

Is Halloween

Too Sexy?

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What do little girls want to be this Halloween? Well, once again their imaginations are being limited as retailers are pushing Paris Hilton costumes and bride costumes (complete with a giant diamond ring). In a world where your child is being stereotyped and marketed to at every turn, how do you encourage her to be anything she wants to be,

"Everyone knows that Halloween is just an excuse to wear lingerie..."

-Mean Girls
(Paramount, 2004)

especially on Halloween? What are some great costume ideas for little girls who want to be more than just "hot chicks" on Halloween?

Especially at Halloween, the image of girls and girlhood sold to our daughters by marketers and media so quickly turns from innocent, "pretty in pink" to sexy in hot pink and black lace.

In this day and age, it is hard to believe that boys are still encouraged to dress up as soldiers, policemen and superheroes while girls are offered choices like cheerleaders, sexy divas and princesses. Even if your daughter wants to be a super hero, the Wonder Woman costume comes complete with a spaghetti strapped leotard, a bikini bottom and beige tights—the only evil she'll be fighting is the typical stereotype!

Halloween is all about kids imagining themselves to be anything they want to be. For parents who want to encourage their daughters to imagine themselves as something other than the pretty princess, the

(Astronaut is NOT a boy costume!) This will give them permission to be wild, brave and phenomenal too!

4. Don't assume that you know what your daughter likes. She is bombarded with pink princesses, sexy divas and pop stars, but she may surprise you! Talk about possibilities.

5. Spend time with her and listen to what she likes and why. Sitting down and talking about Halloween costumes is a great learning and bonding experience. Help her to recall the best costumes she saw last year, "Remember when those three girls who were best friends dressed as the Three Musketeers?" And it's also a great opportunity to open the door to new possibilities.

6. Sit down with a paper and pencil and let your daughter create her own character and story. She can raid the family closets or dress up box to become the wildest character she can think of!

7. There's nothing wrong with wanting to look glam-

orous, pretty, sparkly or pink, but why not open up the world of action to your daughter also and see not only who she wants to be but what she wants to do when her imagination runs wild!

Packaging Girlhood (\$24.95, St. Martin's Press) by Sharon Lamb, Ed.D. and Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D. is available wherever books are sold. ❁

Pick a Costume . . . A Chance For Girls to Be Anything & Everything!

Pink & Glittery: How about a feisty fairy? A butterfly? A pink superhero, a sparkly firefighter or even a sparkly skeleton!

Scary: Be a witch, a monster, or ghost. Avoid all those sexy diva witch costumes in the catalogs; instead, encourage her to look as scary, ugly, and awful as she can.

By the Book: Does your daughter have a favorite book? A favorite character? She can be Madeline, Anne of Green Gables, Dorothy of OZ or Hermione Granger. Or the scarecrow, Wicked Witch of the West, or even the wizard Dumbledore.

Gender Bender: There is no reason she can't be a character usually reserved for boys! Halloween is all about being what you aren't...let her stretch her imagination to become a vampire, ghoul, or cowpoke. Just because some costumes are labeled "for boys" does not mean they are off limits to her. There are plenty of female police officers and fire fighters in real life!

Go for the Gold: Is your daughter an athlete? This is her chance to become her idol off the court, field or race track. She can be Mia Hamm, Danica Patrick or Sheryl Swoopes.

Make History: How about Amelia Earhart or Joan of Arc? Talk with your daughter about real women pirates, explorers and spies. She can be Jane Goodall (with a stuffed chimpanzee) or Sally Ride! But don't stop there. Why can't she be Van Gogh with a palette, paint brushes and a bandage on her ear? Or Mozart with a ruffled shirt, a powdered wig, a feather pen and composition pad?

sexy diva or the glittery fairy, here are some tips:

1. On a day when she can be anyone or anything, princesses and Divas should not be her only Halloween choices! It's not that pink and pretty is bad, but it squeezes out other possibilities.

2. Be creative with your daughter's costumes. Imagination can help girls break out of gender stereotypes...and fantasy is a great practice for reality.

3. Encourage your daughter to be anyone or anything. If they are encouraged to look around them, they will see women doing wild, brave and phenomenal things.

