



The influence of friends and the media

Ages 9-10

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD GOING THROUGH?

At each stage of their development, children need models of men and women to construct their identities as boys or girls.

During childhood, their main models are the members of their **family**. As they grow, young people place greater importance on their **friends**. They want to be accepted by their peers, and their behaviour and tastes can be more easily influenced. The **media** also play a prominent role in the lives of young people: advertising and their idols can influence them in various ways (e.g., haircuts, clothing style, attitude, way of talking or dancing, etc.).

Young people aren't always aware of the influence of their friends and the media, particularly when it comes to their clothing choices.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

Help children become informed consumers when it comes to choosing and buying clothes

Help them make choices that aren't solely influenced by their friends or the media by asking them:

WHY DO YOU WANT THIS CLOTHING ITEM?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because you need it? Because your friends are wearing the same thing? Because you think it looks nice? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because it's fashionable? Because you think you look good in it? Etc. |
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DO YOU REALLY NEED IT? EXPLAIN TO CHILDREN THAT THEY NEED TO ASK THEMSELVES DIFFERENT QUESTIONS BEFORE BUYING CLOTHES:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will this piece of clothing be useful? Will I wear it often? Can my parents afford to buy it for me? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I need to have everything that's in fashion? Do I have to buy everything my friends have? Etc. |
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What will happen if I can't or don't want to buy you this clothing item?

The answer to this question will give you an idea of how much your child really wants the clothing item. She may realize that she doesn't really need it. Or, you will see how important it is for her. Based on her reasons for wanting the clothing item, you can decide whether to buy it or not and explain your decision. For example, you can say:

- "I don't think that wanting this shirt because all your friends have one is a good reason. You already have a lot of shirts. We can look at buying it when you really need one."
- "I can see it's important for you to have this sweater. You think it looks good and you can wear it all the time. Are you sure this is really the one you want? Because I can't buy you another one for a while after that."
- "You want these running shoes because they're a specific brand. Just remember that the symbol on the side costs a lot of money. If these are really the shoes you want, you'll have to pay for part of them. Do you think you can wear them for gym class?"



Tips

Be aware that, just as they do for adults, clothes and accessories can help your children feel that they look good and at their best and give them confidence. However, help them understand that their appearance isn't the only way to feel good and accepted by others. Their values, skills and attitudes are also important parts of their personality.

Negotiate with your child. This will help them develop critical thinking and an ability to accept "no" and to respect authority. These skills will be useful throughout their lives.

Reflect on how the media influences your own consumer habits, clothing choices, and behaviour. You are a model for your child.

WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

Documents for parents

OFFICE DE LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR, and ÉDITIONS PROTÉGEZ-VOUS. *Vos enfants et la pub.* (In French only.) Available from the following website: www.opc.gouv.qc.ca (Information per consumption topic/Advertising, contests and solicitation/Advertising directed at children).

YWCA MONTREAL. *Early Sexualization: A Guide for Parents of Preteen Girls.* 2009. Available from the following website: www.ydesfemmesmtl.org (under Leadership/Tools, Resources and Publications/Resource Material).

Web site

www.mediasmarts.ca

Do you need a professional resource?

Call Info-Santé at 811 or the parent help line at 1-800-361-5085.

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