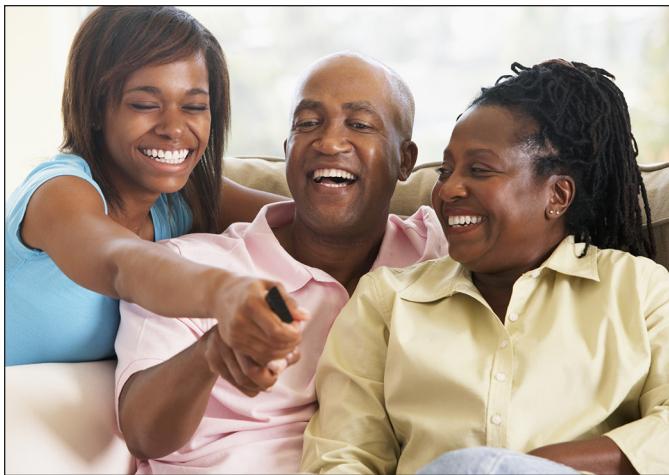




Building a Healthy, Wealthy Future: Sending the Right Message

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Your net worth to the world is usually determined by what remains after your bad habits are subtracted from your good ones.

— Benjamin Franklin, U.S. founding father,
inventor, scientist, diplomat

The culture around us affects how both adults and young people think about food, money, and health. Adolescents in particular receive daily messages from family members, teachers, friends, media, and pop culture that affect their health and financial choices.

Today's young people spend more time using different forms of media than they do anything else (with the exception of sleeping)—magazines, television, and the Internet, including social networking sites. Many advertising companies use media to specifically target adolescents, who can influence the buying decisions of their families. Companies hope to develop brand loyalty so this group will continue to purchase their products as adults. Messages adolescents receive from such media can affect them both now and in the future.

Begin by explaining to your son or daughter that the way we dress, what we eat, and the music we listen to are all decisions based on influences in our environment. It is important that your adolescent become more aware of how the environment's daily media messages influence the choices he/she makes every day.

Work through the following exercises together. Discussing your adolescent's decision-making process is important not only for him/her, but also to help you as a parent stay actively involved in the everyday decisions that he/she makes.

Magazine Messages

To help your adolescent explore examples of both positive and negative media messages, find an age-appropriate popular magazine that he or she would enjoy reading. Flip through the magazine together, paying particular attention to the advertisements. Remind your adolescent that not all advertisements promote

negative messages. For example, an advertisement for cereal would be considered a health-related advertisement; however, depending on the actual type of cereal, it may be promoting either healthy or not-so-healthy nutrition.

Use the following questions as a guide when talking about the media messages your adolescent is receiving from magazine advertisements:

- What type of product is the advertisement promoting?
- Do you find the advertisement appealing? If so, why?
- What message is the product sending?
- If you used or purchased the advertised product, would it have a positive or negative financial impact on you?
- How likely are you to use the product or service promoted by the advertisement? Why or why not?

What's Really on TV Tonight?

Starting at a very young age, children are influenced by advertisements on television. Think back to when your adolescent was a preschooler. You may, for example, remember your child asking for a specific toy or cereal that was advertised on a Saturday morning cartoon. As you are well aware, advertisers continue to use television as a popular way to promote products to young people as they grow up. The average television show only lasts about 22 minutes, which means your adolescent is watching eight minutes of advertisements per episode! To become more aware of the products marketed towards your adolescent, together watch a 30-minute television show that he/she



watches on a regular basis. While watching the show, together complete the *What's Really on TV Tonight? Commercial Log* to help track the number and type of commercials viewed.

After the show is over, have a conversation with your adolescent about the types of messages he/she received from the commercials, using the following questions:

- How many commercials were in the program?
- How many had a positive health or financial message?
- How many commercials had a negative health or financial message?
- Which commercials made you more likely to want something or do something different?
- Did the commercials that made you want something or want to do something different have anything in common? Were they funny? Were they targeted to your age group? Anything else?

What's Really on TV Tonight? Commercial Log

	What is the commercial advertising?	Does the commercial have a health message? If so, what?	Does the commercial have a financial message? If so, what?	Is the message positive or negative?	Does the commercial encourage you to do something?
Commercial 1					
Commercial 2					
Commercial 3					
Commercial 4					
Commercial 5					

What's Really on TV Tonight? Commercial Log

	What is the commercial advertising?	Does the commercial have a health message? If so, what?	Does the commercial have a financial message? If so, what?	Is the message positive or negative?	Does the commercial encourage you to do something?
Commercial 6					
Commercial 7					
Commercial 8					
Commercial 9					
Commercial 10					