

# Phil's Forum 9/22/06 "How Toys Teach Part 3"

(Note: To read parts "How Toys Teach Part 1 & Part 2" [click here.](#))

This forum may sound preachy. Sorry. Get over it.

Quality DOES matter. And the quality of the toys you buy teaches your children a very important lesson.

We live in an "everything must be cheaper, cheaper is better" world. Over 90% of the advertisements you see on TV, read in the paper, or hear on the radio talk about "low prices", "free giveaways", "special discounts" and "huge savings".

Here's a little clue for you. Those special savings you might get are not coming out of the profit of the company. It's coming out of the quality of the product.

In an effort to have the lowest possible prices, companies like Wal-Mart, Target and K-Mart are forcing manufacturers to cut more and more corners to keep their own prices down. End result? Cheaper, lower quality products.

But consumers are eating up those sales, discounts and savings encouraging the companies to continue this practice.

And so the prices drop lower and lower and the quality goes down and down and down. Eventually, everything becomes disposable. If it breaks, throw it out and buy a new one. Hey, at these prices, you can afford it.

Or can you?

There is an underlying lesson we are teaching our kids when price becomes the end-all, be-all decision maker in the items we buy – that there is no value in quality. No value in craftsmanship, no value in workmanship, no value in making products that last.

And when there is no value placed on quality *products*, how do we teach kids the value of quality *work*? How can we ask our kids to do quality schoolwork when we show by our actions that quality doesn't count? How can we expect them to put forth their best effort in the classroom when we aren't willing to pay for effort in the manufacturing world? When we accept the notion that "cheaper is better" we are saying that hard work is not necessary, that attention to detail is not important, that putting in a little more effort is not worth it.

When price becomes king and cheaper is better, we also sacrifice service. Having helpful, knowledgeable people who want to take care of our needs is no longer important. It's okay to be rude and inconsiderate, just have the lowest price.

Believe me, these lessons are being taught every day. Wal-Mart doesn't build hundreds of new stores each year because you want better-built products and more knowledgeable staffs. They continue to grow because consumers continue to demand lower prices (and, therefore, cheaper products).

Now, don't get me wrong. I do believe in value. I do believe you should get the most for your money. But, as with everything in life, there are consequences for our actions. And our actions teach our children what is important and what is not.

For children, it starts with toys. When you buy high-quality toys that are built to last, you teach your children that there is value in hard work and in doing things the right way. You teach your children that it is okay to expect the best. When you buy cheap toys that break easily and are replaced often you teach your children that "enough to get by" is "good enough" and that sloppy work is okay. You can just move on and do something else when what you're doing isn't good enough.

When you shop where price is king at the expense of any kind of real service, you teach that friendliness and helpfulness are not important in life. When you shop where customer service is more than a red-vested greeter at the front door, then you teach that there is value in how we treat each other, and that it is okay to ask for help.

These are real lessons, and one more proof that toys really do teach.

Your kids learn from watching you.

What do you want them to value?

(Thanks for listening. I'll get off my soapbox now.)

Happy Shopping!

**-Phil Wrzesinski**