEO GAME ADDICT?

A recent study released in the February issue of Pediatrics highlighted risk factors for video game addiction. Douglas A. Gentile PhD, an associate professor of psychology at Iowa State University authored this study. In summary, he said that video game addiction is much more than just obsessively playing games. It is doing so in such a way that it damages your ability in many other areas, including social function, occupational function, relationships and school performances. He also said other indicators may be if you lie about how much you play or if you have tried to stop but can't. In this over two year study, he found that addicted gamers exhibited impulsive behavior and were more likely to be socially awkward compared with those who were not obsessed with video games. Another interesting finding was that this just isn't something you "Grow out of." Once a kid becomes addicted, it is something that stays with them. They also found that kids who overcame this addiction were less depressed and anxious than when they were obsessive gamers. One question many parents are asking is "Is there a bigger issue going on here?" Gentile said "Video game addiction may feed into other behavioral or emotional issues or cause them." For example "Maybe your grades aren't good so you play games to cope, or maybe you play games excessively to the exclusion of other things such as schoolwork."

WHAT DO I DO? Keep your eyes open! Look for the indicators of gaming addiction. If you feel your kid is having a problem and notice dwindling grades or lack of social interaction, then maybe obsessive gaming is a piece of the puzzle. This study suggests limiting screen time outside of school work (that's all screens computer, TV etc...) to two hours a day.

NEW GAME BRAGS THAT YOUR MOM WILL HATE THIS GAME...



In late January EA released its new M Rated Sci-Fi thriller "Dead Space 2." This game is chalk full of gruesome content. It plays like a horror film, using fear, suspense and shocking gore to intensify the experience. Body parts fly, blood squirts on the screen, you get the point. Some have said that this is one of the top 5 goriest games ever made. Interestingly enough the makers of Dead Space 2 decided to use the fact that parents will hate this game to their advantage. They launched an advertising campaign in which they film real life mothers watching sequences from the game. As you can imagine their reactions were not pleasant. These moms were terrified and offended by the content they were shown. This is the footage that they have used to market this game. Several commercials have aired showing the moms reactions with the tag line "your mom will hate dead space 2." They even went as far as to name the game's official website yourmomhatesthis.com. The message seems to be pretty blatant, "who cares what your parents think." Ironically, this game's rating indicates that it is not appropriate for any one under the age of 18. But, that seems to be the exact demographic Dead Space 2 is targeting.

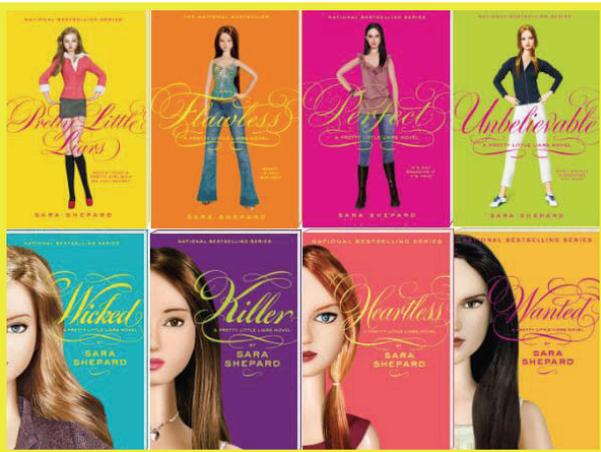
FORMER KID STAR CHANGES HER TUNE.



ALY MICHALKA
formerly of ALY and AJ

Alyson Michalka or better known as “Aly” has been a kid favorite for years. Formerly starring on Disney’s kid hit “Phil of the Future” and making up half of the pop duo 78violet, formerly known as Aly and AJ, Aly grew up in a Christian home and has been very outspoken about her Christian beliefs. In fact, in 2007, Aly and AJ exclusively released their single “Never far Behind” on Christian Rock radio. However, it appears that Aly is the latest child icon to shed her innocent roots. She recently played the role of a promiscuous teen in 2010 hit “Easy A” and plays a similar role as a party girl college student in the new thriller “Roommate.” She also raised eyebrows in December 2010 with her decision to pose in the provocative men's magazine “Maxim.” It’s important for parents to know that this once outspoken Christian, kid favorite is not as innocent as she used to be. As for the content of her music? It is hard to say what 78violet’s new music will consist of. However, Aly and AJ have said that they do not want to be labeled as a Christian band. “We don’t ever wanna preach or shove anything down people's throats, but we want our music to be inspiring.”

PRETTY LITTLE LIARS MAY APPEAL TO TWEENS but is it AGE APPROPRIATE?



“I read this novel because, I started to watch ABC Family's Pretty Little Liars TV series, and I wanted to know what happened.” 11 year old blog writer Book Brat 98

Since the massive popularity of the *Twilight* books teens and tweens alike have been looking for another book series to satisfy their longing for fantasy through reading. The hit show *Pretty Little Liars* on ABC Family has caught the eye of the teen audience. It would be fair to assume even younger viewers have taken interest in this teen mystery series as well.

Pretty Little Liars was actually a book series by Sara Shepard before it made its way to television. Young girls are rushing to buy the books that inspired their new favorite show. While this book series is suggested for ages 14+, it is safe to say that many younger girls are reading these books. A simple search on the internet brings up blogs by readers as young as 11 who are addicted to this book series. Even the book covers themselves appear much more juvenile than the material that is inside, with colorful backgrounds and Barbie like characters on the front. But if you crack the cover to see what’s inside, you will find that these books are not appropriate for a very young audience.

The stories of 5 rich teenage girls who have plenty of secrets and murder mystery to go around are also littered with lesbian make out scenes, struggles with bulimia, and an inappropriate student teacher relationship, not to mention the profanity that is throughout.

Parents should be advised to look closely at these books and the hit TV show before allowing your tween or even your teen to consume these messages.



Parent Discussion questions:

Gay Teens on TV– Do you think gay characters on TV are realistic?

Do you know any openly gay teens in your school?

What do you think God feels about homosexuality? How do you think God feels toward homosexual people?

MTV Skins– Do you think a show that has teens non stop partying and having sex is realistic?

What is destructive about the behavior they portray on the show Skins?

Video Game Addiction-How much video gaming is too much?

How many hours a day do you or your friends play video games?

Why are video games so easy to get obsessed with?

Pretty Little Liars– Have you or your friends watched the show Pretty Little Liars? Have you or your friends read the books?

What things in that show/book are bad for you?