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Girl Power: Accentuate the Positive

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In the American Psychological Association report by the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, the authors offer strategies and resources to counter negative influences on today's young females. Among their suggestions:

- Athletic programs such as GirlSports of Girls Scouts of the U.S.A. (<http://www.girlscouts.org>) provide girls an opportunity to focus on their bodies' competence, rather than its appearance.
- Media literacy programs, which can be included in school sex-ed classes, foster awareness of sexualizing images. Media awards for portrayals of girls "as strong, competent and nonsexualized" make sense, too, the authors note. Organizations that focus on this issue include the Girls, Women + Media Project (<http://www.mediaandwomen.org>).
- Alternative media offer girls more varied perspectives on their bodies and ideas about coping with image-related pressures. Such resources include the webzine "Girl Zone," (<http://www.girlzone.com>), New Moon magazine (<http://www.newmoon.org>) and the book "Body Outlaws: Young Women Write About Body and Identity" (Seal Press, 2004).
- Girl empowerment groups such as Girls Inc. (<http://www.girlsinc.org>) and Girlsforachange (<http://www.girlsforachange.org>) vary in their focus but often emphasize health and competence.
- Activism can empower girls and promote change, the report's authors say. They cite a 2006 grass-roots letter-writing effort initiated by the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (<http://www.commercialexploitation.org>) and Dads and Daughters (<http://www.dadsanddaughters.org>) that persuaded Hasbro to cancel a line of dolls based on the Pussycat Dolls, a musical group known for its sexy songs and dance routines.

-- Stacy Weiner

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