



# This Halloween Let Your Daughter's Creativity Sparkle (Not Just Her Costume)

Tips and Costume Ideas from Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D. and Sharon Lamb, Ed.D. Authors of *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes* (St. Martin's Press, 0-312-35250-6) © 2006

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. Girls love it, yes, but they also love double fudge-frosted brownies, and you wouldn't want them eating a steady diet of that stuff.
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. (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. If she chooses pink and glittery, encourage her to add her own twist to her costume. If she wants to be a queen, let her carry a sheath and sword in case she needs to fight for her crown!
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!

## **Picking a Costume.... A Chance to Be Anything and Everything!**

7. If your daughter is set on pink and glittery, let her pink and glitter DO something. Help her imagine a feisty fairy who can take on the magical realm's evil dragon or let her be a butterfly that saves the insect world or even a princess who can use a map to find her own way to the ball! She can be a pink superhero who saves the universe or a sparkly firefighter or even a sparkly skeleton!
8. If your daughter loves scary stories and the history of Halloween let her go traditional and be a witch, a monster, or ghost. If she's a witch, avoid all those sexy diva witch costumes in the catalogs; instead, encourage her to look as scary, ugly, and awful as she can.
9. Does your daughter have a favorite book? A favorite character? Reread the book with her and think about what she'll need to get into character. She can be Madeline, Anne of Green Gables, Dorothy of Oz or Hermione Granger. She can even be the scarecrow or the Wicked Witch of the West, or even the wizard Dumbledore. Tell her she doesn't need to limit herself to the girl leads in each of these!
10. 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. Teach her that just because the police officer and firefighter 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!
11. Is your daughter an athlete? This is her chance to become her court, field or racetrack idol. She can be Mia Hamm, Serena Williams, Asjha Jones, Gabby Douglas, or her other favorite Olympic athlete.
12. If your daughter has just learned about Amelia Earhart or Joan of Arc at school, Halloween is a great opportunity to make learning fun. Sit down with her and talk about real women pirates, explorers and spies. Visit the library and check out books on Jane Goodall (a costume could be completed with a stuffed chimpanzee) or Sally Ride! But don't stop there. Why can't she be Van Gogh with a palette, paintbrushes and a bandage on her ear? Why can't she be Mozart with a ruffled shirt, a powdered wig, a feather pen and composition pad? It's great to learn about women in history who have made their mark, but this is a day of imagination so she can be anyone, any profession, any role.