

# Centsible parenting

A newsletter for parents of first grade children

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

*Melissa and her little sister Shelley are all settled in for a Saturday morning watching cartoons. Suddenly a commercial comes on for a fruit flavored cereal. "Gee Dad, I want that kind of cereal," says Melissa. "Me too," pipes up Shelley. Melissa adds, "It has to be good, those kids really like it."*

*(See end of newsletter for a possible answer.)*

The pressure to buy, buy, buy is everywhere. It's hard for children to see so many things and not want them all.

Because there is so much available, advertising has become big business. Companies are trying just about anything to get your attention so you will buy what they have to sell.

## SEEING IT ON TV

While adults are exposed to advertising in several ways, children are most likely to be influenced by TV ads. In fact, children watching TV may see thousands of commercials each year.

## FIGURING OUT THE GIMMICK

Marketers are well aware of the power of TV and aggressively gear advertising to children.

First grade children usually are able to see the difference between real and imaginary, but have trouble with subtle distinctions.

For example, your child may not understand that a certain brand of tennis shoes won't make him or her jump like a basketball star.

Here are some questions you can use to help your child understand some techniques advertisers use to push their products.

- Why is a toy put in the cereal if it tastes so good?
- Why is a prize shown rather than the food in special promotions?
- Why is a toy flying through the air when that toy can't really fly?
- Why are there fireworks when you eat certain candies?
- Why do commercials use famous people?
- Why do commercials only show "pretty" people?
- Why are commercials louder than the regular programs?

## WATCHING COMMERCIALS

Sit down with your child on a Saturday morning and watch some TV together. Help him or her fill in this chart and use the time to talk about the gimmicks used to sell the products.

|      | WHAT IS THE PRODUCT? | WHAT IS THE GIMMICK? | DO YOU BELIEVE IT? | WOULD YOU BUY IT? |
|------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| AD 1 |                      |                      |                    |                   |
| AD 2 |                      |                      |                    |                   |
| AD 3 |                      |                      |                    |                   |
| AD 4 |                      |                      |                    |                   |

### CONSIDER THIS

*"Well Melissa," replies Dad, "why do you think the kids really like it?" Melissa answers, "They ate lots of it and were having fun." "They may not think it's as good as they are showing you. Remember the whole idea is to get you to want the cereal and have your parents buy it," says Dad.*

### COMING IN MAY: FINDING OTHER RESOURCES

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#### ... and justice for all

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