

## Deconstructing media

Every media message has been *constructed* by someone. You can *deconstruct* media messages by examining them closely and carefully, looking beneath the surface to understand their deeper meanings.

A magazine ad, for example, may consist of a photograph, a few words, and a logo. This is the surface, or the *text* of the message. Meaning is created when we look at the ad; you may think “*Using this product will make me more attractive*” or “*I’ll have fun if I use this product*” or simply “*This product is cool*”. These are called *subtexts*.

Deconstruction is simply the process of examining how the media message communicates its meaning. Any piece of media -- a magazine ad, a talk show, a conversation, a movie, a TV commercial, a newspaper, etc. -- can be analyzed in this way.

Use the following questions to quickly deconstruct a media example:

- *Who created this media message? Why?*
- *Who is the target audience? What text, images or sounds suggest this?*
- *What is the text (literal meaning) of the message?*
- *What is the subtext (unstated or hidden message)?*
- *What kind of lifestyle is presented? Is it glamorized? How?*
- *What values are expressed?*
- *What tools or techniques of persuasion are used?*
- *What healthy messages are communicated? What unhealthy messages are communicated?*
- *What part of the story is not being told?*

Don’t worry, there’s no one “correct” way to deconstruct a media example. One of the basic principles of media literacy is that individuals construct their own meanings from media. This means that each of us may have our own interpretation of a particular media message. Just be prepared to explain your responses.

So relax, put your reality glasses on, and have fun!