

## SUPERSIZING THE HOLIDAYS

By Joe Cavanaugh

Aah... tis the season to give and get and stuff oneself...to be full. My mailbox overfloweth with catalogs on what to buy and how to be happy. When I was young, all I needed to be happy was a Hot Wheels set. *Then* all would be well. *Then* I would be satisfied. I got the Hot Wheels deluxe set, and I was satisfied—for three hours.

The marketers succeed in convincing many young television watchers to ask for the newest Playstation 3, rent the biggest limo for prom, go on the wildest Spring Break trip. To “supersize” it—get more than we need—which doesn’t really make us happy anyway. Alas, three hours later the focus shifts to yet another wish unfulfilled.

Many kids today are infected with an insatiable hunger—to have more, do more, be more. We are overwhelming our kids—stuffing them with things, while they still look around unsatisfied. We fill their schedules with so much that they never have time to dream or seek paths that one day may fulfill them. We’ve helped create a generation of children who feel endless desire and yet never feel complete.

We give our children so much that we unwittingly create a generation of gluttons with holes in their consciences: teenagers who ask only “What do I *get*?” and not “What should I *give*?” It is this teenager who tomorrow, in corporate offices, decides whether to market violent video games or who may be in a position of influence to your child or grandchild. I believe that most of us mean well when we overindulge our children, but we do so at the expense of their true wellbeing. To live a life only thinking of oneself is not a life well lived.

Too many teenagers—and indeed, too many adults—never recognize that they need things deeper than Razr phones and double lattes. We need deeper things such as knowing that character is more important than consumption. To realize that the person who has the most toys may still be an unhappy and lonely person. And to understand that, in the words of a friend of mine, we should love people and use things—not the other way around.

Suggestions:

- During the holiday season, share with your teenager what you’re most grateful for.
- Give a gift of a donation to the charity of your child’s choice instead of a toy.
- Buy your child a book instead of a video game.
- Have a snowball fight in your front yard instead of just rushing to hockey practice.
- Embrace the word “no” as a critical part of your child’s development.

\*\*For more information on Youth Frontiers, please visit [www.youthfrontiers.org](http://www.youthfrontiers.org).

