



District I Parenting News

Extension Nutrition Program

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"But Everyone Has One!"

If you're tired of hearing your kids beg and nag about what they want to buy-or what they want you to buy, you'll appreciate Nathan Dugan's comments in "Prodigal Sons & Material Girls: How Not to Be Your Child's ATM" (John Wiley & Sons, 2003).

In today's possession crazed society, the average child has unrealistic expectations about money-and expensive taste, writes Dugan. Convinced that American kids lack a sense of financial responsibility and that even preschoolers are being led astray what he calls a "three-headed monster" of consumer products companies, media conglomerates and advertising agencies, he asks parents to compare the marketing that is targeting children today with what the parents experienced at the same age.

Besides identifying how he believes marketing is exploiting kids and distorting the difference between needs and wants, Dugan recommends that you teach your kids to analyze marketing messages. This can be a game: for example, when you're watching a 30-minute television program, count the product placements (the brand-name items being used by actors), logos, promotional messages super-imposed on the screen and advertising with the ending credit lines. For older kids, try "Name That Ploy.", analyze each billboard, magazine ad or broadcast commercial for messages such as:

1. **The "cool" factor.** If you buy this, you too will be popular, have fun and look good.
2. **Bandwagon.** Everyone who's anyone uses this

product. If you don't buy it, you might as well stamp "uncool" on yourself.

3. **Celebrity testimonial.** I'm a superstar and I love this, so you will too.
4. **Emotion.** Buy this product and you'll feel happy, confident, secure, or loved.
5. **Expert testimonial.** I'm the expert and I'm telling you, this is what you need.

Other techniques to alert your kids to: repetition (if you see the name or hear the message enough times, you'll eventually buy) and slogans (catchy phrases are memorable).

However, Dugan also asks parents if they are modeling overspending and under-saving with such questions as:

- Have you ever lived beyond your means to try to achieve higher status with your peers?
- If you reviewed your savings history with your grandparents, what would they say?
- Do you justify spending more time at work because it allows you to spend more?
- Are you willing to change your own consumer habits?

For more information about what Dugan calls the manipulation of kids, and what he advises parents to do, see a PBS site called "[Don't Buy it,](http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/buying%20smart)" @([pbskids.org/dontbuyit/buying smart](http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/buying%20smart)). A well-designed web site with components such as "[Question the Commercial](#)". The "Food Ad Tricks" section will delight the kid who's always looking for disgusting stories

Source: Parenting Press, September, 2003

PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITY IDEAS

Board and Card Game Night



Whether it's Candyland, Old Maid, cribbage or Scrabble, board and card games give your family a couple of hours break from the hustle and bustle of back-to-school, a no-stress way to reconnect with each other and a wonderful way to get everyone away from the television, computer and video games. If it's still warm in your region, play out on the front steps or the picnic table. If there's a fall chill in the air, curl up on the carpet. "Board Game Night" can be an occasional event or part of your weekly routine. If family competition is friendly, you can post everyone's standings on the kitchen chalkboard. Or, especially if you're playing with very young children or trying to encourage strategies like risk taking, skip all scorekeeping.



Magnetic Marker

Cut 2 rectangles (14 by 3 1/2 inches and 11 by 3 inches) out of contrasting shades of colored paper or card stock. Glue the smaller atop the larger to create a place for your child to keep a running list of the books he/she reads. Glue matching magnetic strips (sold at most office supply stores) to the ends, as shown. Fold the marker in half and decorate the front flap.

(The football design shown here is cut from brown paper and detailed with black marker. The laces are a couple of short lengths cut from the perforated edge of a sheet of spiral-notebook paper.) To use the marker, simply fold it over the page you wish to flag; the magnets will hold it in place



Game Potluck

If your kids and their friends are more accustomed to entertaining each other with such passive activities as DVDs, try organizing a "potluck" game day, where ever guest is asked to bring a favorite game. Borrow a couple of card tables and set up game stations around the house: Monopoly at the kitchen table, Hearts in the hallway, checkers at the dining room table...and maybe even poker on the porch! Your family and friends of all ages can rotate from game to game, either as they like or on a given schedule.

