

FOR YOUR HEALTH

Marketing tools of the tobacco industry

Why do more than 350,000 youth in the U.S. start smoking every year?

The answer is fairly simple: The tobacco industry has spent the past century developing the most effective, deceptive marketing strategies on the planet.

So effective that other industries are copying them.

And, tobacco corporations have almost unlimited funds compared to tobacco prevention programs.

Last year, the tobacco industry spent nearly \$13 billion to market its deadly products -- on advertising, promotions and coupons.

You can see those marketing dollars at work in our neighborhoods -- at gas stations, in markets and convenience stores.

Tobacco ads are plastered in store windows and promotional items are placed where customers and their children are sure to see them.

Cigarette ads abound and many are designed to attract young women. Tobacco companies know what magazines are most popular with your children and place ads in Rolling Stone, Sports Illustrated, Maxim, Glamour, Mademoiselle, People and Vibe, to name a few.

Teens account for at least 20 percent of their readership.

Glamorous ads don't portray the reality that disease and death follow tobacco use.

So what can parents do to protect their children from the seductive influence of tobacco advertising?

We can expose the tobacco industry's deceptive tactics.

Health advocates have fought hard to protect new generations from the harmful health effects of tobacco. No longer is the cartoon character Joe Camel more easily recognized by children than Mickey Mouse.

Cartoon Joe has been "arrested" and is outlawed as an advertising symbol for Camel cigarettes. And, television commercials for cigarettes are history.

Perhaps the most successful tactic in the tobacco bag of tricks is showing smoking in films.

Paying movie stars to smoke and promote certain

cigarette brands took root in the 1930s and continued until it became illegal in the late 1990s.

Yet, the amount of smoking in movies has increased in the past 20 years.

Parents beware. According to Breathe California, half of all teens who smoke were influenced by movies.

And a visit to <http://www.smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu> reveals that, shockingly, PG-rated movies contain more smoking scenes than R-rated movies.

Movie icons like John Wayne and Clark Gable endorsed cigarette brands that ultimately led to their deaths from cancer and heart attack.

Unfortunately, vivid images of heroic smokers like John Wayne live on in television reruns of war movies and westerns.

The more often children see appealing images of people smoking, the more normal and harmless it will seem.

Tobacco companies have used their carefully calculated strategies to make smoking seem desirable, sexy and exciting, while covering up the fact that tobacco use kills 40,000 Californians every year mainly from heart disease, cancer and lung diseases.

You, as concerned parents and customers, have the power to screen the movies and videos your children watch.

You have buying and boycott power.

You can convince stores to reduce tobacco advertising, magazines to refuse tobacco ads and movie producers to show tobacco use realistically.

Visit <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org> to learn how to take action to stop tobacco companies from targeting our children.

Also, <http://www.SceneSmoking.org> lists which newly released movies and videos contain smoking scenes.

Marilyn Sexton is part of the Solano County Tobacco Education Coalition (Department of Public Health Services) which is a member of Solano Coalition for Better Health.

Pressure for choking warnings grows

Doctors, parents urge labels on foods for children

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — When 4-year-old Eric Stavros Adler choked to death on a piece of hot dog, his anguished mother never dreamed that the popular kids' food could be so dangerous.

Some food makers including Oscar Mayer have warning labels about choking, but not nearly enough, says Joan Stavros Adler, Eric's mom.

The American Academy of Pediatrics agrees. The nation's largest pediatricians group is calling for sweeping changes in the way food is designed and labeled to minimize children's chances for choking.

Choking kills more than 100 U.S. children 14 years or younger each year and thousands more -- 15,000 in 2001 -- are treated in emergency rooms. Food, including candy and gum, is among the leading culprits, along with items like coins and balloons. Of the 141 choking deaths in kids in 2006, 61 were food-related.

Surveillance systems lack detailed information about food choking incidents, which are thought to be underreported but remain a significant and under-appreciated problem, said Dr. Gary Smith, director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

Smith is lead author of a new policy report from the pediatrics academy that seeks to make choking prevention a priority for government and food makers. The report was released Monday in the journal Pediatrics.

Doctors say high-risk foods, including hot dogs, raw carrots, grapes and apples -- should be cut into pea-sized pieces for small children to reduce chances of choking. Some say other risky foods, including hard candies, popcorn, peanuts and marshmallows, shouldn't be given to young children at all.

Federal law requires choking warning labels on certain toys including small balls, balloons and games with small parts. Unless food makers voluntarily put more warning labels on high-risk foods, there should be a similar mandate for food, the pediatrics academy says.

Adler, a Warren, N.J., attorney who pushed for more warning labels after her son



The Associated Press

Joan Stavros Adler sits in her home Feb. 18 in Warren, N.J., as she holds a photograph of her son Eric Stavros Adler, who choked to death on a piece of hot dog nine years ago at age four. Nine years later, some food makers including Oscar Mayer have added warning labels about choking, but not nearly enough, says Adler.

died in 2001, says she hopes the academy's efforts will work. Several efforts to pass federal legislation for labels have failed in Congress.

The group also urges the Food and Drug Administration to work with other government agencies to establish a nationwide food-related choking reporting system; and to recall foods linked with choking.

The academy says the food industry should avoid shapes and sizes that pose choking risks.

Something as simple as making lollipops flat like a silver dollar instead of round like a pingpong ball

can make a big difference, said Bruce Silverglade, legal affairs director at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which also has lobbied for more attention to choking prevention.

Grocery Manufacturers Association spokesman Scott Openshaw declined to say whether food makers would consider warning labels or new designs, but said making parents aware of choking dangers is key to keeping kids safe.

Openshaw said the industry would continue working with the FDA and USDA "to ensure that our products are as safe as possible."

At the FDA, spokeswoman Rita Chappelle said the agency will review the academy's analysis and recommendations. She said the FDA also would continue consulting with the Consumer Product Safety Commission on assessing choking hazards associated with food and take action on a case-by-case basis.

Adler considered herself educated about children's safety. Her son had eaten hot dogs before without any problem.

Hot dogs are "almost as American as apple pie," she said. "You really don't know how horrible it can be."

Horoscopes by Holiday Mathis

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Today brings a bouquet of pleasurable moments, though they will all come disguised as everyday events.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You don't need a beauty overhaul. And yet, spending more time and money on your physical self will bring you the wonderful sense of luxury that you've been missing lately.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Focus on your own achievements (instead of wasting time analyzing the so-called "competition") and you'll begin to see yourself differently.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There is no such thing as an attention thief in your realm, since you give your love freely to anyone who needs it and otherwise mind your own business.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). A sense of meaning is not something you strive for to get bonus points in life. It's actually a necessity, as important to your survival as food and water.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). When was the last time you went to the library? As you peruse reading material you wouldn't normally look into, you'll find gems of knowledge that are both personally significant and enjoyable.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Take initiative. Be the one to decide and make something happen. The sense of control that comes with this act will empower you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Look on your past with compassion and optimism. Even if you weren't thinking

Today's birthday

Helping others is the key to helping yourself. You make the world a better place this year, dedicating yourself to improving the experience of your loved ones, as well as your community members. You'll win office or be promoted in May. You'll gain a mentor in April and be one to someone else in November. Virgo and Capricorn people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 8, 31, 20, 44 and 18.

very positively back then, you can retroactively change your experience by looking at the best parts now.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Spending money on others usually makes you much happier than does spending money on yourself. However, today is an exception.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Listening to someone is a gift you can give that doesn't cost you any money. But it does take a good chunk of your time.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Charity doesn't feel like an effort for you. Altruism and giving are a part of your everyday life -- it's just who you are.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Why is it that you're able to find the gems in a situation that has others griping endlessly? Because you see opportunities.

ANNIE'S MAILBOX

I can't take my husband's PTSD anymore

Dear Annie: I have been married for seven years and have two children from a previous relationship.

Some time ago, my husband was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. While we were dating, he showed no sign of mood swings or disturbing behavior, but it has surfaced since we began living together with my children.

Most parents would be happy for their children to take out the trash, wash their own dishes and clean their rooms and bathrooms, which is what my children do. My husband, however, blows his lid when the new trash bag isn't tied properly to the trashcan or, heaven forbid, someone doesn't properly close the dishwasher door or there are a few drops of water left on the sink after they wash their hands.

He doesn't like socializing and has alienated us from many friends and family members because nobody wants to be around him. He is paranoid and always wants the blinds closed and the doors shut.

His mood goes up and down on a daily basis, and therefore, so does mine. I

have told him I don't think his behavior is healthy or normal, but he says I'm too sensitive. I'm an emotional wreck and feel like giving up. How do I know whether this really is PTSD or something else? What should I do? — Stressed Out

Dear Stressed: It actually doesn't matter what the reason is. Your husband's behavior is over the top, and he needs to get it under control. Having PTSD, bipolar disorder, anger management issues or any other problem is not carte blanche to treat others poorly. You are suffering, and more importantly, so are your children. Your husband could benefit from counseling, and you should urge him to get it. You also can find excellent information through the VA National Center for PTSD (ptsd.va.gov).

Dear Annie: My mother-in-law works for the Board of Elections. She is constantly looking up personal information about people and passing it on. I know this because she tried to hand me a local TV reporter's home address so I could drive by and see his big house. She has looked

up information on my husband's ex-girlfriend and most recently told me she looked up a candidate's voting history and gave it to another candidate's team.

Isn't it against the law to be looking up, let alone passing out, this personal information? Couldn't she get fired? — Not a Gossip Monger

Dear Not a Gossip: Most complaints of misconduct center on abuses that may affect the outcome of the election. Every state is different, and what your mother-in-law did was nosy and unkind, but it may not have been against the law or a violation of the rules set down by her local Board of Elections. Addresses and voting history are public knowledge. Had she given out a Social Security or driver's license number, that would be a different story.

Dear Annie: Like "Bad Daughter-in-Law," my husband and I were essentially the "Bank of Connecticut" for my sister and her family. I cannot possibly tell you how much money we gave them for one emergency after another. Because we were able to help, we did -- and did, and did. Never

once was it appreciated or even beneficial, because it was mostly laziness and spontaneous spending that got them into financial trouble. Our so-called loans just ended up buying them more time.

Our marriage did not survive the disagreements over this, even though we still loved each other. The guilt I felt because my sister and her husband were not "getting ahead" made me a very angry person -- angry with myself.

No one owes relatives who refuse to work for what they need. This writer and her husband should get on the same page and shut down the candy shop. They must give their relatives the opportunity to do for themselves. If they fall on their faces, they will learn on their own how to get back up. — Brookfield, Conn.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.