

## Common Sense Media - Family Friendly Reviews



## Parent Tips

**Making Healthy Resolutions**

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Turn on the TV, surf the Web, flip through a magazine and you'll find them lurking: Ads for all kinds of gym memberships, weight-loss plans, and diet supplements.

You might be used to seeing commercials promising "a new you in the new year," but they can be a blow to your self-esteem. And what you're feeling? Multiply that by 10 for vulnerable kids who are increasingly insecure about their bodies and often want to fit in at any cost.

But you can help your kids see through the hype and make healthier resolutions.

**Be a critic.** When you see gym or diet ads on TV, the Internet, or in magazines, don't let them just wash over you. Remind your kids that these ads work, in large part, because they make people feel bad about themselves. Tell your kids how the ads make you feel, and ask them for their own reactions.

These makeover ads could actually lead to some very important discussions about body image. Are their friends on diets? Do they know anyone with an eating disorder? How much time do they actually spend worrying about their weight? Do they judge their bodies against those of movie and TV stars? Do they know what it takes to have a truly healthy lifestyle?

Make sure your kids understand that weight loss isn't the secret to being more popular or getting a date, even if that's what the ad is promising.

**Do some myth busting.** Help your kids connect the dots: Weight-loss programs -- from gyms to diet plans and supplements -- constitute a multi-billion dollar industry. Point out that these ads aim to sell products that often don't work or can be unhealthy.

Make sure that your kids know that there is no magic solution to weight loss.

**Be a good body role model.** Here's a New Year's resolution for parents: Remember, it's not just the ads that can impact your kids' self esteem. They're listening to you, too. Studies show when you put down your body, your kids probably will learn to do the same.

**Help your kids create a healthy plan.** New Year's resolutions can actually provide a good opportunity to teach kids about setting goals, and how to follow through on them. Teach your kids to make specific resolutions about their health and lifestyle versus focusing on dropping weight fast through gimmicks.

If you want to work together, you could: Resolve to scale back on the fast food. Resolve to stop talking about weight or just complimenting each other on your looks. Resolve to get the whole family out for a walk on Saturdays.

Resolve to have dinner as a family a few times a week. Resolve to show your kids how to make nutrient-rich meals. Resolve to respect your bodies because they're where you live and help you accomplish your missions in life.

Make sure that your kids' resolutions -- and your own -- are based on being a healthier person inside and out.

*Courtney Macavinta is the co-author of [RESPECT: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect and Dealing When Your Line Is Crossed](#).*



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