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"Gimme" Proof Your Kids: How To Keep Your Child's Materialism In Check

By Dr. Charles Sophy

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Keep 'Em Off My Couch

<http://drsophy.com>

It's the first day of the summer holiday. Five year-old Stephanie is shopping with you at Wal-Mart and picks out three stuffed animals that she saw in the movie Madagascar. "Oh Mom please! I want to bring Alex and Gloria and Melman to Kinder Gym with me!" she says and stomps off in disgust when you tell her she has to choose only one.

Your eight-year old, Alex, comes home from Summer Day Camp. "I need an iPod!" he declares, "Thomas has one and it's sweet!" Your first thought is, "What's an iPod?" Once Alex fills you in on the latest must-have gadget, you're floored by the ticket price and wonder why he needs one when he already has a walkman.

To top it off, your ten-year old, Tabitha, woke up this morning with a singular mission; to have pierced ears with diamond studs like her new best-friend Sarah by the end of the day, when last week she thought body piercings of any kind were gross. She has spent the entire day begging you to bring her to the Salon to get them pierced, ate her dinner in silence and retreated to her room to call Sarah and complain about how unfair her parents are.

You finish the day exhausted by the challenges of managing "gimme" requests from your children. Sitting down with your partner after the kids have been put to bed, you share your concerns about the day's events. You're both left wondering how your children became so materialistic, and worried that they are becoming followers rather than children who are secure in themselves and their values. A change is needed! But where to begin?

During the grade-school years, children grow more interested in the material world than they were back in kindergarten. Motivated by a combination of an increasing awareness of what other kids have

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and the desire to fit in by having the same things themselves, their acquisitiveness begins to become more apparent.

A child's age-appropriate progression from self-awareness to awareness of others is compounded by the society in which we live. We live in an age of affluence, at times one obsessed with status and possession. Evidenced by TV and other forms of media. One message is coming through loud and clear: You are what you buy and what you own. There's no doubt that it has become increasingly difficult to raise children in this world of materialism, distraction and temptation.

You can help keep your child's materialism in check by following these simple steps:

1) Back to Basics: Try to bring your parenting back to a basic level. No need to respond to the distractions that at times seem out of range on many levels and maybe out of your comfort zone.

2) Self-Awareness: Working along with your parenting partner, ensure agreed-upon family values, as

well as the structures that support your beliefs.

3) Explore: Remember that the need your child may have for all these newest gadgets possibly camouflages a deeper problem.

4) Communicate: Discuss with your child the concept of earning, as well as alternative to their request. A less costly option may meet the need.

5) Don't fulfill every request: Children who get everything they ask for don't learn to handle disappointment, and they don't learn to work for the things they desire, or delay the need for gratification.

6) Spend time rather than money on your kids: It's not easy in our hectic lives to give children the time and attention they crave, but that's the best way to ward off the "gimmies."

Remember: No matter what your child says, he/she wants — and needs — a secure sense of family more than a roomful of possessions. There may be times when it's appropriate to fulfill a request and times when it's best to say no. You know your child best: listen, learn, teach and communicate in a respectful manner and do your best to focus your children on the lessons of giving as well as receiving.

Dr. Charles Sophy Dr. Charles Sophy currently serves as Medical Director for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of nearly 40,000 foster children. He also has a private psychiatry practice in Beverly Hills, California. Dr. Sophy has lectured extensively and is an Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California Los Angeles Neuro-Psychiatric Institute. His lectures and teachings are consistently ranked as among the best by those in attendance.

Dr. Charles Sophy, author of the "Keep `Em Off My Couch" blog, provides real simple answers for

solving life's biggest problems. He specializes in improving the mental health of children. To contact Dr. Sophy, visit his blog at

<http://drsophy.com>

What To Look For When Shopping For Kid's Bedding

By Lisa Scott

When choosing kids' bedding, your first step should be to consider your child's tastes. After all, a child's room is often an extension of her personality. Does your daughter like a particular color? Does she prefer a certain style? If you follow your child's lead, she will lead you to the perfect kids' bedding.

Kids' bedding is available in a variety of designs, from cartoon characters to outer space. When selecting a design you must consider longevity. While your daughter might love Strawberry Shortcake this week, you have to think about the future as well. If you don't mind replacing the bedding frequently, character bedding is fine; otherwise consider themes or patterns that can grow with your child.

Most children's books, television, and movie characters are available on kids' bedding (Barbie, Bratz, GI Joe, Batman, Spiderman, Disney Princess, Lion King, Yu-Gi-Oh, Scooby Doo, Tom and Jerry, Mickey Mouse, Tweety, Bugs Bunny, Simpsons, etc.). Before committing yourself to expensive character bedding, try to decide if your child's love of the character is here to stay or just a passing phase.

While a child might quickly outgrow her love of a popular television character, she is more likely to remain fond of flowers or clouds. Here is a partial list of popular themes for kids' bedding: teddy bears, nature, ocean, military, solar system, insects, fairies, flowers, games etc.

Kids' bedding is also available in an assortment of non-themed patterns. Patterns range from soft pastel flowers to wild neon abstracts. Popular patterns for kids' bedding include polka dots, hearts, checks, circles, cow prints, plaid, stripes, and abstract designs. A well-chosen pattern can last all the way through the teen years.

Most kids' bedding is sold in coordinating sets and includes fitted sheet, top sheet, bed ruffle, pillow shams, and comforter. Other sets might include a quilt or bed spread instead of a comforter. All three are used for the same purposes, but comforters are usually thicker. Selection will likely depend on personal preference and climate. Most stores also sell coordinating accessories, including shower curtains, wall hangings, waste baskets, and throw pillows.

Kids' bedding is widely available. Some toy stores also sell kids' bedding. If your child sleeps on a twin- or full-sized bed, you will find that kids' bedding is readily available. If, however, your child's bed is larger, you might have to special order the bedding or opt for patterns.

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