

Is obesity today in America Caused by the Food Industry?

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The essay *Is the Food Industry the Problem or the Solution?* by Dale Buss is about obesity in America today and whether the food industry is responsible for the high increase in obese Americans. If you ask this simple question, it is easy blame obesity on what we eat, but when you look deeper into the problem you will find that the food industry is spending millions searching for consumer's solutions to prevent childhood obesity, but we are finding that the problem is ultimately caused by what we as parents or children decide to consume or choices of activity. A cause of the high rate of obesity outside of the food industry may be children's sedentary lifestyle and the decrease in physical education. After you say that children are obese because they are inactive you could blame the decrease on physical activity on children spending too much time playing video games and sitting in front of the television. We talk about children and how they are more overweight than ever, but shouldn't that be their parents fault since they are the ones that go to the grocery store and buy the fattening food that the parents and their children eat? Now we need to go back to the title of the essay, is the food industry solving or worsening the rate of obesity? Many food industries such as PepsiCo, Subway, and Coca-Cola have been working on finding more healthy food for children to eat, and make them more accessible than the fattening products. Most of these industries still provide less healthy products and Americans still seem to have a preference of a side dish of greasy French fries rather than a simple, healthy salad. Dale Buss (2006) reminds us that Coca-Cola, Kraft, McDonald's, PepsiCo, and others are working hard to aim at making a greater amount of children more active.

Can we say that obesity is solely caused by what we eat? Is it also about how much we work out and what we do to stay physically fit? You do not become obese by

only one of these two factors above, and you can't lose a lot of weight with one of these two vital factors either. It's known as diet *and* exercise; you hear it all the time when talking about weight loss. It is really simple to blame the food industry on why so many more people are obese today, but what you eat is *your* decision and healthy food is available to everyone who is interested in eating healthy. Sometimes people have a hard time fitting a workout into their busy schedule. You can procrastinate a simple workout all you want, but it doesn't take a lot to take the stairs instead of the elevator, take a fifteen minute walk every night, or to play an active game with your family. Instead of video games, encourage your children to play outside when it is warm and get them to have an active lifestyle. If you can afford it, get gym memberships, or enroll your children into a recreational sport that they enjoy. More and more large corporations also have gyms available to employees over the age of eighteen as a benefit to have healthier, happier employees.

Eating healthy isn't complicated. There are a variety of healthy foods anywhere you go, including fast food restaurants. Most homeowners own at least one cookbook, and there are cook books available that are devoted to healthy eating so you can learn to make delicious and nutritious meals for your whole family to enjoy. Dieting is becoming more of a popular fashion than ever before. It is getting much easier to go to the grocery store and find reduced sugar or even sugar free products that you have always enjoyed that used to be very unhealthy. If you learn to eat healthier and fit a small workout into your busy life at least a few times a week, you will most likely be able to avoid obesity. Once again, a concept that cannot be said enough; diet and exercise work hand in hand and can't help you lose weight without one another. It is naive to say that the food

industry or the newly accused American sedentary lifestyles are to blame for the high rate of obesity. The two factors work together to bring around this horrible condition that ruins so many people's lifestyle, and even kills people unfortunate enough to let the disability escalate.

Children will usually eat what is available to them, you don't see children running their own errands and buying their own food at the grocery store. The food industry has gone out of their way to make healthier foods available to whoever decides that they would like to eat healthier. Food industries are trying to make healthier foods more readily available to children, for example, PepsiCo, owner of Frito-Lay has designed reduced-fat Doritos to be served in school lunch rooms. (Buss, 2006) Doritos are what kids like to eat, but it is now given to them in a healthier way, and is easily available to them. Lack of physical activity in children's schedule is a factor of obesity as well as their diet. Subway has many commercials advertising Jared and all the weight he has lost by following the Subway diet. Subway now has commercials aimed towards children's health and how their parents should feed them Subway's kids' meals. The ad was critiqued and had a focus more on how children feel better when they weigh less, suggested by the officials of the American Heart Association in 2003. (Buss, 2006) The advertisement was never aired because Jared showed an extreme weight loss that shouldn't be advertised to children; they may get a mixed message that they will lose the same amount of weight if they tried the same type of diet. The point is that the food industry is looking out for obesity at a younger age, and trying to prevent it by making healthier foods easily available in the lunch room and fast food restaurants. What is ultimately important is that they have healthy foods available at home, which is not the

food industries responsibility. Children build eating habits young, so it is important to begin with healthy habits to live a healthier lifestyle for their future.

Many large food corporations have been working hard to make an active, healthy lifestyle readily available to more Americans. An example of a healthy program available to children's activity sponsored by a food industry would be Gatorade, and are working on promoting the construction of sidewalks where everyone can walk, and children can play. Balance First, an in-school program aimed for children's health by: eating 100 fewer calories each day than before, and burn off 100 calories more by mainly walking. (Buss, 2006) Many elementary schools around the country have joined the program by introducing the idea to students in their science or health classes. Buss (2006) quotes that a professor at the health sciences center of the University of Chicago said, "The idea is to prevent kids from accumulating that excess one or two pounds each year." As the founder of the program Balance First, he also stated, "We can look at the industry as the enemy, but we're only going to change this problem with kids if we actually engage the private sector in helping." James is right, we could blame the food industry for selling sweet foods to children, but the only thing we can do about it is try and solve the problem for children, and to prevent this horrible habit from spreading to more and more generations. Coca-Cola also set up a help in financing a new after school fitness program. Even PepsiCo added 17,000 new Aquafina and Gatorade vending machines in schools in 2002 to make healthier foods, once again, more convenient to children at school. Many restaurants have also tried to add more healthy items to their menu. Wendy's now has side dish substitutes of fruit such as orange slices instead of fries, and milk or juice instead of an unhealthy soda. Even sit down restaurants try to promote healthier entrees

to children. For example, Dale Buss (2006) wrote, “At one time, the restaurant Ruby Tuesday replaced their popular grilled cheese sandwich and macaroni-and-cheese casserole off their children’s menu and replaced the items with entrees like whole-grain tortillas with turkey and cheese”. The new items were replaced only two months later by popular demand. This is another example of how large food industries are trying to help children fight obesity, but it’s the children and their parents who make the final decision of what they are going to eat.

With the information provided from the essay, we can see that the food industry *is* fighting to help solve the problem of childhood obesity. Staying physically fit is a major factor for a healthy lifestyle, and eating healthy food alone doesn’t make you a very healthy person. The higher rate of overweight children is caused by their diet, but children eat either what is given to them or what is convenient to them. What their parents buy, their children will eat. Lastly, food corporations are working hard to find solutions to have a healthy lifestyle available to children by adding healthier foods to their lunchrooms and vending machines, and programs to promote physical fitness during and after school. Is the food industry to blame? To think that many large corporations are looking for solutions to bring childhood obesity to a halt and help children to begin healthy habits at a young age, and hopefully keep those habits throughout their life, makes me think that the food industry is only trying to help us. There are healthy foods available to children, in the end it is the parent’s responsibility to help their children make smart, healthy choices at the beginning of their childhood.

References:

Buss, D (2006) Is the Food Industry the Problem or the Solution? *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to writing*. 244-247