

The Facts About Marketing to Kids



CAMPAIGN FOR A COMMERCIAL-FREE CHILDHOOD





The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (formerly Stop Commercial Exploitation of Children) is a national coalition of health care professionals, educators, advocacy groups and concerned parents who counter the harmful effects of marketing to children through action, advocacy, education, research, and collaboration among organizations and individuals who care about children. CCFC supports the rights of children to grow up – and the rights of parents to raise them – without being undermined by rampant consumerism.

The Coalition evolved from two events: In 1999, an innovative conference held at Howard University brought together a diverse and interdisciplinary group of activists, academics, educators and healthcare providers concerned about the corporate influences on children. One year later, a number of conference attendees gathered in New York City to protest the Golden Marble Awards, the advertising industry's celebration of marketing to children; the Coalition was born.

Since then, CCFC has been at the forefront of a growing movement to protect children from commercial exploitation. Our annual summit on the harms of marketing to children draws experts and activists from a number of fields. The Coalition continued to protest the Golden Marbles – until the industry canceled the awards in 2003. Our other grassroots efforts continue to take on the most egregious corporate offenders and mobilize support for legislation that would help protect children from marketers. CCFC has also hosted well-attended Congressional briefings. Through our efforts, journalists, legislators, educators, and public health officials are, for the first time, questioning the ethics of marketing to children. Our voices can be heard advocating for children in media such as CNN, Newsweek and Time, building public awareness of the harms associated with commercialism and strengthening the public will to foment change.

CCFC does not accept corporate funding. We rely on member donations for support. To join the Campaign, please visit <http://www.commercialexploitation.org/joinus.htm>.





Marketing to Children: an Overview

big business

Marketing to children is big business

- From 1992 to 1997 the amount spent marketing to children shot from \$6.2 billion to \$12 billion. Today marketers spend at least \$15 billion a year targeting children.¹
- Children aged 4-12 made \$30 billion in purchases in 2002, a remarkable increase from the \$6.1 billion they spent in 1989.²
- Children aged 12-19 spent \$170 billion in 2002, a weekly average of \$101 per teen.³
- Children under 12 influence \$500 billion of purchases per year.⁴

constant exposure

Children are bombarded with marketing every waking moment

- Children see about 40,000 advertisements a year on TV alone, a figure that does not include product placement.⁵
- Children see advertisements on the Internet, at the movies, on school buses, in their classrooms and cafeterias.
- Almost every major media program for children has a line of licensed merchandise used to sell fast-food, breakfast cereals, snacks and candy.
- Many toys, such as Coca-Cola Barbie and McDonald's Play-Doh are actually advertisements for junk food.
- In their effort to establish cradle-to-grave brand loyalty, marketers even target babies through licensed toys and accessories featuring media characters.

**Very
young children
can't distinguish
between
commercials
and program
content**

exploitation

Marketing exploits children's developmental vulnerabilities

- Until the age of about 8 children do not understand advertising's persuasive intent.⁶
- Very young children can't distinguish between commercials and program content; even older children sometimes fail to recognize product placement as advertising.⁷
- Marketers often use older children's desire to fit in with their peers and tendency to rebel against authority figures as selling points for their products. A recent Pepsi ad celebrated teens who had been arrested for downloading music illegally.

Marketing is associated with a number of problems for children

- Marketing directly to children is a factor in the childhood obesity epidemic.
- Marketing also encourages eating disorders, precocious sexuality, youth violence, family stress, and contributes to children's diminished capability to play creatively.

There is a growing movement to protect children from marketing

- A number of professional and public health organizations, including the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the World Health Organization have called for restrictions on marketing to children.
- A recent online poll found that 85% of respondents believe children's television should be commercial-free; 81% believe that schools should be commercial free zones; 80% believe that marketing to children eight and under should be prohibited.⁸
- In response to the growing obesity epidemic, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) recently introduced legislation that would restore the Federal Trade Commission's authority to regulate marketing to children.
- A number of organizations and coalitions – including the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood – have formed to protect children from exploitative marketing.⁹

85% of respondents to an online poll believe children's television should be commercial-free

¹ Lauro, P.W. (1999). Coaxing the smile that sells: Baby wranglers in demand in marketing for children. *New York Times*, November 1; Schor, J. (2004). *Born to Buy*, New York: Scribner, p 21.

² Schor (2004), p. 23

³ Teen Research Unlimited (2003). www.teenresearch.com/PRview.cfm?edit_id=152

⁴ Campbell and Davis-Packard. (2000) How ads get kids to say I want it! *Christian Science Monitor*, September 18.

⁵ Kunkel, D. (2001). Children and television advertising. In: D.G. Singer & J. L. Singer (Eds.) *The handbook of children and media* (pp. 375-393). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Atkin, C. K. (1982). Television advertising and socialization to consumer roles. In: D. Pearl (Ed.), *Television and behavior: Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the eighties* (pp. 191-200). Rockland, MD: National Institute of Mental Health.

⁸ Buzzback Market Research (2003, August). *Tweens exploratory*. New York: Buzzback Market Research.

⁹ Kasser, T. & Linn, S. (2004). Public attitudes towards the youth marketing industry and its impact on children. http://www.jbcc.harvard.edu/index_files/Index%20page%20sidebar%20links/Media%20Center%20Survey%20Report.pdf

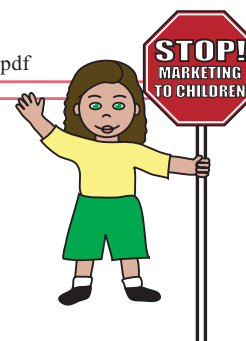
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New Marketing Techniques

overt marketing

Product Licensing

The act of selling use of images or logos to promote products other than the ones they were created for.

- The movie *The Cat in the Hat* had at least 181 licensed products – not including food.
- SpongeBob Squarepants sells clothing, toys, accessories, candy, cereal and a top-selling line of Kraft's macaroni and cheese.

Product Placement

When products are incorporated into the fabric of a TV program, a movie, computer game, or book as props, scenery, or plot points.

- M&M's, Froot Loops, and Cheerios have all produced counting books for young children.
- On *American Idol*, the judges drink Coca-Cola and the contestants act out skits that feature sponsors' products. This type of advertising is particularly effective since studies show children are more likely to watch these skits than clearly delineated ads.¹

Co-Branding

In which two known brands combine for specific products; the result is frequently toys that are advertisements for food. Examples include the McDonald's Barbie, the Coca-Cola Barbie, and McDonald's Play-Doh.

covert marketing

Grass Roots Marketing

The process of building brand relationships with schools, churches, and influential community members and exploiting social issues as marketing opportunities. As one company put it, "Reach(ing) your target audience where they live, work and play."

Viral Marketing

Any orchestrated word-of-mouth marketing, including the practice of using children to advertise products to their friends.

- Adult marketers sometimes enter chat rooms frequented by children in order to promote new products, movies, or television shows.
- Marketers use popular kids, often giving them free merchandise, to market products to other children.
- One marketing company, the Girl's Intelligence Agency, specializes in slumber parties that are used to market products to girls.²

Guerilla Marketing

Using public space as a venue for advertising, such as plastering bus kiosks where school busses stop with ads for products.

Program-Length Commercials

Made legal after advertising on children's television was deregulated in 1984, program-length commercials allow television programs to be created to sell products. Examples include the Pokemon and Yo Gi Go television shows.

Advergaming

Companies integrate products into existing computer games and create games specifically for corporate web sites. Kraft operates www.candystand.com, a website devoted to games and contests featuring Life Savers, Planters peanuts and other candies.

Naming Rights

Examples include the Shop Rite school gymnasium in New Jersey, the proposed Please Touch Museum Presented by McDonalds in Philadelphia, and Burger King Academies all over the country.

Co-opting non-profit groups that protect children's health and well-being helps insure marketers' access to children.

- The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) accepted a \$1 million grant from Coca-Cola; the AAPD now says the science is "not clear" that soft drinks contribute to cavities.
- Coca-Cola has given money to a number of prominent education organizations. Several of these organizations have endorsed Coca-Cola's Model Guidelines for School Beverage Partnerships – guidelines that do little to restrict the sale of sugar-laden drinks in schools.

¹ Buzzback Market Research (2003, August). *Tweens exploratory*. New York: Buzzback Market Research.

² Minnow, N. (2004). Stealth advertising puts products and pitches everywhere . . . and you may never know. *Chicago Tribune*. September 19. <http://www.commercialexploitation.com/news/articles/tribune92104.htm>

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Materialism and Family Stress

materialism affects children

One of the central premises of marketing is that buying things will make us happy. There is a growing body of evidence, however, that the opposite is true: that the pressure to spend and consume actually makes people less happy.¹

Being Materialistic Affects Children's Well-Being

- A recent study of materialistic values among children found the following:
 - *Personal well-being results.* Children who were more materialistic were less happy, had lower self-esteem, and reported more symptoms of anxiety.
 - *Social behavior results.* Children who were more materialistic reported less generosity and allocated less money to charity when they imagined receiving a windfall.
 - *Environmental behavior results.* Children who were more materialistic reported engaging in fewer positive environmental behaviors (e.g., reusing paper, using less water while showering).³
- Another study found that for children, "High consumer involvement is a significant cause of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and psychosomatic complaints. Psychologically healthy children will be made worse of if they become more enmeshed in the culture of getting and spending. Children with emotional problems will be helped if they disengage from the worlds that corporations are constructing for them."²

buy happiness?

Exposure to Marketing Contributes to Children's Materialism

- Materialism is correlated to exposure to marketing for children as young as preschoolers.⁴
- Children attending schools with the commercial television program Channel One are more materialistic than students from schools without the program.⁵
- A survey of parents found that 63% of parents surveyed believed that their children define their self worth in terms of what they own.⁶

teaching to nag

The "Nag Factor", Purchase Requests, and Family Conflict

- A number of studies have demonstrated a correlation between children's exposure to advertising and their purchase requests⁷; reducing the amount of television that children watch reduces their requests for toys.⁸
- In 1998, market researchers conducted a study to help retailers exploit children's nagging to boost sales⁹; they found that nagging was responsible for 40% of trips to "entertainment establishments like the Discovery Zone and Chuck E. Cheese," one of every three trips to a fast-food restaurant, and three out of every ten home video sales.¹⁰



more nagging

- Today, encouraging children to use “the nag factor” to get their parents to buy things is a tried and proven marketing technique¹¹;
- Not surprisingly, several studies have demonstrated a relationship between children’s purchase requests and parent-child conflict; other studies have found a direct correlation between children’s exposure to advertising and family conflict.¹²
- A poll of young people aged 12-17 demonstrates the power of the “nag factor” and how marketing can lead to family conflict and stress:
 - 40% of respondents said they had asked their parents for an advertised product they thought their parents would not approve of.
 - The average young person said they have to ask nine times before their parents give in and let them have what they want. Eleven percent of 12-13 year olds admitted to asking their parents more than fifty times for products they’ve seen advertised.
 - This “keep asking strategy” is paying huge dividends for kids and marketers alike: 55% of young people surveyed said they are usually successful in getting their parents to give in.¹³



resources

Resource for Parents and Concerned Citizens

The Center for a New American Dream helps Americans change the way they consume to improve quality of life, protect the environment, and promote social justice.

www.newdream.org

notes

¹ Kasser, T. (2002). *The high price of materialism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

² Schor, J. (2004). *Born to Buy*, New York: Scribner, p.167.

³ Kasser, T. (in press). Psychometric development of brief measures of frugality, generosity, and materialism for use in children and adolescents. In: K. Moore & L. Lippman (Eds.) *Conceptualizing and Measuring Indicators of Positive Development: What do children need to flourish?* New York: Kluwer/Plenum.

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⁶ Center for a New American Dream. (1999, July). *New poll shows marketing to kids taking its toll on parents, families*. Takoma Park, MD.

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¹⁰ Western Media International (1998). The fine art of whining: Why nagging is a kid’s best friend. *Business Wire*. August 11.

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¹² Buijzen, M. & Valkenburg (2003).

¹³ Center for a New American Dream. (2002, May) *Thanks to Ads, Kids Won’t Take No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No for an Answer*. Takoma Park, MD.

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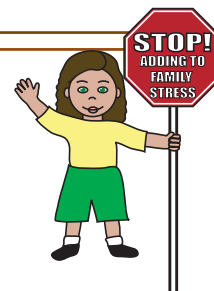
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Marketing to Babies and Toddlers

babies and infants use media

Babies and infants are spending more and more time in front of screens – which means less time playing, exploring, reading and interacting with others.

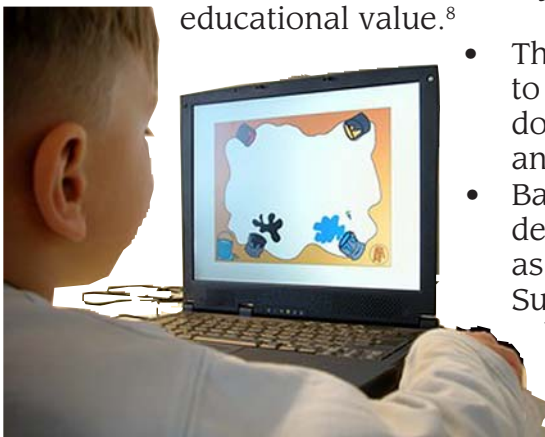
- 26% of children under two have a television in their bedroom.¹
- In typical day, 68% of all children under two use screen media (59% watch TV, 42% watch a DVD or video, 5% use a computer, 3% play a video game) for an average of more than two hours a day.²
- Children in households where the television is on most or all of the time are read to less by their parents.³
- The American Academy of Pediatrics “urges parents to avoid television for children under 2 years old.”⁴



made for babies and toddlers

Since the advent of Teletubbies on PBS in 1998, there are an increasing number of media programs created specifically for infants and toddlers.

- Teletubbies was marketed as educational for children as young as one even though there was no research to back up that assertion. Teletubby gift packs have been distributed in hospitals to newborns. Teletubbies has engaged in toy promotions with both Burger King and McDonald's.⁵
- Comcast and Sesame Workshop plan to introduce a TV channel featuring round-the-clock programming for toddlers.⁶
- 27% of infants own an “educational” *Baby Einstein* video.⁷ There is no evidence that these—or any other video for babies—have any educational value.⁸



- The marketing of these videos sends a message to parents that the things they might normally do with their babies – play, sing, cuddle, talk, and read to them – are not enough.⁹
- Babies are also targets for computer software derived from television program or movies such as *Sesame Street Baby* & *Winnie the Pooh Baby*. Such computer play may actually be harmful to babies and toddlers because it takes them away from the active, multisensory exploration of the world essential to their healthy development.¹⁰

In their effort to create cradle to grave brand loyalty, marketers now regularly target children before they can walk or talk.

- According to kids marketing guru, psychologist James McNeal, "At six months of age, the same age they are imitating simple sounds like "ma-ma," babies are forming mental images of corporate logos and mascots"¹¹
- Clothes, mobiles, crib toys and even diapers featuring brand logos or licensed media characters such as Elmo or Spiderman are now commonplace.
- This type of marketing helps ensure that babies will recognize and request similarly adorned products ranging from cereal to stuffed toys as their verbal skills evolve.¹² According to marketing industry research, babies are requesting brands as soon as they can speak.¹²

"At six months... babies are forming mental images of corporate logos and mascots"

Resources for parents and concerned individuals

- Alliance for Childhood is a partnership of individuals and organizations committed to fostering and respecting each child's inherent right to a healthy, developmentally appropriate childhood.
www.allianceforchildhood.net
- TV-Turnoff Network encourages children and adults to watch much less television in order to promote healthier lives and communities.
www.tvturnoff.org
- Zero to Three is a resource on the first years of life.
<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. (2003). *Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers*. Menlo Park, CA: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

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The Commercialization of Toys and Play

children are playing less creatively

Play is essential to a child's healthy development. Play promotes intellectual growth and critical thinking by providing children with the opportunity to explore, to experiment, and to acquire problem-solving skills.¹ Children play to express their fantasies and feelings and to gain a sense of control over the world. "Play thrives in environments that provide children with safe boundaries but do not impinge on ability to think or act spontaneously. It is nurtured with opportunities for silence. For children who are flooded continually with stimuli and commands to react, the cost is high. They have fewer opportunities to initiate action or to influence the world they inhabit, and less chance to exercise the essential human trait of creativity."²

Young children are spending more and more time in front of screens – which means less time exploring and playing creatively.

- Children six and under spend an average of about two hours a day with screen media, about the same amount of time that they spend playing outside, and three times as much time as they spend reading or being read to; heavy television watchers spend less time playing than other children.³
- Two-thirds of zero- to six-year-olds live in a home where the TV is on at least half the time, even if no one is watching, thus depriving them of a home environment where play thrives.⁴ Children who play while a television is on nearby have more difficulty concentrating; this in turn may affect a child's cognitive development.⁵
- 36% of all children six and under have a TV in their bedroom; 27% have their own VCR or DVD player, and 10% have their own video game console in their room.⁶



the role of marketing

The toys marketed to children are often antithetical to creative play.

- The proliferation of computer chips that enable toys to move or make sounds on their own renders children passive observers rather than active participants in play.⁷
- When the Federal Communications Commission deregulated children's television in 1984, it became possible to market toys and other products to children directly through TV programs for the first time. Since then, the toy market has been dominated by media licensed products⁸; in 2002, nine of the ten bestselling toys were de facto advertisements for television programs, movies, and videos.⁹

The toys marketed to children are often antithetical to creative play (continued)

- Toys based on media programs come with established characters and storylines, making it unlikely that children will use the toy to create their own world. When children play with a toy based on a television character, they play less creatively, especially right after they have watched a program.¹⁰
- Toys like Play-Doh that once inspired creative play are now marketed primarily in kits, many them designed in partnership with companies interested in selling other products. These toys, such as a Play Doh McDonald's kit, deprive children of imaginative exploration and may promote unhealthy foods.¹¹
- The more play is predetermined by a toy, the more likely that creative and imaginative play and its benefits will be jeopardized and the more children will be bored when they aren't told what to do. In other words, the more they are likely to develop what education expert Diane Levin has labeled "Problem Solving Deficit Disorder" - the inability to think of themselves or act as problem finders and solvers.¹²



Resources for parents and concerned individuals

- Alliance for Childhood (www.allianceforchildhood.net) is a partnership of individuals and organizations committed to fostering and respecting each child's inherent right to a healthy, developmentally appropriate childhood.
- TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment) (www.truceteachers.org) produces and provides an annual guide for teachers and parents to help them in selecting toys that are educationally and developmentally appropriate for young children.
- TV-Turnoff Network (www.tvturnoff.org) encourages children and adults to watch much less television in order to promote healthier lives and communities.

¹ Levin, D. (1998). *Remote Control Childhood?: Combating the Hazards of Media Culture*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young People.

² Linn, S. (2004). *Consuming Kids: The hostile takeover of childhood*. New York: Free Press, p. 62.

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⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Healy, M. (2004). Young TV watchers may be at risk for later attention problems. *Los Angeles Times*. May 24. <http://www.childrennow.org/newsroom/news-04/cam-ra-05-24-04.cfm>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Linn, (2004).

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Food Marketing and Childhood Obesity

an increase

There has been a dramatic increase in obesity among American children.

- Since 1980, the proportion of overweight children ages 6-11 has doubled to 15.3%; for adolescents, the rate has tripled to 15.5%.¹
- Among children of color, the rates are even higher: 40% of African American and Mexican American children ages 6-19 are overweight or at risk for being overweight.²

Obesity has serious health consequences for children and adults.

- Overweight children are at risk for Type 2 diabetes, a disease once only found in adults.³
- Other medical complications include hypertension, asthma, orthopedic problems, depression, and low self-esteem.⁴
- 80% of adolescents continue to be overweight in adulthood⁵; approximately 300,000 adult deaths in the United States each year are related to obesity.⁶

the role of marketing

Marketing is a factor in childhood obesity.

- Television advertising affects children's food knowledge, choices, and consumption of particular food products.⁷
- A preschooler's risk for obesity increases by 6% for every hour of TV watched per day. If there's a TV in the child's bedroom, the odds jump an additional 31% for every hour watched.⁸
- A report by the Kaiser Family Foundation concluded: "It appears likely that the main mechanism by which media use contributes to childhood obesity may well be through children's exposure to billions of dollars worth of food advertising and cross-promotional marketing year after year, starting at the very youngest ages, with children's favorite media characters often enlisted in the sales pitch."⁹

bombarded with junk food

Children are bombarded with advertisements for junk food on television.

- Food commercials account for most TV advertising during children's peak viewing hours.¹⁰
- 32% of all ads targeted to children are for candy; 31% are for cereal.
- Fast food restaurants alone spend \$3 billion dollars a year on television ads aimed at children.¹¹
- On Saturday mornings, children see one food commercial about every five minutes¹²; most of these ads are for foods high in fat, sugar, salt, and calories.¹³



it's everywhere

Food marketing aimed at children is everywhere.

- Many popular children's media characters appear on the packaging for high sugar and high calorie foods; e.g., *SpongeBob Squarepants* was Kraft's top-selling macaroni and cheese.¹⁴
- McDonald's and Burger King regularly give away toys from popular movies such as *Rugrats*, *Shrek*, and *Finding Nemo*.
- Many toys themselves are now food marketing, such as the McDonald's Barbie and the Happy Meal Play-Doh Playshop.
- Internet sites such www.candystand.com, which allow children to play games for "free," are festooned in advertising for sugary and high calorie snacks.

even in schools

Food marketers regularly target children in schools.

- 94% of high schools, 84% of middle schools, and 58% of elementary schools allow the sale of soda or other sugar-laden drinks on their premises¹⁵; the likelihood of child becoming obese increases 1.6 times for each can of sweetened drinks consumed daily.¹⁶
- Channel One, in more than 12,000 schools, regularly shows ads for soda, candy, fast food and chips.



resources

A growing number of researchers and professional organizations are concerned about the link between childhood obesity and food marketing.

- A number of organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, have called for restrictions on food marketing to children.
- The Institute of Medicine has called for a national conference to develop guidelines for the advertising of foods and beverages directed at children.

notes

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⁵ Styne, D. (2001). Childhood and Adolescent Obesity: Prevalence and Significance. *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 48 4: 823–854.

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Marketing in Schools

Increasingly, marketers are infiltrating schools to gain access to a captive audience. There are a number of different ways that corporations market their products in schools

channel one

Channel One

- In exchange for free video equipment, schools agree to show a Channel One program every day to their students.
- Channel One's programs consist of 10 minutes of "news" (many have questioned the quality of Channel One's programming¹) and two minutes of ads. A full week of teaching time is lost to Channel One every year; one day per year is lost just to the ads.
- Products regularly advertised include junk food such as Mountain Dew, M&Ms and Twinkies.
- Channel One is shown in over 12,000 schools to more than 8 million students.²

soft drinks, candy and fast food

The Sale of Soft Drinks, Candy, and Fast Food in Schools

- 94% of high schools, 84% of middle schools, and 58% of elementary schools allow the sale of soda or other sugar-laden drinks on their premises; 72.2%, 46.6%, and 29.2% of high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools allow the sale of candy.³
- 20.2% of schools sell brand-name fast-food such as McDonald's and Taco Bell on their premises.⁴
- Many school districts sign *pouring rights contracts* with Coca-Cola or Pepsi. These contracts give beverage companies exclusive rights to sell their products at school events and place vending machines on school property, along with other measures that increase student exposure to beverages. The amount of money a school receives is often tied to the sale of beverages, thus giving schools an incentive to encourage the consumption of soft drinks.
- Many prominent health organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Dental Association, have issued policy statements opposing pouring rights contracts and arrangements that increase students' access to soft drinks.⁵



curricula

Corporate Sponsored Curricula & Materials

- Many corporations “donate” educational materials and supplies.
- A review of 77 corporate-sponsored classroom kits found nearly 80% to be biased or incomplete, “promoting a viewpoint that favors consumption of the sponsor’s product or service or a position that favors the company or its economic agenda.”⁶
- An environmental curriculum produced by Exxon emphasized the earth’s resilience in responding to oil spills; a Nabisco math curriculum has children estimate how many chocolate chips are in a bag of Chips-A-Hoy
- Companies such as The Field Trip Factory organize school trips to stores like The Sports Authority and Petco.

direct ads

Direct Advertising in Schools

- Advertising appears on textbooks, on school buses, on interior and exterior school walls, gymnasiums, scoreboards, and at athletic events. Much of the advertising is for soft drinks and snack foods.
- Thousands of schools provide students with free text book covers bearing ads from companies like Nike, McDonald’s, and Hershey that use the covers as an opportunity to pitch sneakers, food, and other products to elementary, junior high and high school students.

what can be

Concerned Parents, Activists, and Legislators are Working to Take Our Schools Back From Marketers

- School districts around the country – including Los Angeles and Chicago – have banned the sale of soda and junk food on their premises.
- In Seattle, the school district’s contract with Coca-Cola was a primary issue in the 2003 school board elections; the anti-marketing candidate won!
- On October 5, 2004 Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduced legislation that would ban the sale of foods “of poor or nutritional value” in schools that receive federal funds; the bill would also provide grants to schools that ban the marketing of junk food on their premises.

resources

Resources for parents and concerned individuals

- Commercialism in Education Research Unit conducts research, disseminates information, and helps facilitate dialogue between the education community, policy makers, and the public at large about commercial activities in schools. <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ceru.htm>

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Marketing Violence to Children

the problem

In 2000, 6 leading national public health organizations, after reviewing 1,000 studies and more than 30 years of research concluded, “viewing entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values and behavior, particularly in children.” Effects of viewing entertainment violence include:

- Children who see a lot of violence are more likely to view violence as an effective way of settling conflicts.
- Viewing violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward violence in real life.
- Entertainment violence feeds a perception that the world is violent and mean place.
- Children exposed to violent programming at a young age have a higher tendency for violent and aggressive behavior later in life than children who are not so exposed.¹



violence on TV and video games

Television programs are fraught with violence.

- Nearly 2 of 3 television shows contains some violence, averaging about 6 violent acts per hour.²
- Violence is even more prevalent in children's shows, which average 14 violent acts per hour.³
- More than half of concept music videos contain acts of violence, usually against women.⁴
- By the time a child is eighteen years old, he or she will witness on television 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders (based on average viewing time).⁵

Videos games are increasingly popular among children . . . and often incredibly violent.

- On average, children 2-7 spend 43 minutes a day playing video games; older children average one hour per day.⁶
- In 2001, 9 of the 10 top-selling video games contained violence; about half of all games contained serious violence, and 17% featured violence as the primary focus.⁷
- Video game players are usually rewarded for aggression and violent behavior in the games.⁸



inconsistent ratings

Despite the use of rating systems throughout the entertainment industry, violent media content is frequently marketed to children.

- A report by the Federal Trade Commission in 2000 found that 80% of movies rated R for violence were targeted to children under 17. 64% of the films' marketing plans contained explicit statements that the film's target audience included children under 17.
- The same report found that music that had been labeled for violent or sexual content was routinely advertised in magazines that targeted young audiences.
- The FTC also found that the marketing plans for 70% of video games rated Mature for violent content were targeted to children under 17.⁹
- Violent toys, often tied to violent media programs, are frequently marketed to young children. For example, a whole line of highly realistic and violent Terminator 3 action figures, some with age recommendations for children as young as 5, accompanied the release of the R-rated movie.



resources

Resources for parents and concerned individuals

- Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment (www.peaceeducators.org) is a network of parents, teachers and other concerned individuals, who are dedicated to creating a safe and healthy world for children
- TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment) (www.truceteachers.org) produces and provides an annual guide for teachers and parents to help them in selecting toys that are educationally and developmentally appropriate for young children.

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Marketing Sex to Children

the problem

There is a link between watching sexual content and adolescent's sexual activity and beliefs about sex.

- More than half of teens report getting some or most of their information about sex from television.¹
- Teens who watch more sexual content on television are more likely to initiate intercourse and progress to more advanced noncoital sexual activities during the subsequent year.²
- Another study found that girls who watched more than 14 hours of rap music videos per week were more likely to have multiple sex partners and to be diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease.³
- Boys exposed to violent sex on television, including rape, are less likely to be sympathetic to female victims of sexual violence.⁴

sexual content and messages

Children are bombarded with sexual content and messages.

- In 2003, 83% of the episodes of the top twenty shows among teen viewers contained some sexual content, including 20% with sexual intercourse.⁵
- 42% of the songs on the top 10 CDs in 1999 contained sexual content; 19% included direct descriptions of sexual intercourse.⁶
- On average, music videos contain 93 sexual situations per hour, including eleven "hard core" scenes depicting behaviors such as intercourse and oral sex.⁷
- The video game Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, rated M, was the best selling video game among teens and preteens in 2002. In it, players can simulate having sex with a prostitute and then killing her.⁸

- Neilson estimates that 6.6 million kids ages 2-11 and 7.3 million adolescents ages 12-17 watched Justin Timberlake rip open Janet Jackson's bodice during the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show.⁹



Sexual content is regularly marketed to younger children and “tweens.”

- The cable station Nickelodeon is a feeder station for MTV and lyrics, clothing, and images that may not be appropriate for preschoolers and preteens.¹⁰ The rapper Eminem, whose CDs are rated “Parental Advisory” and who starred in the R rated movie *8 Mile*, was nominated for a 2003 Nickelodeon kid’s choice award. Nickelodeon features singers such as Jennifer Lopez, Brittany Spears, and Mandy Moore in on-air concerts and the Kids Choice Awards.
- R rated movies are regularly advertised on television during times when children are likely to be watching; the *8 Mile DVD* was repeatedly advertised on *American Idol*, the highest rated show on television among children ages 2-17. Mature rated video games – many of which contain explicit sexual content – are also often advertised during times and programs when many children are watching television.¹¹
- Bratz dolls, a hipper and sexier version of Barbie, are advertised on shows for young children such as *Rugrats* and made the Toys “R” Us 2002 “Hot Toy Picks” for five- to –seven-year-olds.¹²
- Marketers exploit children’s natural tendency to look forward to growing up, and use this tendency to market clothing that is inappropriate for younger children. Tight belly-baring shirts, and tiny halter tops, “low rider pants” are regularly marketed to tweens. Before parents raised an outcry, Abercrombie and Fitch marketed a line of thong underpants decorated with sexually provocative phrases such as “Wink Wink” and “Eye Candy” to ten-year-olds.¹³

Resource for Parents and Concerned Individuals

Dads and Daughters (www.dadsanddaughters.org) provides tools to strengthen father-daughter relationships and to transform the pervasive cultural messages. The Motherhood Project (www.watchoutforchildren.org), an initiative of the Institute for American Values, works to put the importance of motherhood on the national agenda and to foster a renewed sense of purpose, passion, and power in the vocation of mothering. New Moon (www.newmoon.org), The Magazine for Girls and their Dreams, produces media for every girl who wants her voice heard and her dreams taken seriously and for every adult who cares about girls.

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Marketing, Body Image and Eating Disorders

the wish to be thinner

Concern about body type and eating disorders are prevalent among girls and adolescent females.

- The number one wish for girls ages 11 to 17 is to be thinner.¹
- 40% of nine and ten-year-old girls are on diets; girls as young as five have expressed fears of getting fat.²
- As many as ten million females are struggling with an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia; most anorexics and bulimics are between 11 and 25 years old.³



boys are not immune

Increasingly, boys are also dissatisfied with their bodies.



- The increasing muscularity in toy action figures helps set unrealistic body ideals for boys.⁴ Much of the entertainment marketed to boys – particularly professional wrestling – features extremely muscular body types.
- In one study, more than half of boys ages 11-17 chose as their physical ideal an image only possible to obtain using steroids.⁵

The number one wish for girls ages 11 to 17 is to be thinner

More than half of boys ages 11-17 chose a physical ideal only possible through the use of steroids

Marketing, Body Image and Eating Disorders

Even as kids are being assailed with messages to eat junk food, they – especially girls – are being sold the notion that they are supposed to be impossibly thin.⁶

Marketing is a factor in eating disorders

- Adolescent girls' discontent about body image is directly correlated to how often they read fashion magazines, which are filled with ads featuring underweight models.⁷
- Viewing television commercials leads to increased body dissatisfaction for both male and female adolescents.⁸
- Girls with eating disorders are more susceptible to messages about body image than girls with normal eating patterns.⁹
- After television was introduced in Fiji, there was a significant increase in eating disorders among adolescent girls.¹⁰
- 50% of advertisements in teen girl magazines and 56% of television commercials aimed at female viewers use beauty as a product appeal.¹¹
- A study of 500 female models found that almost half were malnourished according to World Health Organization standards.¹²
- A life-size Barbie doll would have a sixteen-inch waist.



Resource for parents and concerned individuals

Dads and Daughters (www.dadsanddaughters.org) provides tools to strengthen father-daughter relationships and to transform the pervasive cultural messages that value daughters more for how they look than for who they are.

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Alcohol Marketing and Underage Drinking

underage drinking

Underage drinking is extremely prevalent and has serious consequences for youth.

- The average age at which young people begin to drink is 12.94 years old.¹
- 12.4 % of 8th graders, 22.4 % of 10th graders, and 28.6 % of 12th graders are heavy drinkers (defined as five or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks).²
- Underage drinking is estimated to account for between 12% and 20% of the U.S. alcohol market. Even the lower estimate, 12%, represents 3.6 billion drinks each year.³
- Lifetime alcohol abuse and dependence is greatest for those who begin drinking between the ages of eleven and fourteen.⁴

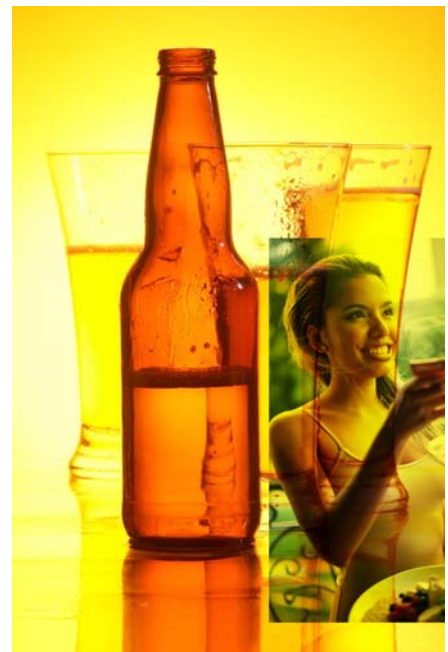
advertising plays a role

Alcohol advertising and marketing have a significant impact on youth decisions to drink.

- According to the Federal Trade Commission, "While many factors may influence an underage person's drinking decisions, including among other things parents, peers and the media, there is reason to believe that advertising also plays a role."⁵
- While the alcohol industry says advertising only influences brand choices, teens say ads have a greater influence on their desire to drink in general than on their desire to buy a particular brand of alcohol.⁶
- A recent economic analysis concluded that a complete ban on alcohol advertising could reduce monthly levels of youth drinking by 24% and youth binge drinking by about 42%.⁷

Alcohol is regularly advertised on television programs watched by children and teens.

- In 2002, all 15 of the most popular shows with teens aged 12-17 had alcohol ads – a total of 5,085 ads at a cost of more than \$52 million.⁸
- Teens see more ads for alcohol on TV than they do for jeans, sneakers, potato chips and pretzels, gum or makeup.⁹
- 1996 study of children ages nine to 11 found that children were more familiar with Budweiser's television frogs than Kellogg's Tony the Tiger, the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers, or Smokey the Bear.¹⁰
- The more television teens watch in the 9th grade, the more likely they are to have begun drinking 18 months later.¹¹



it's everywhere

Alcohol marketing that reaches children is everywhere.

- In 2001, youth saw more beer and distilled spirits advertising in magazines than adults: 45% more for beer brands and 27% more for distilled spirits brands and 60% more for "malternitives" – beverages such as Smirnoff Ice that are targeted to young drinkers; *Sports Illustrated*, with a youth readership of over 6,000,000 took in \$31 million in alcohol ads alone.¹²
- In summer 2003, underage youth were more likely per capita than adults 21 and over to hear alcohol ads in 14 of the 15 largest radio markets in the United States.¹³
- More than 80% of beer websites feature content attractive to teens.¹⁴

troubled parents

Parents are troubled by the alcohol industries marketing practices

- Two-thirds of parents say that seeing and hearing alcohol ads makes teens more likely to drink alcohol than they otherwise would be. Almost three-quarters of parents fault alcohol companies for the number of ads that teens see and hear.
- Eighty-two percent of parents say that teens' alcohol-related risky behavior is a problem in society today.
- Parents overwhelmingly (81%) believe that, due to the potentially harmful effects of its products, the alcohol industry has a special responsibility to avoid exposing young people to messages encouraging alcohol consumption.¹⁵

resources

Resources for parents and concerned individuals

- The Center on Alcohol Marketing to Youth monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America's youth. www.camy.org
- Center for Science in the Public Interest, Alcohol Policies Project, focuses public and policy maker attention on high-leverage policy reforms to reduce the devastating health and social consequences of drinking. <http://www.cspinet.org/booze/>

notes

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Tobacco Marketing and Kids

the problem

In 1998, after years of public health research, advocacy, and lawsuits, the American tobacco industry and forty states signed a Master Settlement Agreement in which the industry agreed to intentionally stop marketing to kids.

Unfortunately, the tobacco companies have not lived up to their promises.



in their own words

The tobacco industry in their own words: The importance of youth customers.

- Phillip Morris: "Today's teenager is tomorrow's potential regular customer, and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while still in their teens. . . The smoking patterns of teenagers are particularly important to Phillip Morris."¹
- U.S. Tobacco: "Cherry Skoal is for somebody who likes the taste of candy, if you know what I'm saying."²
- RJ Reynolds: "Evidence is now available to indicate that the 14-18 year old group is an increasing segment of the smoking population. RJR-T must soon establish a successful new brand in this market if our position in the industry is to be maintained in the long term."³
- Lorillard Tobacco: "[T]he base of our business is the high school student."⁴

broken promises

Despite their promises, the tobacco industry still markets their product to kids.

- In 2000, the tobacco companies spent \$59.6 million advertising the most popular youth brands in youth oriented magazines.⁵ Advertising in magazines with high youth readership actually *increased* 33% after the 1998 Settlement.⁶
- After tobacco billboards were banned by the Master Settlement agreement the cigarette companies also increased their advertising and promotions in and around retail outlets, such as convenience stores;⁷ 75 percent of teens visit a convenience store at least once a week.⁸
- In 2000, the average California retail outlet had 17 tobacco ads, with half placed three feet high or lower, at the eye level of kids – with a quarter of all retail outlets displaying cigarettes right next to candy.⁹
- In 2001, United States Smokeless Tobacco Company (USST), the country's largest smokeless tobacco manufacturer, spent \$9.4 million advertising in magazines with high youth readership, compared to the average \$5.4 million spent in 1997 and 1998, the two years before the settlement.¹⁰
- A 2004 survey found that kids were more than twice as likely as adults to recall seeing a tobacco ad in the past 2 weeks.¹¹

The impact of tobacco marketing to kids

- A review of the research on tobacco marketing and youth smoking by the National Cancer Institute concluded “that there is a causal relationship between tobacco marketing and smoking initiation seems unassailable.”¹²
- Teens are more likely to be influenced to smoke by cigarette advertising than they are by peer pressure.¹³
- Adolescents who own a tobacco promotional item and can name a cigarette brand whose advertising attracted their attention are twice as likely to become established smokers than those who can do neither.¹⁴
- According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the development and marketing of “starter products” with such features as pouches and cherry flavoring have switched smokeless tobacco from a product used primarily by older men to one for which young men comprise the largest portion of the market.¹⁵ More than 14 percent of high school boys are current smokeless tobacco users.¹⁶
- Tobacco marketing can even trump good parenting. For kids who start smoking despite their parents best efforts, advertising is the main reason they begin.¹⁷



Resource for parents and concerned individuals

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
(www.tobaccofreekids.org)

¹ Philip Morris. (1981). *Young Smokers: Prevalence, Trends, Implications, and Related Demographic Trends*. Philip Morris Special Report, March 31. Bates No. #1000390803. <http://www.pmdocs.com>.

² Freedman, A. (1994). Juiced up: How a tobacco giant doctors snuff brands to boost their ‘kick’. *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, [quoting former UST sales representative].

³ Reynolds, R.J. (1976). Planned Assumptions and Forecast for the Period 1977-1986. March 15, Bates No. 502819513-9532, <http://www.rjrtdocs.com>.

⁴ Lorillard (1978). Memo from executive TL Achey to former Lorillard President Curtis Judge re Newport brand, August 30, Bates No. TINY0003062. <http://www.tobaccoinstitute.com>.

⁵ King, C. & Siegel, M. (2001). The Master Settlement Agreement with the Tobacco Industry and Cigarette Advertising in Magazines. *New England Journal of Medicine*, August 16, 345(7): 504-511.

⁶ Bowker, D. & Hamilton, M. (2000). Cigarette Advertising Expenditures before and After the Master Settlement Agreement: Preliminary Findings. May 15. <http://www.state.ma.us/dph/mtec/report/mag.htm>.

⁷ Wakefield, M. et al. (2000, July). *Changes at the point of purchase for tobacco following the 1999 tobacco billboard advertising ban*. University of Illinois at Chicago, Research Paper Series, No. 4.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Feighery, E. et al. (2001). Cigarette advertising and promotional strategies in retail outlets: Results of a statewide survey in California. *Tobacco Control*, 10L:184-188.

¹⁰ Massachusetts Department of Health (2002, May). Smokeless Tobacco Advertising Expenditures Before and After the Smokeless Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/Script/DisplayPressRelease.php3?Display=503>.

¹¹ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (2004, March). National telephone survey of 501 kids aged 12 to 17 and 1,012 adults conducted for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (TFK) through the International Communications Research Teen Excel Study.

¹² National Cancer Institute (2001, November). *Changing Adolescent Smoking Prevalence*. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph, No.14, NH Pub. # 02-5086.

¹³ Evans, N. et al. (1995). Influence of Tobacco Marketing and Exposure to Smokers on Adolescent Susceptibility to Smoking. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. 87(20): 1538-45.

¹⁴ Biener, L. & Siegel, M. (2000). Tobacco Marketing and Adolescent Smoking: More Support for a Causal Inference. *American Journal of Public Health*. 90(3): 407-411.

¹⁵ Giovino, G. et al. (1994). Surveillance for Selected Tobacco-Use Behaviors – United States, 1900-1994. *MMWR CDC Surveill Summ*, November 18, 43(SS-3).

¹⁶ Centers for Disease Control (2002). Trends in Cigarette Smoking Among High School Students - United States, 1991-2001. *MMWR* May 17, 51(19): 409-412. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5119a1.htm>.

¹⁷ Pierce, J.P. et al. (2002). Does tobacco marketing undermine the influence of recommended parenting in discouraging adolescents from smoking? *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 23(2), 73-81.

Campaign For A Commercial-Free Childhood

Judge Baker Children's Center
53 Parker Hill Avenue
Boston, MA 02120
Phone: 617-278-4282
Fax: 617-232-7343
Email: ccfc@jbcc.harvard.edu
www.commercialfreechildhood.org

CCFC

Quad Cities Chapter

c/o Unitarian Church
3707 Eastern Avenue
Davenport, IA 52807-1398
Phone: 563-359-0816
Fax: 563-359-9723



Summary of resources for parents and concerned individuals

Action Coalition for Media Education (www.acmecoalition.org), free of corporate media funding, is a strategic network linking media educators, health advocates, media reformers, independent media makers, community organizers and others.

Alliance for Childhood (www.allianceforchildhood.net) is a partnership of individuals and organizations committed to fostering and respecting each child's inherent right to a healthy, developmentally appropriate childhood.

California Center for Public Health Advocacy (<http://www.publichealthadvocacy.org/>) raises awareness about public health issues and mobilizes communities to promote the establishment of effective health policies.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (www.tobaccofreekids.org) is a leader in the fight to protect children from tobacco marketing.

The Center for a New American Dream (www.newdream.org) helps Americans change the way they consume to improve quality of life, protect the environment, and promote social justice.

Center for Science in the Public Interest (<http://www.cspinet.org/>) is a leader in the fight against obesity and an advocate for sound nutrition policies. CSPI's Alcohol Policies Project (<http://www.cspinet.org/booze/>) focuses public and policy maker attention on high-leverage policy reforms to reduce the devastating health and social consequences of drinking.

Center on Alcohol Marketing to Youth (www.camy.org) monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America's youth.

Commercialism in Education Research Unit (<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps1/ceru.htm>) conducts research, disseminates information, and helps facilitate dialogue between the education community, policy makers, and the public at large about commercial activities in schools.

Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment (www.peaceeducators.org) is a network of parents, teachers and other concerned individuals, who are dedicated to creating a safe and healthy world for children.

Dads and Daughters (www.dadsanddaughters.org) provides tools to strengthen father-daughter relationships and to transform the pervasive cultural messages that value daughters more for how they look than for who they are.

Free Press www.freepress.net is a national nonpartisan organization working to increase informed public participation in crucial media policy debates, and to generate policies that will produce a more competitive and public interest-oriented media system with a strong nonprofit and noncommercial sector.

Kids Can Make a Difference (www.kidscanmakeadifference.org) is an educational program for middle- and high school students, focuses on the root causes of hunger and poverty, the people most affected, solutions, and how students can help.

Media Center of the Judge Baker Children's Center (www.jbcc.harvard.edu) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children whose emotional and behavioral problems threaten to limit their potential. The Center strives to provide services of the highest standard, to search for new knowledge, to teach, and to apply and disseminate knowledge to promote healthy development.

The Motherhood Project (<http://www.watchoutforchildren.org/>), an initiative of the Institute for American Values, is to put the importance of motherhood on the national agenda and to foster a renewed sense of purpose, passion, and power in the vocation of mothering.

New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams (www.newmoon.org) produces media for every girl who wants her voice heard and her dreams taken seriously and for every adult who cares about girls.

TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment) (www.truceteachers.org) produces and provides an annual guide for teachers and parents to help them in selecting toys that are educationally and developmentally appropriate for young children.

TV-Turnoff Network (www.tvturnoff.org) encourages children and adults to watch much less television in order to promote healthier lives and communities.

Zero to Three (www.zerotothree.org) is a resource on the first years of life.

Suggested Reading

RESOURCES FOR RAISING COMMERCIAL FREE CHILDREN

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