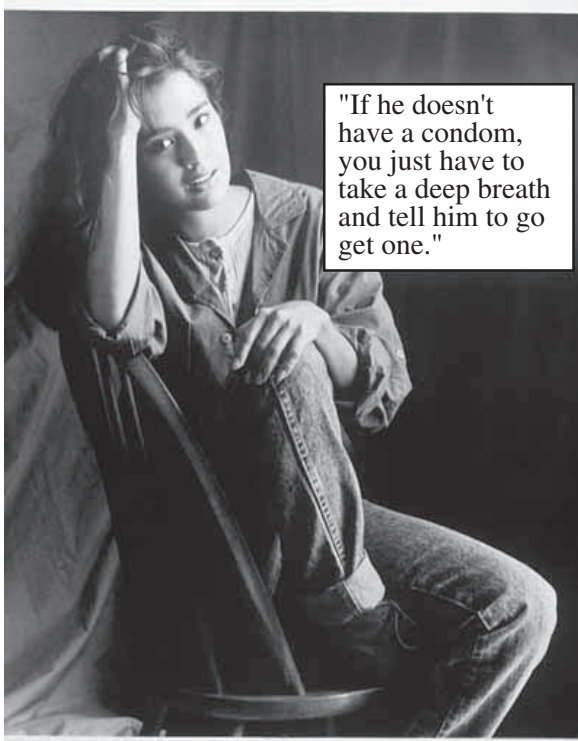


PSA's: A Producer's Guide

Do you want to speak out? Change the world around you? A **public service announcement** (PSA) is an excellent way for you to reach large numbers of people from all different walks of life. It is a way to make a personal message public, to stand up for your beliefs and be heard.

The mass media has often used traditional formats for PSA's, but the most effective PSA's are innovative and creative, using new ideas and methods to present a message. Young people are often the most skilled at finding new ways of self expression. Let's start with some basic guidelines.



"If he doesn't have a condom, you just have to take a deep breath and tell him to go get one."

It's not the easiest thing in the world to say. But these days, you have to. If you're dating someone who doesn't like condoms, talk before having sex. Explain how you feel. Offer to help during the awkward moments. And if this doesn't work, ask yourself, is it worth the risk? For more information on condoms and AIDS, call 1-800-342-AIDS for answers you can count on.

AMERICA RESPONDS TO AIDS

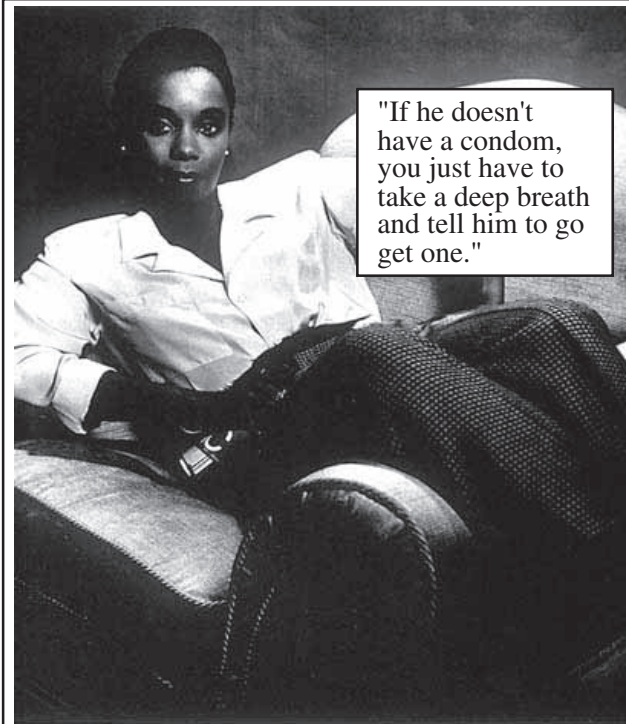
Is your audience male or female? Young or old? Are they students? Are they working?

What is a PSA?

PSA's are short, concise messages, usually produced as a television or radio spot, a poster or print ad, or as an internet web banner. Effective PSA's build awareness, reinforce positive beliefs, change negative behavior and initiate dialogue. A well made PSA will motivate people to take action to improve their communities, families and their own lives.

Who is your audience?

Do you speak to your school principal the same way you speak to your friends? Neither would we. In fact, all day long, you will change the way you speak depending on whom you are speaking to. This is also true when you are speaking through mass media. You must first define your audience in order for your message to be understood.



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AMERICA RESPONDS TO AIDS

CIX

Is your audience African American or another group? Are they working mothers? Single moms?

Who is your **target audience**? Finding your audience is like hitting the bullseye with a bow and arrow. It takes steady aim to define and narrow in on the people that you want to reach. The following questions will help get you started.

- *Where does my audience live?
- *How old are they?
- *Are they male or female?
- *Do they share a common interest?
- *Do they work? Where?
- *What language do they speak?
- *Do they already have information about my issue?
- *Etc., etc., etc. (Keep the questions coming!)

The Message

Now that you know exactly who you want to reach, you can begin to work on the message itself. Whatever the issue is, if you want your PSA to be successful, it must do three things for your audience: **Grab their attention! Hit them with your message! Get them to act!**

A gun in the home triples the risk of a homicide in the home.

CEASE FIRE
Think about your family before you think about getting a handgun.

Cease Fire, Inc. PO Box 33424, Washington, DC 20033-0424

©1997 National Crime Prevention Council

Drug Dealers
Gang Members
Rapists
Arsonists

... all kicked out
with the help of kids like us.

- Jamal, age 15
- Khaleeq, age 16
- Malcolm, age 16

Everybody loves to trash teenagers, right? Maybe they don't realize that we do care. That we can make a difference. Get involved in Crime Prevention. Clean up parks. Teach younger kids. Start a school or neighborhood watch. And help make your community safer and better for everyone. Together, we can prove them wrong by doing something right.

Call Toll Free
1-800-722-TEENS
www.weprevent.org

Ad Council

CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

1. Grab their Attention!

Creativity in 10-30 seconds

This is a test. Say something important about saving the environment. You have 30 seconds. Go. . . It's not a lot of time, is it? Traditional radio or television PSA's are only 10 or 30 seconds long. A person may read a PSA poster or web page banner in 10 seconds or less. PSA's must be simple and concise. Public attention is short, and there is no time to spare.

Pitfall to avoid:

"[Often] PSA's are prepared in the wrong form. Lots of public service advertisers are still distributing 60 second TV spots even though 40 percent of all aired PSA's are 30 seconds in length; 32 percent of all aired spots are 10 seconds."

Joe Adams

"Why Public Service Advertising"

Attention Grabbers



This is where your creativity comes in. There are so many different ways to grab public attention. Your method might be loud and bold or quiet and subtle. While you may want to study existing PSA's and commercials for ideas, the most valuable source of knowledge may come from your own life experiences.

Pitfall to avoid:
"Remember rights and clearances issues. Some of the [youth-produced] PSA's were great but were obviously not using original music. If they are going to use music...make sure it's original."
Kristen Mainzer,
Network Standards,
MTV Networks

Teenagers are the experts on ways to reach other teenagers. You know what will make people your age stop and think. Take your own experiences and look for creative ways to write your PSA's! The big shots at the ad agencies use their own life experiences to write commercials. You can do it too.

2. Hit 'em with your Message!

**JUST BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR KIDS ARE
DOESN'T MEAN YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.**

 <p><i>"My kid doesn't smoke pot. He's either at school, soccer practice, piano lessons or at a friend's house."</i></p>	 <p><i>"I usually get stoned at school, after soccer practice, before piano lessons or at my friend's house."</i></p>
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So if you don't want your children smoking pot, talk to them.
If you need help, visit our websites at www.projectknow.com or www.drugfreeamerica.org
or call 1-800-788-2900 for a free copy of "Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know."

PARTNERSHIP FOR A DRUG-FREE AMERICA®

Clear and simple

You only have a few seconds. If you say too much, the audience will lose interest without gaining understanding. If you say too little people might get the wrong idea, or no idea at all. Make it simple and clear enough to reach the busiest or least interested person in your audience. How will you know if your message works? Do what the professionals do in advertising. Pre-test.

Pre-Testing

Not every idea that you have for a PSA will work. Before you a lot of energy into producing a PSA, try running the idea by people your respect (ad agencies call them **focus groups**). **Pre-test** your ideas with members of your target audience. For example, you could ask a group of young women, ages 13 to 19 if they know what "STD's" are. If they don't, you know that you must say "sexually transmitted disease" instead of "STD" in your PSA.

Pitfall to avoid:
"Very little consideration is given to whether their [public service] ads will attract attention, whether the audience will recall important ideas, whether the message is personally relevant, believable and interesting to the target audience. It doesn't cost a lot to pre-test advertising, but few [producers] do it."
Joe Adams,
***"Why Public Service Advertising
Doesn't Work"***

Tag Line

Most PSA's have a **tag line**. The tag line is a powerful, concise sentence or phrase which sums up the message in your PSA. Have you ever seen the PSA with the father and son eating breakfast? They don't say a word for 25 seconds until an announcer comes on to say "Another missed opportunity to talk about drugs." A powerful tag line says it all.

"To be effective a PSA should be short, relevant to the audience, interesting or entertaining, and have a goal that can be summarized in one declarative sentence."

Margie Goldsmith

"How to Get Results with PSA's"

Accurate, Verifiable Information

Be prepared to back up your statements. You want your message have integrity and accuracy. Your PSA will not be taken seriously (or distributed) if you make claims you cannot back up. How do you avoid this problem? Take the time to do some research. **Verify** your statement with a reliable source and document the source of all information.

3. Get them to Act!

Web banner PSA



NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD
1-800-621-4000
1-800-621-0394 (TDD) For the hearing impaired

It is fairly easy to let people know about an important issue. It is harder to get them to become involved or to act on that issue. Your message must go beyond getting someone's attention and hitting them with a message. An effective PSA will get people to take action!

This may take the form of **contacts and references** of organizations that that can take them one step further. For example, you have created an effective PSA about teenage runaways that will reach many young men and women. You could further help these people if you include local and national 800 numbers for counseling centers.

Contact the **advocacy organizations** in your area that deal with the issues you want to talk about. Describe your PSA and ask them if you could use their name and 800 number. Like your focus groups in pre-testing, the organization may have important suggestions to help you with your PSA.

Now it's your turn. Let's hear what you have to say!

"The PSA's we air have a call to action...In other words, the PSA sends a message and then there is a place people can go or a number they can call to get more information. [The producers] may want to create partnerships with local organizations and run their information at the end [of the PSA]."

Kristen Mainzer

Public Responsibility and Network Standards, MTV Networks