



Strategies for parents around advertising

Increasingly, there are very sophisticated marketing campaigns directed to children, and at a younger and younger age.

While it is almost impossible for parents to keep their children away from advertising and marketing pressures, there are a number of constructive things that parents can do to modify the impact of these.

We all need to remember that advertising works by making us feel unhappy with our lives—anxious and unsatisfied. Successful campaigns will work by making us feel that life will be better, and we will be happier if we buy, wear, wash our hair with, eat certain things. Advertising to children will play on their insecurities and need for acceptance by their peers.

The best defence against advertising that we can give our children right from birth, is a solid sense of self-esteem. We need to give them the message that “we like you as you are, exactly and precisely, I think you turned out nicely” (adapted from the theme song of US pre school program *Mr Rogers Neighbourhood*)

Then there are some other more immediate steps that we can take:

- minimise young children’s (under the age of eight years) exposure to commercial media
- choose to watch the ABC (though there are toy spin-offs there as well), or borrow or build a selection of videos that don’t promote a line of toys along the way
- be an active media educator. Show children the real toy when you’re out shopping and point out differences between the TV ad and the real thing. With

older children, talk about the tricks used in advertising, and show them how much more the heavily sugared and promoted cereals cost in comparison to the less advertised ones.

- don’t give TV or movie related toys as presents; don’t buy foods advertised on TV
- choose age specific toys that meet children’s real play needs. The TRUCE Toy Action Guide is a good place to start. (<http://www.truceteachers.org/TRUCE/toyguide01.pdf>)



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Up to date and reliable information for parents and caregivers about the impact of the media on children.

1800 700 357

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