

facing fads as a family

Deciding which of the latest crazes to embrace affects more than just your budget; it also reflects your family values. The final call may be yours, but it can get a great conversation started with your kids.

It's an issue that all parents grapple with: While your son is fixated on yet another gaming system, your daughter is hyper over *High School Musical* – even though at five, she's much too young to be swooning over teenage boys. How can you negotiate the latest fads with your kids and still stay true to your family values?

"While you can't shelter your kids to the extent that they're on the fringe because you reject anything marketed to them, there's a high price to pay if you give in all the time because there's always something new around the corner," says Ilana Tamari, a psychologist in Toronto who specializes in child and family therapy. The key is to find the middle ground, where your children are exposed to popular culture and you welcome it into your home without buying into it wholeheartedly.

And though it isn't always easy to work through, there is a hidden benefit to grappling with the choice. In fact, the process of deciding whether to say yes or no to a fad opens a window for you to parent more effectively. "It's an opportunity to instill

good values in your family," says Tamari. "How you handle fads will model how you want your children to deal with them, too." And the more you challenge fads, the better you'll feel about your convictions as a parent – and the influence you'll have over your children as they grow up. "That's how fads can really affect parents in a positive way," says Tamari.

The next time you're faced with your daughter's need for everything *HSM*, make the most of it with Tamari's tips.

- **HAVE A CONVERSATION.** Fads offer you the chance to have a dialogue with your kids and understand where they're coming from. "You can learn more about what they want, why they want it and why it's so important for them to have it," she says.

- **ASK YOURSELF SOME QUESTIONS.** How important is this to my child? Is there a middle ground where she can have some of it without me totally buying into it? When Tamari's young daughter took an interest in Miley Cyrus, Tamari said no to the clothes

and music that she disapproved of but yes to an autographed pencil case. "It allowed her to look socially within bounds while still knowing that, as a family, we weren't buying into all of it," she says.

- **PREPARE A RATIONAL RESPONSE.** Make choices based on good reasoning (after all, if you don't have a good reason for saying no, then why aren't you allowing it?) and put it in terms your kids will understand. If the latest *HSM* movie isn't appropriate for your five-year-old, say "That movie is for big girls and you're a little girl."

- **BE CONSISTENT.** "When parents say 'No, no, no...yes,' what their kids hear is 'We were able to sway her on this one, which means we are really powerful and we'll be able to sway her on other things, too.'"

- **RESIST FADS YOURSELF.** Teaching values is as much about what you do as what you say. For example, do you really need to buy a new iPhone when you just upgraded your BlackBerry a few months ago? ☹

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