

Kids Unbranded

TIPS FOR PARENTING IN
A COMMERCIAL CULTURE

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"We have become a nation that places a lower priority on teaching its children how to thrive socially, intellectually, even spiritually, than it does on training them to consume. The long-term consequences of this development are ominous."

Juliet Schor¹

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This booklet was written and published by the Center for a New American Dream. Our mission is to help Americans reduce and shift their consumption to improve quality of life, protect the environment, and promote social justice. Since our founding in 1997, we have raised awareness of the negative impact of a hyper-consumer culture. We work with individuals, institutions, businesses, and communities to conserve natural resources, counter the commercialization of our culture, support community engagement, and promote positive changes in the way goods are produced and consumed.

New Dream seeks to change social norms around consumption and consumerism and to support the local movement of individuals and communities pursuing lifestyle and community action. In a society often fixated on “more,” we focus on more of what matters: a cleaner environment, a higher quality of life, and a greater commitment to justice. A key part of that focus is helping parents and caregivers raise healthy, happy children—children with strong values, a sense of community, and meaningful connections to the natural world. Visit us online at www.newdream.org to learn more about our programs.

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Our children remind us that the world is full of wonder and possibility.

They make us laugh, exhaust us with their endless questions, and evoke indescribable feelings of love. We dedicate ourselves to meeting their needs, while endeavoring to foster wholesome values, independent thinking, respect for self and others, and a dedication to the common good.

Raising kids in today's noisy, fast-paced culture can be difficult. For good or ill, modern kids are exposed to a wider world. The voices of home and community have been joined by a chorus of voices from around the globe clamoring for their attention. Unfortunately, an increasing number of those voices view your child not as a young citizen to be nurtured and encouraged, but as a target—a unit in an underdeveloped market to be exploited for gain.

Over the past few decades, the degree to which marketers have scaled up efforts to reach children is staggering. In 1983, they spent \$100 million on television advertising to kids. Today, they pour roughly 150 times that amount into a variety of

mediums—from television to online games to mobile phone apps—that seek to infiltrate every corner of our children's worlds.²

The results of this onslaught are striking. Research suggests that aggressive marketing to kids contributes not only to excessive materialism, but also to a host of psychological and behavioral problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, childhood obesity, eating disorders, increased violence, and family stress.³

The purpose of this guide is to give adults a greater understanding of what children face today, and to offer resources to help parents and caregivers band together to protect children from intrusive and harmful advertising. We believe that it's important to help children reclaim valuable noncommercial space in their lives—space to be children, not merely consumers.



Children as Targets

“You’ve got to reach kids throughout the day—in school, as they’re shopping at the mall, or at the movies. You’ve got to become part of the fabric of their lives.”

CAROL HERMAN

Senior Vice President at Grey Advertising⁴

Pre-teen idol Justin Bieber singing and dancing across a candy-colored stage, with supermodels dressed as toys strutting alongside him—was this a televised concert for the tweens and teens of America? Well, yes and no. This was the 2013 Victoria’s Secret fashion show, and the models were showcasing the latest lingerie trends. But this spectacle was very much intended for today’s youth. The “concert” launched Victoria’s Secret’s Bright Young Things campaign, a marketing push aimed specifically at “young teens.”⁵

Modern children are inundated with a dizzying array of sales pitches in a variety of settings, hawking everything from electronics to apparel to cosmetics, and more. Historically, just a handful of multimedia conglomerates—among them News Corp., Disney, and Viacom—has dominated the cross promotion and selling of popular culture to youth.⁶ Increasingly, even institutions that traditionally have been considered “wholesome” or “non-consumerist,” such as the Girl Scouts and Scholastic, have given in to more aggressive commercialization.⁷

Marketers have focused much of their recent attention on America’s estimated 21 million “tweens” between the ages of eight and twelve, who spend some \$30 billion annually themselves and influence another \$150 billion of their parents’ spending.⁸ But with each passing year, marketers strive to reach younger and younger audiences. In a more than figurative sense, they are stooping ever lower, making their pitches to budding consumers not yet out of diapers. In 2011, *Ad Week* declared infants to three-year-olds to be “the next great American consumer.”⁹ Studies show that by the time they turn three, U.S. children can recognize an average of 100 brand logos.¹⁰

And advertisers aren’t satisfied with merely transforming kids into walking billboards or hooking them through the latest media marketing. They’re embracing stealthier techniques to track children’s private interactions with technology, and with each other. Through social media sites, online games, and mobile apps, marketers can secretly track kids’ preferences and selectively tailor advertising messages to them. To entice kids into filling out surveys or entering valuable personal information, they may dangle cash rewards, product samples, or the opportunity to be part of an exclusive, trendsetting club.



“With a single-minded competitiveness reminiscent of the California gold rush, corporations are racing to stake their claim on the consumer group formerly known as children. What was once the purview of a few entertainment and toy companies has escalated into a gargantuan, multitentacled enterprise ... children are the darlings of corporate America. They’re targets for marketers of everything from hamburgers to minivans. And it’s not good for them.”

SUSAN LINN

*Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*¹¹

“From the time they are born, most children are exposed to hundreds of messages per day designed to convince them that a happy, meaningful life depends in large part on what they own ... not only can these organizations affect children’s current purchases and influence their parents’ consumption decisions, but the stage will be set for children to eventually spend hundreds of thousands of dollars ... in the continued pursuit of ‘the goods life.’”

TIM KASSER, TOM CROMPTON, AND SUSAN LINN¹²

NATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

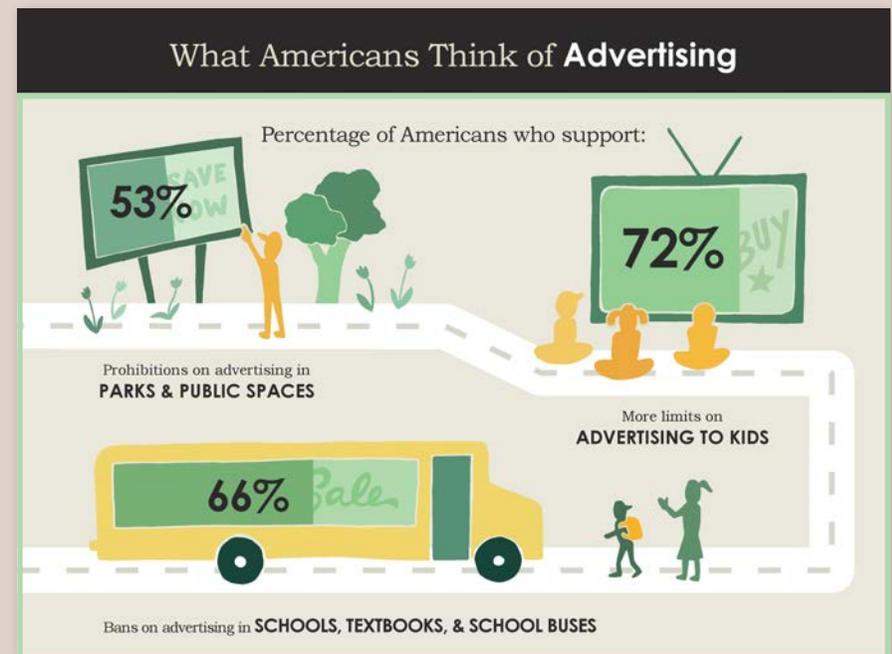
Limiting Advertising to Children

Data indicate that a large share of the American population is concerned about the creeping influence of commercialism in children's lives. According to a national survey commissioned by the Center for a New American Dream in 2014, nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of respondents believe that there should be more limits on advertising to children. The majority of respondents also believe that action should be taken to limit the influence of marketing through screen-based media, in public spaces, and in our children's schools.

SPECIFICALLY:

- **68% of respondents** support a 1% tax on all broadcast advertising, with revenue dedicated to K–12 education
- **66% of respondents** support a prohibition on advertising in schools, textbooks, and school buses
- **57% of respondents** support a prohibition of advertising on children's television programs and websites
- **53% of respondents** support a prohibition of advertising in or on public property like parks and public transportation¹³

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Harming Children's Well-Being

“As tens of thousands of those flickering images melt together into a constant, nagging whisper in children’s ears, specific harmful effects can run the gamut from increased parent-child conflicts to strained family budgets, distorted value systems, and both physical and emotional health problems.”

MICHELLE STOCKWELL

*Childhood for Sale: Consumer Culture’s Bid for Our Kids*¹⁴

Since 1965, the Higher Education Research Institute has surveyed college freshmen across America annually, documenting the changing nature of students’ characteristics, aspirations, values, attitudes, expectations, and behaviors.¹⁵ In 1976, freshmen were asked for the first time in the survey to explain their reasons for attending college. Only half (49.9 percent) viewed being able “to make more money” as a very important reason for attending college.¹⁶ In 2006, 69 percent of college freshmen surveyed listed a higher earning capacity as a very important reason to attend college.¹⁷

Similarly, Dr. Allen Kanner, child psychologist at the Wright Institute in Berkeley, California, has been asking kids over the past few decades what they wanted to do when they grew up. Their answers used to include such job titles as “nurse” and “astronaut.” Kanner says he is now more likely to hear “make money.”¹⁸ He adds: “In my practice I see kids becoming incredibly consumerist ... When they talk about their friends, they talk about the clothes they wear, the designer labels they wear, not the person’s human qualities.”¹⁹

Kanner sees advertising as a prime culprit: “Advertising is a massive, multi-million dollar project that’s having an enormous impact on child development.”²⁰ The result is not only an epidemic of materialistic values among children, but also a “narcissistic wounding” whereby children have become convinced that they’re inferior if they don’t have an endless array of new products.²¹ Author and Boston College sociology professor Juliet Schor reports similar links between immersion in consumer culture and depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and conflicts with parents.²²

Likewise, the violence depicted in advertising and the media can influence children’s interactions with wider society.²³ The American Academy of Pediatrics reports a causal connection between increased displays of aggressive behavior and child-oriented ads for movies, games, and music that are rife

with violent imagery.²⁴ According to a 2009 AAP policy statement, “Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed.”²⁵ Viewing repeated instances of violence increases the likelihood that children will see the world as a dark and sinister place, the AAP says.²⁶

Wheelock College Education Professor Diane Levin sees similar correlations between sexual imagery in children’s ads and increases in eating disorders among girls, adding that as “children struggle to make sense of mature sexual content, they are robbed of valuable time for age-appropriate developmental tasks, and they may begin to engage in precocious sexual behavior.”²⁷ Given the scope of the problem, the American Psychological Association says schools should include information on the negative impacts of the sexualization of girls in media literacy and sex education programs.²⁸

Not surprisingly, causal links have been observed for junk food as well: an explosion of junk food ads in recent years has paralleled rising levels of childhood obesity.²⁹



Commercialism and the Environment

“While not typically seen as an ‘environmental issue,’ those concerned about the environment should be sobered by the increasing commercialization of childhood, as the same generation of children that is being encouraged to prioritize wealth, consumption, and possessions is the same generation that, if current trends continue, will need to drastically reduce its consumption patterns so as to prevent further global climate disruption, habitat loss, and species extinction.”

TIM KASSER, TOM CROMPTON, AND SUSAN LINN³⁰

Recent research shows that the more people care about money, wealth, and possessions, the less they value protecting the environment.³¹ Other studies show that materialistic values correlate negatively with how frequently adults and children engage in pro-environmental behaviors such as commuting by bicycle, reusing paper, buying secondhand, and recycling.³² One analysis even found that among 20 of the wealthiest nations in the world, those whose citizens are most focused on money and achievement have higher levels of carbon dioxide emissions, even after controlling for Gross Domestic Product (GDP).³³

In a 2010 article in *Solutions Journal*, Tim Kasser, Tom Crompton, and Susan Linn argue that limiting marketing to children should be seen as part of the solution to our current environmental problems.³⁴ When today's children inherit these

challenges, they will have to live a substantially altered lifestyle in order to forestall the associated impacts. Rather than preparing them for such a lifestyle, today's culture instead "encourages their adoption of materialistic messages through the television, through targeted messages on their cell phones and Facebook pages, and through viral marketing on the Internet..."³⁵

The authors believe that because children's less-developed cognitive capacities leave them more vulnerable to marketing, they are particularly susceptible to the onslaught of advertisements that encourage them to value materialistic aims that will conflict with their desire and ability to make the changes required to live more sustainably.³⁶ By reducing our children's exposure to marketing now, we will be helping them to prepare for the changes ahead.





Protecting Our Children: Who's Responsible?

“Turning around ... current trends [related to junk food marketing and obesity] will require broad private and public leadership—including the full participation of the food, beverage, and restaurant industries, food retailers, trade associations, advertising and marketing industry, entertainment industry, and the media—in cooperation with parents, schools, and government agencies.”

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES³⁷

Marketers often argue that marketing is not to blame, and that parents should more carefully monitor their children’s media exposure and “just say no” when children beg for the things they see advertised, from junk food to the latest video game.³⁸ And indeed they should. It is undeniably true that parents bear primary responsibility for shepherding children through the commercial culture and must teach discernment and set limits if they wish to protect their children from the media onslaught.

In households with young children, parents are generally the ones who have the money to buy specific products, and it’s their choice whether to purchase them or not. They also need to model the behavior they want in their children, providing healthy alternatives and teaching kids how to make responsible choices on their own.

That said, parents don’t always have the power to turn off the ever-present media machine. Ads and screens are everywhere: in friends’ homes, at restaurants and gas stations, even in the doctor’s office. Marketers go too far when they use the “parental responsibility” argument to imply that they themselves should not be held accountable for egregious intrusions into children’s lives—especially since marketers are increasingly going out of their way to circumvent parents, seeking out children in venues where parents aren’t present.

Overextended parents should not be forced to raise children in plastic bubbles while marketers enjoy free reign to accost kids who unwittingly venture into a commercial world by simply attending school or a public library.³⁹ The fact that parents hold primary responsibility for teaching children positive values does not imply that corporations should be allowed to undermine parents and saturate kids with harmful messages.

THE LAMP:

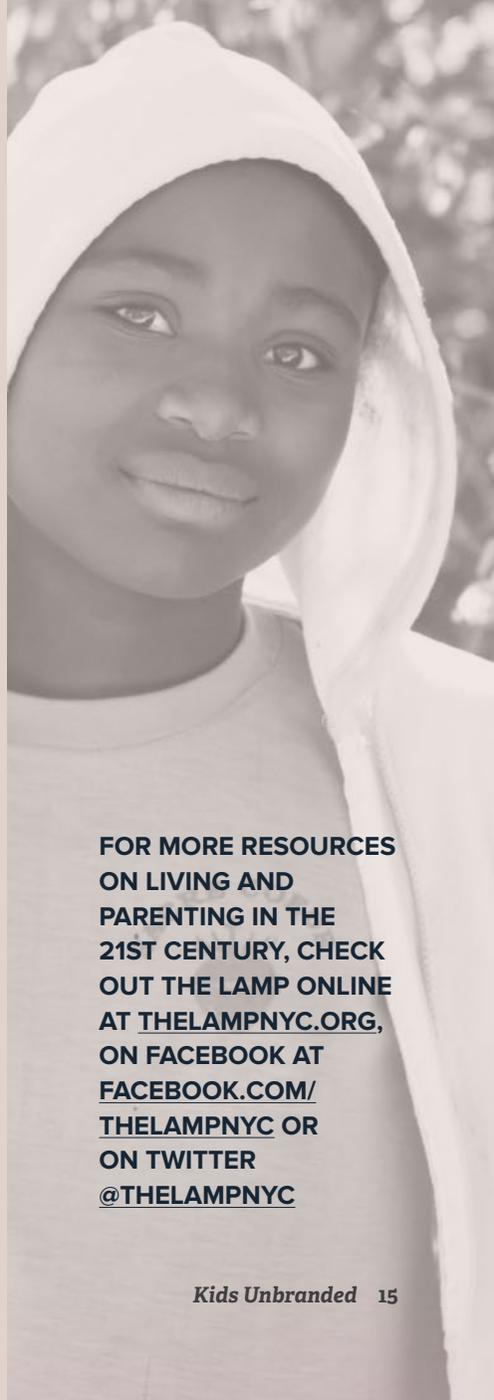
Teaching Young People to Filter and Engage with Advertising and the Media

D.C. VITO

Americans see an estimated 3,000 advertising messages every day. In an urban environment like New York City, where I co-founded an education nonprofit called The LAMP in 2007, it's probably more. Eventually, you don't even seem to notice them anymore, and that's the problem. When ads become normalized, we stop asking questions and accept them as part of our daily landscape.

When students in our "Make a Commercial" workshops create their own fictional product and then write, shoot, and edit a commercial to sell that product, they're pulling back the curtain on how marketers make us aspire to want certain things, and how different products are advertised according to the target customer.

In our "Break a Commercial" workshop, students take actual commercials and remix them using software like iMovie or The LAMP's own MediaBreaker platform. By inserting critical statements that challenge stereotypes and misleading information in ads, they're learning to filter and engage with the media they see every day, and not simply accept messages at face value. The deconstructed, or "broken," commercials created by students are posted online, giving them an opportunity to talk back to mass media producers and disrupt the one-way flow of communication.



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**D.C. VITO IS
CO-FOUNDER AND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE LAMP
(LEARNING ABOUT
MULTIMEDIA PROJECT),
A NEW YORK-BASED
ORGANIZATION THAT
AIMS TO EDUCATE AND
EQUIP PEOPLE TO
SHAPE THE MEDIA
LANDSCAPE THROUGH
HANDS-ON LEARNING.**

When we posted a student’s broken version of a Bratz commercial, the online backlash from Bratz fans was fierce—we were challenging a brand that they had learned to accept as part of their identity. There have been numerous times when broken videos questioning certain stereotypes about women or people of color draw comments like, “It’s just a commercial, get over it.”

What the people who write these comments don’t know is that they are doing exactly what marketers want them to do. They’re so loyal to a concept or a brand that they’re willing to defend it publicly, or else they have bought into the perceived right of a commercial to say whatever it wants. It doesn’t matter how harmful that message may be, because no one pays attention to ads anyway. Right?

If that were true, the advertising industry would not have spent \$1.38 trillion just to reach Americans in 2013. The American Academy of Pediatrics would not be publishing research linking fast food advertisements to childhood obesity, and it would not be issuing policy statements calling for media education.

The truth is that people do pay attention to ads, and more importantly, advertising isn’t going away. But there are things you can do as parents. Encourage your kids to question media: Why was this ad made? Why is it airing right now? How do you feel when you’re watching this? When your child says she wants something, ask her why. The point here is not to negotiate, but rather for you to listen to what she cares about—what messages are getting to her—and for her to practice reflection on why, really, she must have that thing. Teach by example. Moderate your own screen time, and don’t sit rapt in front of TV commercials in the same way you might during an actual show. Mute the ads, start a conversation, and disrupt the flow.



Commercial Television

“Research shows that children under the age of eight are unable to critically comprehend televised advertising messages and are prone to accept advertiser messages as truthful, accurate and unbiased ... For these reasons, a task force of the American Psychological Association is recommending that advertising targeting children under the age of eight be restricted.”

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION⁴⁰

With the emergence of tablets, smartphones, web video, and other wireless video sources, some observers have predicted the demise of television.⁴¹ But the reality is that the average American child views even more TV content these days—as much as 4.5 hours a day.⁴² Popular shows that were once consumed sitting in front of a TV set at a certain time of day are now available 24/7 on tablets, phones, and laptops.⁴³ Through television content alone, children ages 2–11 see more than 25,000 advertisements a year.⁴⁴

Marketing to children isn't limited solely to commercials. Today, there is often very little separation between marketing and content. "Watching an ad is no longer the price you have to pay for watching the show. The ad is the show," says James P. Steyer, author of *The Other Parent*.⁴⁵ Many of your kids' favorite programs—from *The Smurfs* to *Transformers*—were funded and developed by toy companies as direct advertising vehicles for their products.⁴⁶ Music videos aimed at teenagers are often little more than highly seductive advertisements for songs, clothing, and lifestyles. The bottom line is that television in the United States increasingly aims not to educate or to entertain, but to sell.⁴⁷

“Setting limits on television is the single most effective thing we can do reduce children’s exposure to advertising. In the short run, it’s easier to plop young kids in front of the tube. But it is a choice that comes at a cost.”

SUSAN LINN

Director of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and a psychologist at Harvard Medical School⁴⁸

Tips for Limiting Exposure to TV Advertising

- ◆ The obvious first step is to unplug from the television. If going completely TV-free seems impossible, consider setting firm limits on the number of hours watched per day; restricting TV viewing during eating or homework times; and limiting viewing to commercial-free programs or parent-approved videos. Or just DVR the TV shows you like and fast forward through the ads. At the very least, teach your children to mute the commercials.
- ◆ As you're weaning your family off their TV habit, be sure to replace the forgone screen time with fun activities, like bike rides, board games, or walks around the neighborhood. (See page 52 for additional ideas for family fun.)
- ◆ Limit your own TV time! Research shows that parent TV time has a stronger relationship to child TV time than access to television in the home or the child's bedroom, or even parental rules about TV viewing and co-viewing.⁴⁹
- ◆ Let your friends and family know about your goals to limit exposure to TV ads. This way, visits with grandparents and playdates don't become screen-dates.
- ◆ Even if you unplug completely, your kids will still be exposed to ads whether it's on buses, buildings, or in the classroom. And, in fact, you may want to even encourage a reasonable amount of exposure while in your presence. In a series of studies, Dutch researchers found that "active mediation"—making deliberate comments and judgments about commercials and actively explaining the nature and selling intent of advertising—was more effective than sheltering children from ads.⁵⁰

◆ To engage in "active mediation" with your kids, help them understand what an ad is and how to decode it. Teach them the difference between a TV program and a commercial. Use a timer to show younger kids when a commercial begins and ends. Teach them to ask critical questions, such as:

- Who is responsible for the ad?
- What is the ad actually saying?
- Are they leaving out any important information?
- What does the ad want me to do?

◆ Explain the tricks that advertisers use in commercials. For example, teach your kids about how you can make a burger look delicious even after it sits for hours in a photo studio (hint: it involves food coloring, superglue, tweezers, a paintbrush, and waterproof spray!). Check out PBS's [Don't Buy It](#) website to learn more tricks that advertisers use.

◆ Help your kids identify less-obvious forms of advertising. Watch TV with them and find the products and logos used as props or as part of the storyline. Make a game out of it!



Seven Benefits of Going Screen-Free

“Our children are growing up into a world where they will, more than ever, need to be innovative, adaptable and, above all creative ... allowing our homes to be low or no-screen environments will give them the hugest advantage in their lives to come—because it gives them the space and time to transform passive consuming into active creativity.”

KIM JOHN PAYNE, AUTHOR OF SIMPLICITY PARENTING

For additional resources, check out Payne’s website, Simplicity Parenting.com⁵¹



- 1 FEWER INSTANCES OF THE “GIMMIES:”** Generally, a child will pester a parent for a toy three or four times before they accept no for an answer. But if that child watches television regularly, those numbers rise dramatically. A child who is continually stimulated by television will pester about a toy over 30 times, on average!⁵²
- 2 CONTROL OVER MESSAGING:** When parents limit or remove screens from the home, they have much more control of the messages that marketers target directly to our children—messages that include “What you have is not enough,” “You are not complete,” and “You need more stuff (particularly the stuff we are selling!).”⁵³

- 3 MORE CREATIVITY:** Children of low or no-screen homes tend to be more creative in their play. They are very slow to be bored because they are not accustomed to being passively entertained. How curious will a child be if, from a young age, they learn to Google rather than to seek answers on their own?⁵⁴
- 4 MORE FOCUS:** Low or no-screen children tend to be able to focus very well and bring their attention to bear where they choose—their attention spans are very good. They also have good impulse control because they have not been served up a diet of “if you want it, you can get it (and get it quickly).”⁵⁵
- 5 EASIER TO DISCIPLINE:** When parents limit screen time in their homes, discipline becomes much easier. A media diet allows families to deepen their family connections. Because of these healthier relationships, when a time to redirect a child comes up, it comes out of a good, caring, solid relationship.⁵⁶
- 6 MORE POPULAR:** You would think that children raised without screens would not necessarily fit in well with their media-saturated peers. But kids who aren’t raised on a steady diet of screen time are the kids who have fun, creative play ideas at the ready. When other kids are whining about nothing to do, the screen-free kid is the one who says “Let’s build a fort!”⁵⁷
- 7 MORE INNER DEVELOPMENT:** One of the things that concerns me most about this media tsunami is the similarities I see with my prior work as a substance abuse counselor. Much like I observed with drug addiction, I see that people use screens to create “a very socially acceptable” outer stimulation in order to avoid boredom and pain, and to replace deeper inner development.⁵⁸

Kim John Payne has worked as a consultant and trainer to over 150 independent and public schools in the United States as well as to educational associations worldwide. He has also worked as a private family counselor for 27 years and authored several books, including *Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids* and *Beyond Winning: Smart Parenting in a Toxic Sports Environment*.



Beyond the Tube

“Marketing approaches have become multi-faceted and sophisticated, moving far beyond television advertising to include the Internet, advergaming, strategic placement across media, and much more.”

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES⁵⁹

Kids today are adding more and more hours in front of computers, tablets, and phones to the already extensive time in front of the television, and marketers are happy to meet them there. For advertisers, the real breakthrough of the Internet is not the ubiquitous banner ad but the chance to engage kids directly, weaving commercial messages into the content itself. The majority of American teenagers own smartphones, and 9 in 10 use social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, according to a 2012 poll by Common Sense Media, a child-advocacy group.⁶⁰

Consider the emergence of advergaming, or free video games that contain advertisements for products, services, or companies. These games are designed with the goal of encouraging kids to spend time interacting with certain brands. Barbie.com, for example, offers games that enable users to design virtual

dresses for Barbie and her “besties,” design their own “Dream-house,” and even join My World, a free member site where users can customize their Barbie doll “over & over again” and earn “fab B Doll fashions & rewards!”⁶¹

Barbara Kahn, director of the Jay H. Baker Retailing Center at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School, says these marketing strategies are manipulative because “[k]ids can’t differentiate between what’s propaganda and what’s not. And on the Internet, the regulations haven’t caught up.”⁶² She notes that the biggest difference between the Internet and television commercials is the level of interaction: “TV is a passive medium. Kids get mesmerized by TV shows, but they’re not engaged. When they are on the Internet playing a game, it’s much more involving.”⁶³ Moreover, kids tend to watch TV on a bigger screen in an open room, whereas they use smaller, personal screens for Internet viewing, creating more of a private experience that does not allow for in-depth discussion with parents.⁶⁴

Advergaming aren’t the only way our kids are being targeted. Consider the ubiquitous ads on social media. Young people use the Internet to connect with one another, but they may not realize that, while online, they are also connected to a large number of corporations and other institutions. Facebook works with outside parties to track searches and purchases online and to target ads based on this activity.⁶⁵ Celebrities cash in on their Twitter fans by agreeing to endorse certain products through

Too Much Screen Time?

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, youth are multitasking their way through a wide variety of electronic media daily, juggling tablets, smartphones, laptops, and televisions.

Today’s 8-to-18 year-olds consume an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes of screen media per day—almost the amount of time most adults spend at work daily, except that young people use media seven days a week instead of five.⁶⁶

In total, given that kids often interact with more than one medium at a time, today’s youth pack a staggering 10 hours and 45 minutes worth of media content into those daily 7.5 hours.⁶⁷



“It’s one more medium that allows us to be everywhere kids are.”

A NICKELODEON VP describing a plan to send branded ring tones, text messaging, and content to young children’s cell phones⁶⁸

tweets (which, unlike sponsored Twitter ads, are not labeled “Ad”).⁶⁹ Most kids don’t realize that when they sign up for their favorite show’s mobile alerts, they’ve also signed up for ads from all the companies that have purchased this coveted subscriber info.

Even very young children are being targeted. With its DreamTab tablet, DreamWorks (in partnership with technology company Fuhu) has created a device that it can program much like a cable channel, strategically targeting content. “We could push out a new character moment every day of the year,” says Jim Mainard, head of digital strategy and new business development for DreamWorks.⁷⁰ The DreamTab is also designed to communicate wirelessly with DreamWorks-made toys: a “How to Train Your Dragon” action figure, for example, could be used to unlock games and educational experiences on the tablet—just in time for the release of the movie’s sequel.

Tips for Limiting Exposure to Internet Advertising

- ◆ Set limits on Internet time, and avoid unmonitored computer time for young children. Consider keeping computers in high-traffic family areas to avoid social isolation.
- ◆ Talk to your kids about protecting their online privacy. Explain that you give advertisers a lot of information simply by downloading an app or clicking on a sweepstakes. Teach your kids to never click on an ad, do an online quiz, or fill out a form without your permission.
- ◆ Install an effective ad blocker, such as the easy-to-use [AdBlock](#), on your web browser to help prevent your children's online activity from being tracked by marketers.
- ◆ Install and use web browsers that are designed for kids but allow parents to block ads—for example, [Zoodles.com](#) (for ages 3–13) or [kidoz.net](#) (ages 2–8).
- ◆ Get to know the games and the apps that your child is using. Have them show you how the game is played, what kind of information they are required to provide, and what sorts of awards they're earning. Invest the time to really understand—and if you don't approve of the game and its marketing tactics, steer your kids toward games that you find acceptable.



Raising Teenagers in a Screen-Saturated World

LAURA MORTENSON PAVLIDES

A decade ago, our young sons had limited access to a computer, the Internet, and a video game console. A few years later, at 12 and 13 years old, they received their first cell phones to help with family scheduling. But everything changed with smart phones: communication and surfing could now be done privately, so we had to come up with new rules. For instance, the boys aren't allowed to clear their browsing history, and we can ask anytime for their passwords to check any messages or sites.

Cable is a recent addition to our home, with unwanted channels under a parental code lock. When a problem with video games came up, we found that restricting this activity to weekends worked well. We still have only one TV! It's in a main room, so disappearing for hours gaming or channel surfing is much harder to do. In order to "walk the talk," we rarely sit for long in front of the TV; it's usually on just to watch a specific show, or a movie together.

As parents, we've settled on three guiding principles:

- 1 Our teens are responsible for handling their time.** They know that everyone in this world needs a job, and theirs is school. If their grades and comprehension match their abilities and goals (implying that homework is done thoroughly and on time), they can choose how to spend their free time as long as it agrees with our values.

2 We avoid rules requiring us to police them daily. It would make everyone anxious and might encourage teens to hide things. This is the role that the media wants for parents! Rather than be the bad guy and play defense against the media machine that never sleeps, we turn it around. We make the marketers sweat it in trying to compete with our family’s fresh seasonal lineup of entertainment.

3 We offer fun, physical activities that our kids are interested in doing. Many of these are outdoors, build skills they want to learn, or are experiences that they just want to try. Teens need to feel worthy, express their opinions face-to-face, get compliments, and feel like they belong without too much criticism. Real confidence comes from getting good at something, not from “things” or only being in the top school clique. Groups like sports teams, church, or a club can offer the opportunity to be with like-minded, new people. Situations where the age ranges are mixed at a job or through volunteer organizations model what they will find as they get older.

Our teens don’t mind us being around, as long as it’s more on the sidelines. But they need enough experience to recognize that a world without screens and their current social web is often more fun! No video game can outdo coming across deer in the woods, bodyboarding a wave, or petting a real dog who surprises you with an eyeball lick. Without happy times spent elsewhere, young adults will look to the media and anyone agreeable for acceptance, regardless of their ability to handle it. We don’t panic over good doses of alone time, either. Decompressing and hanging out is where lots of great ideas come from!



What do our teens do rather than being on screens? For John (16), it’s surfing, swimming, art, playing guitar, photography, and writing songs or articles. For Chris (15), it’s martial arts, swimming, and volunteering teaching little kids karate.

LAURA MORTENSON PAVLIDES HAS RECENTLY WRITTEN ABOUT CONFIDENCE, PERFECT STORM ECONOMIC SHIFTS, AND SCARLETT O’HARA. MORE AT LAURAPAVLIDES.COM



Print Media

“Instead of just a straight selling of a product, it’s all about how we tell the message in the magazine and how we engage with the kids.”

CLAUDIA MALLEY

Executive Vice President of National Geographic Global Media
(Publisher of *National Geographic Kids*)⁷¹

Print advertising aimed at children is often not given the same attention as screen advertising. But many advertisers see magazines and other written materials as a key pathway to reaching children—in part because the distinction between content and advertising can be made less obvious. The chief strategy officer of a New York advertising agency has noted that, because of all the criticism surrounding direct advertising to children and its connection to obesity, diabetes, and other social issues, “[I]t’s a much more difficult environment to advertise directly in. They [advertisers] have to be a lot more subtle about it these days.”⁷²

As a result, publishers and marketers are becoming more creative about ads, including by running games, contests, and events. *Sports Illustrated Kids*, for example, has featured a

“Sports Day of the Year” (sponsored by Wendy’s) and a “design-your-own-game” contest for Pepperidge Farm’s Goldfish crackers.⁷³ As one parent described *National Geographic Kids*: “The magazine is one huge ad. Even the feature stories are all about selling some popular culture fad. A great example is a story about how the Incredible Hulk ‘evolved’ from its comic book roots through its TV show to its currently released movie version.... They are selling current films or pop singers, not teaching your children anything.”⁷⁴

Children’s magazines are an under-researched medium, but certain studies have shown that print advertising can negatively influence kids’ choices. An experimental study in Australia, for example, found that children who read a magazine that contained food advertisements predominantly chose unhealthy foods when presented with snack choices—whereas those who read magazines with no food ads were less inclined to choose the advertised foods.⁷⁵



Tips for Limiting Exposure to Print Advertising

- ◆ Stock your home with high-quality magazines, books, and articles for your kids to read. As Joe Kelly, a.k.a. The Dad Man, has noted, provide these materials even if your child hasn't asked for them: "It's like stocking the kitchen with healthy snacks, even if she begs only for chips and soda."⁷⁶
- ◆ Examples of great ad-free kids' magazines include Highlights, New Moon, and Stone Soup. Cobblestone & Cricket Publishing produces mind-enhancing magazines for various age levels, including Ladybug (a literature and arts magazine for grades K–2), ask (a science magazine for grades 2–5), Cobblestone (a history magazine for grades 5–9), and AppleSeeds (a social studies magazine for grades 3–5). Many of these may be available at your local library.
- ◆ If your child is reluctant to give up a favorite magazine, flip through each month's issue and use the content as a catalyst for discussion. Try not to lecture about the magazine; instead, ask them why they like certain articles and ads, and teach them about the tricks that advertisers use to promote their products, including using Photoshop and airbrushing.
- ◆ Look critically at the adult magazines you read, and, if you deem the content and/or advertising inappropriate for your kids, avoid leaving these materials out in public spaces in your home."

Empowering Girls Through Feminist Multimedia

When Nancy Gruver’s twin daughters, Mavis and Nia, were in their pre-teen years, she became worried about the low and limited media expectations targeting girls their age. Gruver wanted her daughters to be exposed to media that honored, respected, and celebrated girls and their talents, dreams, and goals.⁷⁷ She had hoped to find media resources that presented girls as individuals with important ideas and who could make the world a better place. But at the time—in 1992—these resources simply didn’t exist.

So Gruver and her daughters decided to develop their own magazine called *New Moon Girls*, a bi-monthly release created by and for girls ages 8–14. *New Moon Girls* differs from mainstream magazines in that readers submit their writing, opinions, and artwork for review by a Girls Editorial Board, which assembles every issue with help from adult staff. The magazine is 100% advertising-free and features sections such as “Herstory” (historical women with fascinating life stories), “Body Language” (honest, accurate information about our bodies), and “Global Village” (girls from around the world teach readers about other countries and cultures). *New Moon Girls* has become a groundbreaking international publication with a loyal following.

To accompany the magazine, Gruver and her staff have added an online component. As the popularity of the Internet surged,

they saw a need for a social network where girls can nurture their creativity and support one another. They created NewMoon.com as a safe, creative, and positive world for girls to interact with one another online, in an adult-moderated environment.⁷⁸

Gruver continues to tackle the issue of media misrepresentation of girls in other ways. As a member of [The Brave Girls’ Alliance](http://TheBraveGirlsAlliance.com), she is spearheading a campaign started by dad Seth Matlins called [#TruthinAds](http://TruthinAds.com) that aims to prevent the harm caused by deceptive photoshopping of people in ads. Gruver is motivated by the fact that 69% of elementary school girls say that magazine images influence their concept of ideal body shape, and over 30% of high school girls and 16% of high school boys suffer from eating disorders.⁷⁹ To get involved with the [#TruthinAds](http://TruthinAds.com) campaign, visit [The Brave Girls’ Alliance](http://TheBraveGirlsAlliance.com).





Toys and Accessories

“[K]ids get toys that come straight out of hit movies or TV shows, toys that come with a preset collection of ideas about who the characters are and how children should play with the toys. This kind of preformed script can rob the child of the ability to create his own story. Instead, he is mimicking the expressions and lines that he is expected to say. A chance for imaginative flights of fancy is lost.”

STUART BROWN, M.D.

Author of [Play: How It Shapes The Brain, Opens The Imagination, and Invigorates The Soul](#)⁸⁰

In addition to media of all types, the accessories of everyday life and play are increasingly becoming tools for commercialism, helping to cultivate and cement children's brand loyalties. From Nickelodeon-themed bedsheets to art supplies featuring Disney characters, branded images are ubiquitous in stores, malls, daycares, and schools. The TV show or movie itself is often just the "hook" for a broader-themed marketing package that includes a seemingly never-ending supply of toys, accessories, clothing, and other products.

By designing toys and accessories to maximize sales and reinforce brands, manufacturers often minimize the educational and child development benefits of these items, including their role in stimulating imaginations and helping kids learn key skills and competencies. Rather than encouraging open-ended play, many of today's media-based toys provide "a pre-imagined story line that takes the place of creative thinking," and pieces are designed to break easily so kids and parents will come back for more.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the strategy of

offering "girl" and "boy" versions of similar products expands the market to encourage additional purchases, while feeding into gender stereotyping that can affect a child's self-image.⁸²

Although peer pressure among kids certainly feeds the consumerism frenzy, parents are also complicit in fostering a "more stuff" mentality. For children as young as one, parents compete to host lavish birthday parties, which for hosts and guests alike can become more about the gifts and goody bags than about celebrating the birthday child.⁸³ One mom lamented on the website UrbanBaby: "Once, the birthday present I bought for the b-day child [a fancy pail and shovel set] was the same exact thing as the goody bag! awkward!"⁸⁴

Other traditional coming-of-age celebrations, such as bat or bar mitzvahs and quinceañeras, are becoming similarly costly and commercialized affairs (check out this [Barbie-themed event](#)), sending increasingly materialistic messages to children.⁸⁵

Tips for Limiting Exposure to Commercialism Through Toys and Activities

- ◆ Surround girls and boys with open-ended toys that require creativity to be fully imagined—such as blocks, art supplies, play kitchens, and dolls—and avoid toys that have a media hook or that offer only one way to play with them. “A good toy is 90 percent child and 10 percent toy,” says Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood director Susan Linn.⁸⁶
- ◆ When seeking out toys, opt for neutral colors and items made from durable, eco-friendly materials like wood. To reduce the cost of these “better-for-you” toys, try secondhand stores and garage sales, or ask friends and family members for hand-me-downs. Search for a [toy library nearby](#), or considering starting one in your neighborhood.
- ◆ When watching videos or movies with your children, be wary of brands and set limits around the marketing “extras”—for example, by making it clear that although you’re seeing the film, you’re not going to buy any toys. If the movie is based on a book, get your kids to read the book first so that they have the chance to envision their own characters and places. If your child wants to re-enact a film’s storyline, try to expand the way she plays about the characters: “Let’s cook dinner for Spider-man” or “Let’s make Elsa’s ice castle out of clay.”⁸⁷
- ◆ For home and school, try to consciously avoid branded food items, décor, clothing, and accessories. (Though if your daughter really wants to wear the Elmo shirt, it may not be worth the battle so long as the rest of your environment is relatively ad-free.)

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- ◆ Research daycares and schools to learn about their advertising policies. Many independent schools, such as Montessori and Waldorf schools, are conscious about not including branded items in their curricula or classrooms.
 - ◆ To deal with excess commercialism at social engagements or friend's houses, start conversations about expectations among parents, or bring up the issue at PTA events.
 - ◆ At parties, curb the stream of branded toys by asking for donations in lieu of gifts (and letting the child choose the

charity). For friends and family members who really want to give gifts, steer them toward non-material gifts by setting up a registry on [SoKind](#). Skip the party favors or hand out small bags of healthy snacks rather than plastic trinkets and other goody bag clutter. Or host a craft party or cookie-decorating party, and the results become the favors.

- ◆ Look critically at ads and promotions and always be on the lookout for teachable moments. The best defense you can give your child is to be a smart consumer.



Tackling the Pink/Blue Divide in Children's Toys

“Toys focused on action, construction and technology hone spatial skills, foster problem solving and encourage children to be active. Toys focused on role play and small-scale theater allow them to practice social skills. Arts and crafts are good for fine motor skills and perseverance. Boys and girls need the chance to develop in all these areas, but many stores divide toys into separate boys’ and girls’ sections ... Both boys and girls miss out this way.”

LET TOYS BE TOYS⁸⁸

These days, it can be difficult to find a toy that is not gender marketed.⁸⁹ Rather than letting parents decide what’s appropriate for their children, most manufacturers and retailers now segregate their offerings into color-coded items that are strategically targeted at either girls or boys. Typically, the “blue” (boy) aisles contain toys related to building, action, and aggression (such as engineering or chemistry sets, robotics toys, and action figures), whereas the “pink” (girl) aisles offer toys related to nurturing, domesticity, and beauty (such as stuffed animals, dolls, fairy and princess items, and art and design sets). By segmenting the market and advertising to a narrower demographic, manufacturers are often able to sell more versions of the same toy.

Gender marketing hasn't always been as prevalent. In a study of toy ads in Sears catalogs over the decades, Elizabeth Sweet, a sociologist at UC Davis, found that the split between "boys" and "girls" toys was largely absent at the turn of the 20th century. It picked up during the pre-and post-World War II years, but then began to disappear starting in the early 1970s. By 1975, very few toys were marketed explicitly according to gender, and nearly 70 percent were gender neutral; some ads even challenged gender stereotypes—depicting, for example, girl pilots and boy chefs. But by the 1990s, Sweet says, the gendered advertising of toys returned to levels similar to those of the 1950s.⁹⁰

Manufacturers claim that they're simply responding to more sophisticated research that shows clear differences between what boys and girls want.⁹¹ Lego, a company that in the 1970s marketed plastic building sets to both genders in a variety of primary colors, launched its girl-oriented "Lego Friends" line in 2011 based on research suggesting that girls and boys have distinctive, sex-differentiated play needs. But not all kids agree: in a letter to Lego that went viral in early 2014, seven-year-old Charlotte Benjamin criticized the company's gender stereotyping, noting that on Lego packaging in the "pink" section, "All the girls did was sit at home, go to the beach, and shop, and they had no jobs but the boys went on adventures, worked, saved people, and had jobs, even swam with sharks."⁹²

Critics say that gender segregation is sending the wrong messages to our children, especially if they want to play with toys marketed to the opposite gender. Such a segmented approach can hurt kids' ability to be themselves and prevent them from discovering their unique talents—implying instead that they have to be a certain way in order to fit in. For girls, there is particular concern that the focus on "pink" toys deters young women from pursuing male-dominated (and more lucrative) professions in the "STEM" fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.⁹³ For boys, there is a concern that they may be discouraged from developing the empathy necessary for understanding the feelings of others.⁹⁴





To break the pink/blue cycle, the U.K.-based [Let Toys Be Toys](#) campaign is calling on toy stores to stop using signage that perpetuates the gender divide. By mid-2014, some 14 large retailers in the U.K. had agreed, including Toys R Us, Marks and Spencer, and Tesco.⁹⁵ Similarly, [Pinkstinks](#), also in the U.K., aims to challenge sexism toward girls in toys, marketing, and media messages; the group recently convinced the supermarket chain Sainsbury's to change the labeling on its dress-up clothes to avoid, for example, designating a doctor outfit for boys and a nurse outfit for girls.⁹⁶ In the United States, similar petitions have been coordinated via groups like [Change.org](#), but with less success.

Meanwhile, more-empowering toy alternatives are emerging. A promotional video for the 2013 hit toy [GoldieBlox](#), developed by Stanford University engineer Debbie Sterling, went viral, in part because of its strong stereotype-busting message. The GoldieBlox kit combines a book with a construction set, so girls can engage in storytelling while also tinkering and problem solving. Another recent toy, the Lottie doll—marketed as a “child-like” alternative to Barbie—aspires to tackle premature sexualization and common stereotypes about body image. And there's even good news on the Lego front: in mid-2014, the company responded to critics by creating a line of female scientist minifigures, including a paleontologist, astronomer, and chemist.⁹⁷



Breaching the School's Walls

Parents hoping to limit excessive commercialism in the home are understandably frustrated when marketers invade parent-free venues. The classroom is a particularly troublesome battleground. A report from the American Psychological Association warns that parents should be especially concerned about in-school commercialism because children have little freedom to avoid such content.⁹⁸ Moreover, in-school advertising may be assumed to have the “tacit endorsement of respected teachers and school officials, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the advertising.”⁹⁹

School advertising abounds in a variety of forms. Many of us are familiar with ads in yearbooks and newsletters, on team uniforms and vending machines, and even on the sides of school buses. But a recent list of school advertising options available for purchase from [Steep Creek Media](#), a Houston-based company that specializes in “mobile media,” indicates far broader options, including website ads, stadium sponsorships, bookcovers/homework folders, event tickets, gym and cafeteria banners, light poles in parking lots, and naming rights to buildings and sports fields.¹⁰⁰

Maybe some of these options seem extreme—but what about box tops? Chances are that your school participates in General Mills’ Box Tops for Education program. It’s a seemingly easy way to raise money, until you consider that you have to buy 50 boxes of Lucky Charms cereal to earn your school \$5.¹⁰¹ Or have you ever ordered from a Scholastic book form or participated in a Scholastic book fair? According to a Scholastic representative, 35–40 percent of the books sold at the typical book fair are linked to a movie, TV show, or video game.¹⁰² Scholastic has generated millions in revenue by providing cover for major companies like Disney and Nickelodeon to sell their products in schools.¹⁰³

Even more worrisome is when marketing makes its way into the school curricula. In 2011, for example, Scholastic distributed to public schools fourth-grade curriculum materials that were funded by the American Coal Foundation.¹⁰⁴ Scholastic’s “United States of Energy” package gave children a one-sided view of coal, failing to mention its negative effects on the environment and human health.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in the Appalachian mining communities of Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia, the Coal Education Development and Resources foundation offers small grants to teachers whose lessons dovetail with its industry-driven mission.¹⁰⁶

And it’s not just the coal industry getting in on the action. Industry groups from the fields of information technology and aerospace have crafted lesson plans aimed at training future employees, while, in the Washington, D.C. area, defense

contractors have sponsored school engineering clubs.¹⁰⁷ In New Jersey, Deloitte LLP, an accounting firm, provided business teachers with glossy classroom materials designed to “help” students figure out their future career paths.¹⁰⁸ Eighteen career paths were profiled, including a writer, a magician, a town mayor—and five employees from Deloitte.¹⁰⁹

The tricky issue for many schools is that, across the country, school districts are chronically underfunded, making them desperate to identify alternative sources of funding. But turning to advertising in schools is not guaranteed to raise significant revenue. A report from Public Citizen that examined advertising programs in the country’s 25 largest school districts found that no program reported raising more than 0.03 percent of the school system’s overall budget.¹¹⁰ Such low revenue generation is a poor tradeoff given the harmful costs of advertising to children.

Each year since 1998, the Commercialism in Education Research Unit of Arizona State University has produced a report detailing trends in schoolhouse commercialism.

TO READ THE REPORTS, VISIT:

[nepc.colorado.edu/ceru/
annual-report-trends-schoolhouse-commercialism](http://nepc.colorado.edu/ceru/annual-report-trends-schoolhouse-commercialism)

Tips for Setting Limits on School Advertising

- ◆ Gather a group of concerned parents or community members to do a walk-through of your school. Look for examples of sponsored materials such as text books with company logos; banner ads on computers; vending machines; and cafeteria banners. Record the information and report it to the local school board with your concerns.
- ◆ If the school board is unresponsive, consider writing an editorial or letter to the editor in your local newspaper to bring attention to the issue. Once the issue has gained notice, start a petition to provide the school board with proof of public opposition to commercialism.
- ◆ Encourage your school to develop a set of advertising guidelines. Ideally, this process would involve parent, teacher, and student involvement. Check out the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education’s [Guide to Adopting Commercial-Free School Board Policies in Your Community](#).
- ◆ Look into alternative ideas for fundraisers. Rather than host a Scholastic book fair, convince your school to try a “Commercial-Free Book Fair.” Increasingly, schools are working with independent booksellers to hold book fairs where you won’t find video games or SpongeBob posters. Check out the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood’s useful [guide](#), which includes tips for changing the culture of book fairs at your school, as well as a list of independent booksellers that support such fairs.
- ◆ For healthy fundraising ideas that avoid peddling junk food to students, be sure to read the Center for Science in the Public Interest’s guide, [Sweet Deals: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy and Profitable](#).

Ban Channel One From Your School!

For more than two decades, Channel One network has provided schools across the nation with television equipment if they agree to carve out class time to watch a daily news broadcast with embedded commercials. Although the broadcast is only 12 minutes long, it adds up: schools with Channel One lose more than a week of instructional time each year, including at least one full day just to the commercials!¹¹¹ Moreover, in addition to regular commercials, Channel One integrates advertising throughout the broadcast.

On May 23, 2012, for instance, the entire 12-minute “news” show was devoted to promoting four television shows on the ABC family network. Channel One also promotes inappropriate websites (such as the highly sexualized gURL.com and Live Psychic Readings, which charges \$7.49 per minute) as well as movies that are not rated appropriately for the age levels being targeted.

Because of the work of concerned parents, Channel One’s days may be numbered. But as of 2012, the network was still being broadcast to 5.5 million students.¹¹² That’s 5.5 million too many.





Junk Food Marketing

“Over the last three years, there have been some improvements to the nutritional quality of fast food, and to companies’ marketing practices. However, the pace of improvement is slow and unlikely to reduce young people’s overconsumption of high-calorie, nutritionally poor fast food.”

**YALE UNIVERSITY’S RUDD CENTER
FOR FOOD POLICY AND OBESITY, 2013¹¹³**

Junk food advertising is big business. Each year, the food and beverage industry spends nearly \$2 billion marketing fast food, sugared cereals, sugary drinks, and candy to children and teens.¹¹⁴ Every day, young people see an average of 12–14 food ads on television alone, many featuring TV or movie characters whose primary intent is to hook children on salty, fatty, and sugary foods.¹¹⁵ This relentless advertising has had an impact on the overconsumption of junk foods and on the dramatic rise in diet-related health problems in children, including obesity and diabetes.

And television is not the only advertising medium anymore. Junk food marketers have found increasingly creative ways to reach children in the digital sphere, including through brand-boosting online techniques that are “outside the scope of most regulatory and self-regulatory” regimes, says João Breda of the World Health Organization.¹¹⁶ Websites offer reward programs, peers are enlisted as brand ambassadors, and companies promote product-related content via mobile apps and social media sites.¹¹⁷ “Coke is the most popular brand on Facebook,” says Jennifer Harris with the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, McDonald’s Happy Meals are by far the most commonly advertised fast food item on kid-oriented websites, according to a 2012 Yale survey.¹¹⁹

Moreover, soft drink and snack food companies pay for the right to place their products and ads in school cafeterias and vending machines, free from competition. Under these exclusive contracts, schools are limited to selling only a certain brand of product and must meet specified sales quotas in order to receive the promised financial benefits.¹²⁰ A 2005 survey of U.S. public schools found that almost half of elementary schools and roughly 80 percent of high schools had exclusive “pouring rights” contracts with soda companies.¹²¹

Marketers have also wormed their way into school curricula, often offering “free” math and reading tools like *The Oreo Cookie Counting Book*, the *Hershey’s Kisses Addition Book*, and *The Story of Coca-Cola*. Other sponsored activities

include “My Coke Rewards,” a soda-marketing program under which schools can earn points toward equipment and supplies, and the McDonald’s programs “Giving Back With Ronald McDonald” and “Book Time With Ronald McDonald.”¹²² Many elementary schools hand out fast-food gift cards for good student performance (one example is the [Pizza Hut “Book It!” program](#) in 41% of schools!), or give prizes for bringing in “box tops,” a trend that encourages parents to buy specific products.

The effects on children’s health far outweigh the potential benefits of these “reward” schemes. Fatty and sugary snacks have been shown to trigger the same pleasure centers in the brain that drive people into drug addiction, leading to bingeing and excess weight gain.¹²³ In less than a decade, diagnoses of Type-1 diabetes among children up to age 19 increased 21 percent, and Type-2 diabetes diagnoses increased 30 percent.¹²⁴

And, while obesity levels seem to have levelled off since 2010, we still have an epidemic on our hands.¹²⁵ Obesity in American children has more than quadrupled since the 1960s, affecting nearly a fifth of all 6- to 19-year-olds in 2008.¹²⁶ It is especially high among minority youth: in 2008, nearly 1 in 3 African-American girls ages 12 to 19 was obese.¹²⁷ This is perhaps unsurprising given that fast food billboards are more prevalent in largely African-American neighborhoods, and that young African-Americans see 80–90 percent more ads for sugary drinks than white children do.¹²⁸



“Food companies must stop marketing junk foods to kids. Voluntary self-regulation is notoriously ineffective. Legislative intervention is essential.”

MARION NESTLE
Author of *Food Politics*

Although advertising is just one among many factors causing obesity and other diet-related health problems, studies show correlations between media consumption and preferences for junk food.¹²⁹ In a 2005 survey of teenagers in 34 countries, researchers found a link between body mass index and the amount of television that teens watched in 22 of the countries.¹³⁰

Food companies are taking advantage of their influence. They design their packaging to include colors, fonts, and characters that prompt children to request their products. Researchers have even found that the characters on the front of children’s cereal boxes are positioned so that they make eye-contact with children in the store!¹³¹ Additionally, food companies pay fees—sometimes called “slotting fees”—to place their products in prominent locations, including at checkout and end-of-aisle displays.¹³²

Tips for Limiting Kids' Consumption of Junk Food

- ◆ To limit your kids' exposure to junk food marketing, reduce their screen time and keep track of what kids are seeing when they do watch TV or go online.
- ◆ When children ask for a specific junk food item, rather than just saying no, find out where they saw the product, then have a discussion. Teach critical viewing skills. Talk about what you see, from images on billboards or touchscreens, to Super Bowl commercials, to websites they visit.
- ◆ Speak up to protect youth from junk food marketing—as a parent, teacher, or consumer advocate. Support actions by groups like the [Center for Science in the Public Interest](#), [Corporate Accountability International](#), and the [Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood](#), which have a wide range of targeted campaigns to fight junk food marketing to children.
- ◆ Teach your children healthy food choices. Involve them in planning meals, going grocery shopping, and preparing food, which can help them become invested in the process and more likely to eat the foods you make. Teach them where food comes from by visiting a local farmers' market or nearby farm, or try planting a few veggies in a home garden. Model smart choices by eating healthy yourself and offering healthy snacks.
- ◆ Support your local “farm-to-school movement” to help bring more locally sourced foods, as well as food and agriculture education, into school systems and preschools. Visit the [National Farm to School Network](#) to learn more.

Fighting Obesity with a Healthy Dose of Family Dinners

Already concerned about the environmental challenges facing us, advocate, author, and producer Laurie David found herself alarmed by daily reports of food recalls, increased food allergies, and links between food dyes and behavioral problems. Laurie took note of the constant media coverage about the rapid rise of childhood obesity and diabetes. She found herself disturbed by the fact that, despite all of the attention, people continued to become sick with preventable diet-related diseases, and food companies still spent billions of dollars on advertisements aimed directly at children.

Tackling big and complicated issues is Laurie's forte, and so when award-winning journalist Katie Couric asked Laurie if she would like to join her in executive producing a movie that would explore the American diet and why so many people are overweight and sick, she said yes. Together, Laurie and Katie produced *Fed Up*, a feature-length documentary that examines the causes and impacts of the childhood obesity epidemic and what can be done about it.

In producing the film, Laurie realized that, for families, eating right has become a monumental challenge. Cultural messages convince us that we no longer have time to cook, and marketers

spend billions persuading us that packaged, processed food is convenient and satisfying. Although studies clearly show that eating home-cooked meals reduces obesity and develops lifelong healthy eating habits, half of American meals are now eaten outside the home. As Laurie learned more about the causes of the obesity epidemic, the solution became crystal clear: the single most powerful thing we can do to eat well is to go into our own kitchens and cook for ourselves.

To encourage families to return to their kitchens, cook real food, and re-connect, Laurie has authored two cookbooks: *The Family Dinner: Great Ways to Connect with Your Kids One Meal at a Time* and *The Family Cooks: 100+ Recipes to Get Your Family Craving Food That's Simple, Tasty, and Incredibly Good for You*. The goal of the books is to inspire parents and kids to take control of what they eat. The recipes are designed to be simple, fast, and "low in the bad stuff and high in the good stuff," says Laurie.



**YOU CAN FIND RECIPES, TIPS,
AND MORE ON LAURIE'S
WEBSITE, [THE FAMILY COOKS](#).**



Raising Your Kids in a Non-Commercial Culture

With hundreds of billions of dollars spent each year on advertising, it's difficult to escape commercialism. Nevertheless, there are things that parents, caregivers, and concerned citizens can do in the home and in the community to stem commercialism's reach into children's lives.

Limit your child's exposure to commercial influences via the television, computer, mobile devices, and mail slot. Focus instead on good old family fun.

Say yes—to time! When you say no to another gadget, say yes to something your child really wants: your time. In *What Kids Really Want that Money Can't Buy*, author Betsy Taylor points to surveys and self-reports indicating that what children really want is time with parents, friends, and extended family. According to a 2003 New Dream poll, 57 percent of children age 9–14 would

rather do something fun with their mom or dad than go to the mall to shop.¹³⁴ Kids yearn to get off the treadmill of constant activities and simply have unstructured fun with their families. Whether it's playing games, cooking, reading together, or just sharing space with the TV and computer off, remember that the best thing you can give your kids is you.

REDISCOVER NATURE. Richard Louv writes in *Last Child in the Woods* that children today are increasingly disconnected from the natural world, even as research shows that exposure of youngsters to nature can be a powerful form of therapy for attention-deficit disorder and other maladies. There is strong evidence, he reports, that independent play and exploration builds broad mental, physical, and spiritual health.¹³⁵

Fostering connections with and respect for nature can also encourage children to think more about their values and how personal behaviors affect the world we live in. A 2009 study found that individuals immersed in natural environments reported higher valuing of intrinsic aspirations (aspirations that include growth, connectedness, and helpfulness) and lower valuing of extrinsic aspirations (aspirations that include money, fame, and image).¹³⁶ In contrast, those individuals immersed in non-natural environments reported increased valuing of extrinsic aspirations and no change of intrinsic aspirations.¹³⁷

Teach your children about advertising, stuff, and money.

ADVERTISING. Poke holes in ad puffery and deconstruct marketing messages you encounter. Make a game out of it with your children—helping them discern what's being sold and how the advertiser is trying to manipulate their desires. You can mute the commercials, and encourage your kids to make up dialogue that makes fun of the ad. For more tips on how to actively engage with your children on the subject of advertising, see pages 19–20.

For older kids, the book *Made You Look* by Shari Graydon offers a visually fun, lighthearted, but substantive look behind the curtain of advertising. In addition to describing traditional marketing methods, she also delves into more “stealth” techniques, such as companies hiring “cool hunters” to hang around trendsetters. The book is filled with provocative questions as well as contact information for watchdog organizations and tips for writing effective complaints.

STUFF. Teach your kids to be conscious consumers. Talk about where things come from, who made them, what they are made of, and what happens when they are thrown away. Seek out products that are made in a more environmentally and socially responsible manner. Teach them that it is sometimes better to buy used or to not buy at all.

MONEY. National surveys reveal that kids are leaving high school without a basic understanding of issues relating to savings and credit card debt. As a result, many fall prey to the aggressive techniques that credit card companies use to attract young clients, from buying lists and entering into exclusive marketing arrangements with schools, to marketing directly to students through the mail, bulletin boards, and tabling—all while promising “free gifts.”

It’s important for parents to teach kids about where the money goes. Check out [The Mint](#), an online site that provides tools to help parents as well as educators teach children to manage money wisely and develop good financial habits. [ShareSaveSpend](#) provides additional resources for parents—and a study of the group’s programs showed that its sessions actually decreased materialism overall and improved self-esteem for those children who started the study with higher levels of materialism.¹³⁸



Ideas for Family Fun That You Can Start Right Now

- ◆ Make up family rituals, starting with the activities, foods, music, and places that your kids love. If they love sports, try making up a new backyard game. If they love music, have a family dance party once a week. If they love to cook or bake, have a weekly family bake-a-thon. If they have a favorite park, go for a nature walk and take special treats; stop mid-way and throw a picnic blanket on the grass to eat your snack.
- ◆ Map out certain days of the week for certain activities. Make one night a week “game night,” during which you choose from a wide range of games. Make another one “reading night” in which you read aloud (or silently), but everyone reads. Another option is “sports night”: play tag outside if the weather is mild, or invent an indoor game.
- ◆ Take a class together! Find a cooking class and make Italian pastas. Or take a painting class that promises a frame-worthy work of art after just two hours. Instead of watching a reality talent show, learn some guitar and play at an open-mike night.
- ◆ Get outside! When possible, plan outdoor family activities. Pack picnic lunches for a weekend hike to a lake or a park. Find a bike or walking trail nearby. Start a garden or, if you lack space, look for a community garden you can join. Go camping, even if just in your backyard. Gaze at the stars.
- ◆ Turn the regular rules upside down for a change, so once a week or once a month, schedule an “indoor picnic” and eat finger foods while sitting on a blanket on the family room floor.

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- ◆ Make dinner together, from appetizer to dessert—and let the kids choose the recipes!
 - ◆ For a deeper challenge, try a device-free detox involving either nature or a serious change of scenery for a week. Go whitewater rafting. Help build a home or center in a less-fortunate community. Whether they admit it or not, the change of perspective and relief from social pressures might just give your kids a view into a whole new world.

SOURCE: IDEAS FROM LAURA MORTENSON PAVLIDES (FEATURED ON PAGES 27–28) AND MEG COX, AUTHOR OF *THE BOOK OF NEW FAMILY TRADITIONS: HOW TO CREATE GREAT RITUALS FOR HOLIDAYS AND EVERY DAY*¹³⁹



Changing Laws and Corporate Behavior

Outside your home, there are ways to tackle excessive marketing and advertising to children by working for deeper systemic change. One pathway to change is to protest the existing legal framework that allows for the harmful intrusion of advertising into our children's lives. Examples from around the world show that this can be an effective method to fend off the onslaught of commercialism into our family lives.

Another important pathway to change is to directly influence corporate behavior by encouraging companies to stop advertising to children or to market healthier options. Given the growing movement toward corporate social responsibility, as well as the rising threat of negative PR from viral social media campaigns, many companies are more willing to respond to parent or consumer concerns than they were in the past.

Laws In the United States

In the U.S., few comprehensive rules exist to regulate marketing to children. Concern over the effects of advertising on children grew in the 1970s, and a 1978 Federal Trade Commission report concluded that children under age seven “do not possess the cognitive ability to evaluate adequately child-oriented television advertising.”¹⁴⁰ But just as the first tentative measures were proposed to reign in advertisers, the industry flexed its muscle and persuaded Congress to effectively strip the FTC of oversight of children’s advertising.¹⁴¹

Since then, only modest safeguards have been put in place, mainly covering television advertising and online data collection. There are rules, for example, that limit the amount of commercial material that can be aired during children’s TV programming and that prohibit kids’ show hosts from appearing in ads during the show.¹⁴² There is also a law aimed at protecting children’s privacy online, called the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).¹⁴³ While this law aims to impose requirements on operators of websites or online services, the FTC modified the guidelines in July 2014 in ways that may make it easier for app developers to obtain parental consent by simply verifying credit or debit card information and by allowing developers to rely on the policies set by app stores to gain consent.¹⁴⁴

Limits on fast food marketing seem to be making greater strides, particularly in schools. U.S. Department of Agriculture

guidelines went into effect in July 2014 that ban ads during the school day for foods that do not meet federal nutrition guidelines, including on vending machines, posters, menu boards, cups, and other food-service equipment.¹⁴⁵ But the government’s definition of what’s healthy remains weak—for example, although schools can no longer promote regular Coke, they can advertise Diet Coke as the “healthier” option. Moreover, critics say that these guidelines may inadvertently (and for the first time ever) give the federal “green light” to the practice of in-school marketing.¹⁴⁶

Models of Laws Around the World

Other countries have taken more decisive steps to protect children from intrusive advertising. Many European countries do not allow children’s television programs of less than 30 minutes duration to be interrupted by advertising.¹⁴⁷ Austria bans the airing of ads before and after children’s programs, and Italy has made it illegal to show ads during TV cartoons. In Greece, no toy advertising is allowed between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. And Brazil, Norway, Sweden, and the Canadian province of Quebec all have taken sweeping action by banning almost all commercial advertising to children under 12.¹⁴⁸

Some laws also focus on content. Costa Rica and the U.K. restrict ads that might result in harm to children’s physical, mental, or social development.¹⁴⁹ Ireland does not allow ads to take unfair advantage of the natural credulity and sense of

loyalty of children, or to exhort children to pester their parents to buy products.¹⁵⁰ In Canada, ads aimed at kids must adhere to a set of specific rules that, among other things, prohibit excessive advertising, exaggerations, and implications that a child must have a certain product to fit in or be cool.¹⁵¹

Regulations for junk food marketing are also beginning to tighten worldwide, with Latin America at the forefront of such efforts. Mexico is planning to ban all ads for junk food and sugary drinks during children’s TV programming.¹⁵² Chile is aiming to ban advertising of food high in sugar, salt, calories, or fat to children.¹⁵³ Ecuador will soon bar industrial food makers from using images of animal characters, cartoon personalities, or celebrities to promote junk food products.¹⁵⁴

The U.K. already bans advertising on radio and television of any foods high in fat, salt, and sugar to children under 16, although the ban doesn’t apply to aggressive online marketing via Internet games and advertising, which critics say is a major loophole.¹⁵⁵ And Taiwan aims to prohibit advertising for five kinds of junk food—potato chips, french fries, pastries, fried chicken, and sugary drinks—on TV channels for children by the end of 2014.¹⁵⁶

Spotlight on Brazil

In 2014, the Brazilian government took a powerful step by effectively banning all advertising to children under the age of 12. The landmark resolution defines all advertising aimed at children as “abusive” and therefore illegal under the country’s consumer protection laws. The ban applies to virtually all methods of advertising, including print ads, television, commercials, radio spots, banners and sites, packaging, promotions, merchandising, actions on shows, and point-of-sale presentations directed at children. Any advertising and marketing in day care centers, nurseries, and elementary schools (including on uniforms and classroom material) is also considered abusive.

Advertisements are considered to be in violation of the rules if they include such elements as soundtracks with children’s songs or sung in children’s voices; childish language, special effects, and excess color; representations of children; cartoons or animations; dolls or similar toys; people or celebrities that appeal to children; child characters or hosts; promotions with prizes or collectable gifts or that appeal to children; and promotions with competitions or games that appeal to children. A consumer advocacy organization, the [Instituto Alana](#), was a driving force behind the new regulation.¹⁵⁷

Tips for Changing Existing Legal Frameworks and Corporate Behavior

- ◆ Contact your local, state, and federal officials to support legislation limiting advertising toward children in general as well as commercialism in our schools. For example, legislation pending in Congress—the Stop Subsidizing Childhood Obesity Act—would change current tax law by preventing companies from being allowed to deduct expenses for advertising and from marketing unhealthy foods to children. If this issue concerns you, contact your representative to support this bill. You can find out who your representatives are at usa.gov.
- ◆ Support the efforts of grassroots groups, such as the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, and Public Citizen, that are fighting for stronger advertising standards and regulations.
- ◆ Challenge the corporations directly! The Internet has made it much easier for individuals to exert pressure on big companies by making it simple to start petitions on sites like Change.org or to raise awareness on social

media sites like Facebook and Twitter. You can, for example, join the [#momsnotlovinit](https://twitter.com/momsnotlovinit) campaign on Twitter, and help raise awareness of the dangers of fast-food marketing aimed at kids.

- ◆ Be persistent! Changing laws and regulations is never easy, but it can be particularly difficult when you're up against corporations with lots of resources on hand.

The Victory Against Channel One: Nick Leon, a high school teacher in California, was dismayed when his school became the first school in the state to install Channel One in 1989. Leon and other teachers sued Channel One and the State of California, stating that forcing students to watch Channel One was against state law.

Although they lost the lawsuit, the courts did rule that the schools had to give students the right not to watch Channel One, but only with their parents' permission. However, when parents called to withdraw their permission, the school

officials would talk them out of it by claiming how beneficial the programming was to their children's education. Eventually, Leon and his fellow teachers gathered enough data to convince the school board that Channel One was "educationally unsound" and certainly not worth the two entire school days that were being lost to just the commercials being aired. In the end, the battle took over five years.¹⁵⁸

In other school districts, parents have brought down Channel One by asking for alternative homerooms, speaking out at school board meetings, writing newsletters, and even staging walk-outs during the program to protest its compulsory nature.¹⁵⁹

Fighting Corporate Data-Mining in Our Schools



“It won’t be easy. There’s a lot of money to be made from students’ data, and powerful forces with deep pockets will certainly try to thwart our efforts. But this ... victory demonstrates the significant power of parents—and that working together, we can stop corporate data-miners from invading our schools.”

JOSH GOLIN¹⁶⁰

In 2013, Josh Golin, associate director of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC), became alarmed when he learned about a Gates Foundation initiative that would grant for-profit corporations easy access to students’ confidential information, under the auspices of developing new data analysis tools for classroom educators. The project, inBloom, planned to share with outside parties sensitive student data including names, home and email addresses, test scores, racial identities, economic and special education status, and even detailed disciplinary and health records—without any guarantee that the information would be safeguarded.

To stop inBloom from taking hold in schools across the country, CCFC organized parents and coalition partners in its home state of Massachusetts. In Illinois, Colorado, and other states,

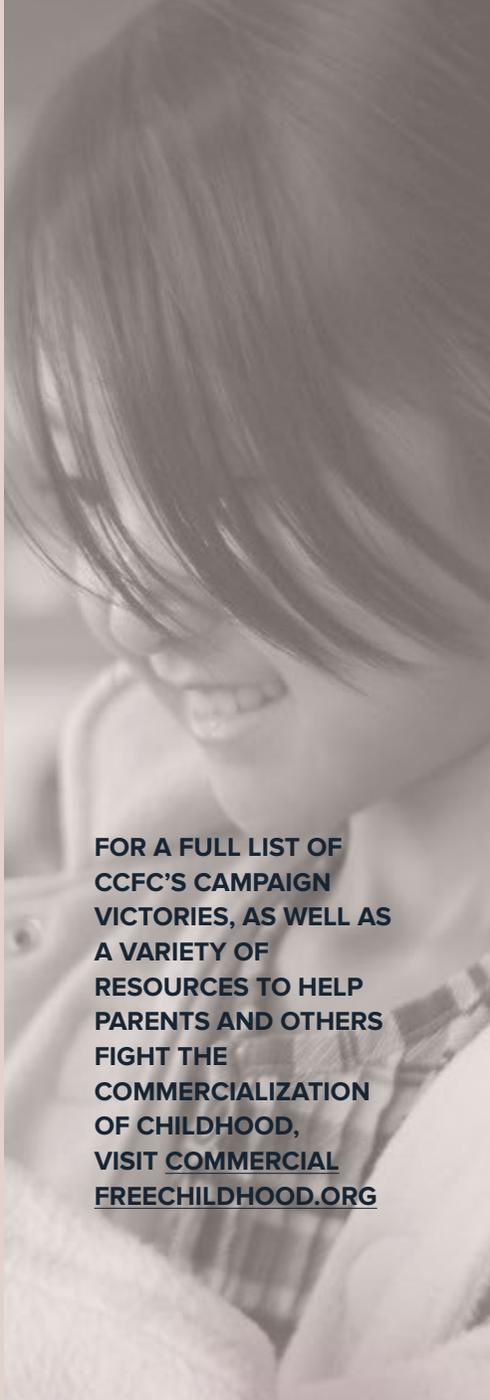
the group provided technical support to local activists and encouraged its members to e-mail education officials and to speak out at school board meetings and hearings.

Thanks to these widespread parent protests, each of the nine states originally committed to participate in the controversial project either officially withdrew or made no plans to move forward. Bowing to the pressure, on April 21, 2014, inBloom officially announced that it would shut its doors.¹⁶¹

Golin believes that this important victory “is one step in what will be a long fight to protect students’ privacy.” CCFC will continue to work with coalition partners to stop marketers from accessing and exploiting students’ confidential data.

The inBloom win is the latest in a long line of CCFC successes in protecting children from exploitative child-targeted marketing. In 2008, the group stopped McDonald’s from advertising on children’s report card envelopes in Florida. In 2009, as part of its ongoing campaign to stop the false and deceptive marketing of baby videos as educational, CCFC convinced the Walt Disney Company to offer an unprecedented refund to anyone who bought a Baby Einstein video. In 2011, CCFC persuaded Scholastic Inc. to stop distributing biased fourth-grade teaching materials paid for by the American Coal Foundation. And for several years running, CCFC has successfully stopped legislation that would allow ads on school buses in states around the country.

CCFC’s mission is to support parents’ efforts to raise healthy families by limiting commercial access to children and ending the exploitive practice of child-targeted marketing generally. Founded in 2000, CCFC has built a powerful movement that promotes a modern childhood shaped by what’s best for kids, rather than by corporate profits.



**FOR A FULL LIST OF
CCFC’S CAMPAIGN
VICTORIES, AS WELL AS
A VARIETY OF
RESOURCES TO HELP
PARENTS AND OTHERS
FIGHT THE
COMMERCIALIZATION
OF CHILDHOOD,
VISIT [COMMERCIAL
FREECHILDHOOD.ORG](http://COMMERCIAL
FREECHILDHOOD.ORG)**

You are not alone!

What you do matters.

The task of conscientious parenting is always daunting, and there's a lot to be gained by reaching out to friends, family, and the community for support in your efforts to reduce the negative impact of commercialism on your children. Find parental support groups. Speak with your parents or other people who have already wrestled with these issues. Together, you'll find creative and innovative solutions that work for you, and we'd love it if you'd share some of your suggestions with us.

Obviously, these tips alone won't single-handedly solve all the problems presented by our commercial world. But it's important to acknowledge that parents do have the power to promote a healthy understanding of the effects of commercialism on our quality of life, the environment, and a just society. This way, we help to raise a generation of young people who can lead happier and healthier lives as they build better and stronger communities. It's a tall order, but it's worth pursuing—for you, your children, and future generations.

Resources

GROUPS DOING GOOD WORK

A number of organizations around the country work to fight against advertising aimed at children and commercialism in schools. These groups provide valuable information and resources for caregivers. Find out more by checking out some of these groups:

Alliance for Childhood: www.allianceforchildhood.net

American Academy of Pediatrics Media and Children Initiative:

www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/Media-and-Children.aspx

American Academy of Pediatrics Media: www.healthychildren.org/english/family-life/media/Pages/default.aspx

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood: www.commercialfreechildhood.org

Center for Ecoliteracy: www.ecoliteracy.org

Center for a New American Dream: www.newdream.org

Center for Digital Democracy's Youth Marketing Site: www.centerfordigitaldemocracy.org/youth-digital-marketing

Center for Science in the Public Interest: www.cspinet.org

Commercialism in Education Research Unit: www.nepc.colorado.edu/ceru-home

Common Sense Media: www.common Sense Media.org

Food Mythbusters: www.foodmyths.org

The Lion and Lamb project (no longer active, but resources still available): www.lionlamb.org

Northwest Earth Institute: www.nwei.org

Obligation, Inc.: www.obligation.org

ParentFurther's Technology and Media Resources: www.parentfurther.com/technology-media

Parents Television Council: www.parentstv.org

PBS Parents, Children and Media site: www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia

Public Citizen's Commercial Alert: www.commercialalert.org

Screen-Free Week: www.screenfree.org

Simplicity Parenting: www.simplicityparenting.com

Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (TRUCE): www.truceteachers.org

Unplug Your Kids blog: www.unplugyourkids.com

Yale Rudd Center's Fast Food f.a.c.t.s: www.fastfoodmarketing.org

RESOURCES FOR ADULTS: HANDS-ON ADVICE

EcoKids: Raising Children Who Care for the Earth by Dan Chiras (New Society Publishers, 2005)

Good Times Made Simple: The Lost Art of Fun by Center for a New American Dream

Her Next Chapter: How Mother-Daughter Book Clubs Can Help Girls Navigate Malicious Media, Risky Relationships, Girl Gossip, and So Much More by Lori Day with Charlotte Kugler (Chicago Review Press, 2014)

More Mudpies: 101 Alternatives to Television by Nancy Blakey (Tricycle Press, 1994)

Parenting Well in a Media Age: Keeping Our Kids Human by Gloria DeGaetano (Personhood Press, 2004)

Prodigal Sons and Material Girls: How Not to Be Your Child's ATM by Nathan Dungan (Wiley, 2003)

Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids by Kim John Payne (Ballantine, 2010)

The Book of New Family Traditions by Meg Cox (Running Press, 2012)

Unplug Your Kids: A Parent's Guide to Raising Happy, Active and Well-Adjusted Children in the Digital Age by David Dutwin (Adams Media, 2009)

What Kids Really Want That Money Can't Buy: Tips for Parenting in a Commercial World by Betsy Taylor (Time Warner, 2003)

ISSUE AWARENESS

Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic by John De Graaf et al. (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002)

Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture by Juliet Schor (Scribner, 2004)

Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers by Alissa Quart (Perseus Books, 2003)

Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Frontlines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture by Peggy Orenstein (Harper, 2012)

Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood by Susan Linn (The New Press, 2004)

Fed Up, a documentary film from Katie Couric and Laurie David (2014)

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv (Algonquin Books, 2005)

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls by Mary Pipher (Ballantine Books 1995)

“The High Price of Materialism” (video) by Center for a New American Dream (2011)

The Other Parent: The Inside Story of the Media’s Effect on Our Children by James P. Steyer (Atria Books, 2002)

The Story of Stuff by Annie Leonard (Free Press, 2011)

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

Healthy Children – Healthy Planet by Northwest Earth Institute

Media Wizards: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Media Manipulations by Catherine Gourley (Lerner Publishing Group, 1999)

Rethinking School Lunch Guide by Center for Ecoliteracy

Smart Consumers: An Educator’s Guide to Exploring Consumer Issues and the Environment by Center for a New American Dream and World Wildlife Fund

RESOURCES FOR KIDS AND TEENS

“Don’t Buy It!” on analyzing media messages (PBS Kids)

Get Real: What Kind of World Are You Buying? by Mara Rockliff (Running Press Teens, 2010)

The Gift of Nothing by Patrick McDonnell (Little, Brown, & Company, 2005)

Henry Hikes to Fitchburg by Donald B. Johnson (Houghton Mifflin, 2000)

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1971)

Made You Look: How Advertising Works and Why You Should Know by Shari Graydon (Annick Press, 2013)

New Moon magazine, edited by and for girls age 8 to 14

The Center for a New American Dream thanks Meg Cox, Laurie David, Josh Golin, Nancy Gruver, Laura Mortenson Pavlides, Kim John Payne, and D.C. Vito for their contributions, and Tim Kasser, Juliet Schor, Jessica Almy, and Kate Klimczak for their careful review of and helpful suggestions for improving the draft.

This booklet was updated in 2014 by Edna Rienzi and Lisa Mastny. Designed by Eleanor Cleverly and Sarah Parkinson. Stock photography used under a Creative Commons license.

THE CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN DREAM ALSO GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS, WHOSE FINANCIAL SUPPORT MADE THIS BOOKLET POSSIBLE:

Aaron Ahuvia	Bruce Draper	Gerald Iversen	Ray Mims & Andrew Zalman	K. Syra Smith
Susanne Allen	Kirsten Edwards	Laura Iwan	Jan Montgomery	Paula Spector
Johan Andrade	Stephanie Elms	Kimberly Johnson	George Ashley Moretz	Melanie Steele
Susan Arterian	Gina Faber	William Johnston	Carolanne Otto	Eric Swanson
Hank Becker	Nicole Fenske	Murat Kalayoglu	Mary Flo Ouellette	Elizabeth Sweet
April Benson	Joy Ferrante	Elisabeth Karlin	Michelle Parker	Hal Tepfer
Patricia Berhau	Jeff Frant	Dana Kelly	Patel Family	Paul Traylor
Beverly Braxton	Sandra Gonzalez	Kacey Kelly	Elizabeth S. Paynter	Karen Trujillo Heffernan
Barbara Brock	Jack Greene	Aldina Kennedy	Tamara Piety	Anais Tuepker
Charlotte Brock	Karen Greenstein	Pat Kenschaft	Leah Quenelle	Mark Valentine
Courtney Cadotte	Gina Grone	Jean Kilbourne	Brian Rich	Saleem Van Groenou
Ashlee Caul	Eliza Harris	Annette Lanier	Lori Rochino	Cindy Wachter
Michael Cochran	John Hartman	Suzanne Lewis	Jeffrey Rose	Rebecca Walch
Sky Colley	Kathy Hedge	Frances Ludwig	Teresa Salvini	Whitney Willbanks
Susan Comfort	Krystal Hering	Kista Mansell	Heather Settle	Pamela Wirht
Ranae DeSantis	Brian Hicks	Marissa Matsler	Matt Shapiro	Susan Wyman
Susan Dobra	John House	Shelley McCuen	John Shea	

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