

## Media Messages – What's In An Image?

Andrew Love  
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If photography and video didn't exist, would you have the same type of images in your mind? You would still have mental images, but where would those pictures come from, and what would they look like?

I was looking at a Zulily ad that popped up in my inbox this morning. The photos were enticing and I couldn't help but click on 5 of them. More products than anyone could ever need, but somehow the beauty and variety was drawing me in. Shoes, clothing, beauty products, crafts, fitness, health -- what is this appealing to? I have all I need of these things, so why am I drawn to look at more? The pull to keep clicking gets stronger with each new image, and I feel more enticed to buy.

### What do you really want and need?

The funny thing is, I'm not an avid consumer. I hate shopping, and I'm frugal. But the overload of beautiful imagery is stirring a desire for something. The perfectly beautiful, stylish, creative, fit and healthy life I wish I had? If I liked shopping and had excess financial resources I probably would have spent a lot of money.

So, I asked myself this question. What if images didn't exist? What would I want, and what would I feel I needed? Food, clothing, shelter, comfort, safety, companionship, love and fun. That's all we need really. But what would these things look like if there were no manufactured images and advertising to create expectations for my life?

It's an important question to consider because we're constantly bombarded with media images that create perceptions and expectations. What does a man look like? What does a woman look like? What's your mental image of happiness and where does it come from? What does love look like?

### The Imprint of Emotional Satisfaction

Before the onslaught of media took over the world, perceptions and expectations of life were formed within family and community relationships. If these relationships were emotionally satisfying, safe, healthy, fun and creative, they would become the model for what we aspired to create in life. Our mental images of beauty, health, goodness, happiness and love would come directly from our own emotional experience rather than from images someone created to convince us of what we want or need.

Now, don't get me wrong, I believe there's a lot of good that comes from media too. Human beings are endlessly creative and we stimulate each other with new and novel ideas. I'm just pointing out that we need to question our mental imagery, perceptions and expectations of life. We need to see the way media influences the way we think and feel.

### What's influencing you?

From birth we're influenced by the thoughts, ideas and emotions of others. Relationship is the context in which we grow and experience life. In today's media saturated world there's a lot of confusing messages out there that we can't avoid unless we grow up in a cave. These are messages about how people relate, how they live, act and feel in every kind of situation.

The imagery and messages we're engulfed in on a daily basis have both a subtle and direct impact on our thoughts and feelings. Pulling on our basic instinct to survive and thrive, advertisers have perfected their ability to entice and gain customers, advocates and devotees. Not just product advertisers, but entertainment and politics also thrive on appealing to your basic instincts to capture your recurring attention and participation. But is it always to your benefit?

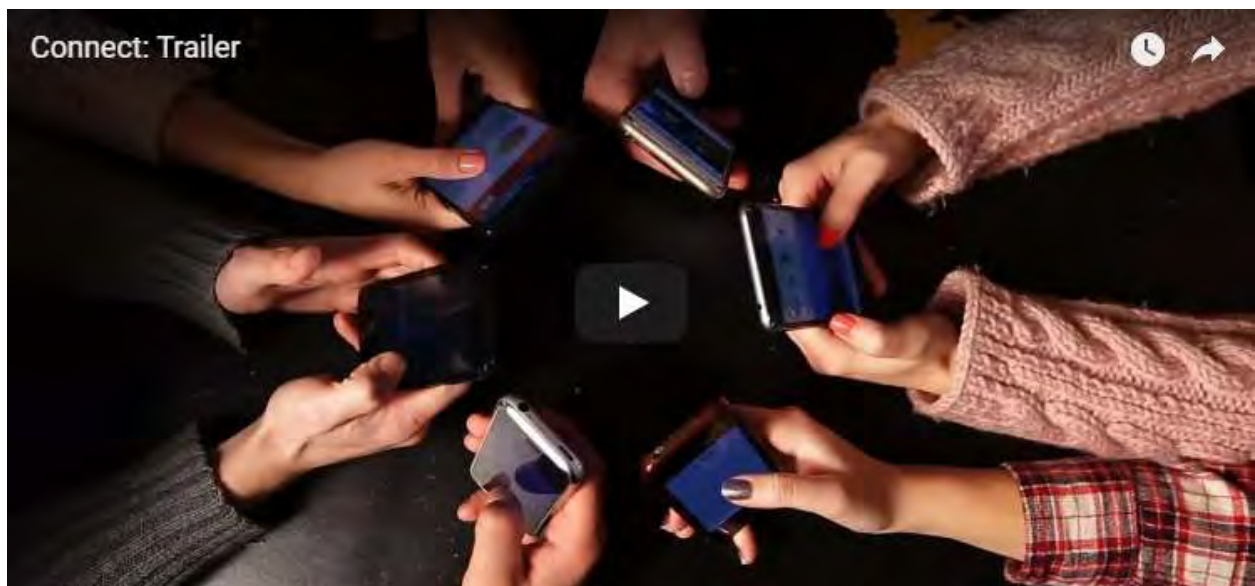
### **The Impact of Media Culture**

Major depression is one of the most common mental illnesses in America, affecting more than 16 million adults each year. It's the leading cause of disability among people age 15 to 44. Suicide is the second largest cause of death for this age group, with one suicide every 12 minutes. I'm not suggesting that media is the sole cause of this, but since our perceptions and expectations of life are so deeply enmeshed with media messages, we have to consider the connection.

So, we have to ask ourselves these questions: "Does the mental imagery I'm working with line up with my deepest heart? Am I fulfilling my real life goals and dreams or an imitation of someone else's idea?" Never are these questions more important than when considering the confusing and conflicting culture that porn media has created.

Due to the rapid growth of technology, there's never been a generation before that's faced the influences of media like today. We need to be aware, and recapture our hearts with mental and emotional images that reflect our true values. For the sake of generations to come, we need to create the message of real love.

Watch this trailer for a new movie: "Connect", by Kirk Cameron – to help us create a better message in our families.



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