



## **Packaging Girlhood: 10 Tips for Girls**

**1. Face the Facts.** Most girls want to believe that they are independent thinkers and that marketers and the media won't be able to influence them. But realize that marketers are spending billions of dollars every year to try and trick you and they wouldn't spend that much if it doesn't work and work often. So, perhaps the first thing a girl needs to do is to believe that somehow, somehow those marketers may be getting under her skin. Once you realize that this is happening, it is harder and harder for the media and marketers to claim you.

**2. Know The Same Old Same Old.** The same old stereotypes are brought up and sold to you again and again. Do you see a girl on TV in pink with a bow in her hair and pearls? Do you see yet another movie that suggests girls are mean and can't get along? Do you see a girl watching while the boy gets to drive? Is the message in the book you're reading that a girl is nothing without a boyfriend? That she hates math? Does a makeover or shopping spree really fix everything? These are the same old stereotypes we see over and over again. We read about them. We hear them in lyrics of songs. Know them so you know how to resist them.

**3. Think of Counter-Examples.** One way to resist is through counter-examples. You may know girls who like and are good at math. You may have an aunt who's an engineer or who plays the horn in an orchestra. You may know specifically that girls really can get along when you think about you and your best friend. Remember these examples and bring them up when you hear the people around you reduce girls to stereotypes.

**4. Look For Product Placement Invasions.** This is tricky because the marketers are slipping in product information everywhere you look in subtle and almost undetectable ways. Don't be fooled. So, for example, if you're watching the new video of Cheaper by the Dozen 2 and you see the scene with Neutrogena makeup, yell (in your mind or out loud) PRODUCT PLACEMENT! And then swear not to buy that product.

**5. Refuse To Type-Cast Yourself.** Everywhere people may be asking you to sum yourself up as a girly girl, a tomboy, a goth, a prep, a jock. Don't do it. Keep in your mind a picture of yourself as a super complex human being. Make a list of all the things you are, do and love. See? No one can type cast you! When you see those magazine contests that ask you to type yourself by answering a bunch of questions, leave them be. They're

not you--and they'll probably tell you to buy some product to fix whatever they think is wrong with you in the end.

**6. Stop Calling Things Girly or Boy Stuff.** If you participate in labeling things girl or boy you may end up calling all sorts of things that girls love to do and are good at "boy" things and giving messages to other girls and boys that the world is not open to them, that there's something wrong with them if they try things from the "other side."

**7. Point Things Out to Other Girls.** Now that you know, it's your responsibility to share these new things you're observing with other girls, boys and even your parents and teacher!

**8. Don't Let the Media Turn You Away From Your Parents as Valuable Resources.** Lots of media and marketers want to set up your parents as the opposition, as the ones who say no to fun. Then they can market to you directly and get you to buy things just to be rebellious. So teach your parents this way of seeing the world and get their true opinions of the music you listen to, the books and magazines you read, and the shows you watch.

**9. Girlcott The Really Awful Stuff.** If you see something really awful, like the Abercrombie and Fitch T-shirt that read "Who needs a brain when you have these" across the chest, start your own protest. Get other girls who are angry too and work together: send instant messages, set up a Facebook page posting your ideas, decide on a tactic whether it's a protest outside the store or a letter writing campaign, then do it. And remember to call the newspaper and tell them you're doing it too!

**10. Enjoy Pink, Pretty, Glam Things** on occasion, but never let it be the sum of who you are. We love chocolate but we don't eat it 24/7!!!

*Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes* Sharon Lamb, Ed.D and Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed. D.

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