



Planting the seed

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It is no secret that children like to do things that adults do. The marketing of commercial products has not overlooked this fact with many adult labels being extended to children. For example, it is possible to buy your three year old a motorized JEEP™ to whiz

around in the back yard. Children like to wear GAP™ clothing, just like mommy and daddy, thus the generation of GAP KIDS™. Luckily, the reverse trend is not in effect, as it would be tough for parents to get to work in a Barbie™ sports car. Nor would we look too

appealing sporting SpongeBob's SquarePants.

But all joking aside, the concept of "planting the seed" at young ages has different degrees of implications and ramifications depending upon what product is being pitched to these young impressionable minds. Our particular concern revolves around the promotion of gambling-type products to children. In recent editions, we have addressed concerns revolving around toys that promote poker, Las Vegas, etc. For example, slot machines for children are available for purchase in toy stores. One must wonder what will hit the kiddie market next, as it does seem at times that societal morals have been checked at the door.



Speaking of abandoned morals, here is one very explicit and recent example I came across this past summer. If you have a hard time believing this, take a good look at the pictures. On Wildwood's boardwalk (on the New Jersey shore), there is a never ending string of arcades for kids that offer retired slot machines (originally used in casinos) for children's entertainment value. Youngsters buy tokens which are then inserted into the machines as currency. Sometimes they win, most times they lose. The tokens they win can be exchanged for an array of attractive prizes that are mounted up on the walls, such as mountain bikes, video games, and stuffed animals. Of course, many tokens are required in exchange for even the smallest of prizes. And for those children not too interested in slots, the arcades offer a wide array of gambling-type games, such as Texas Hold'em Blackjack, and Keno, to name a few. Actually, many



of the storefront signs combined words such as *arcade*, *casino*, and *family fun* all together.

What was most astounding to me, however, was how many of these young children were spending endless hours with their parents in these 'casinos'. They were having fun with their moms or dads, probably experiencing a degree of 'quality time' they rarely experience when not away on vacation. Children still in strollers were being taught how to put coins in

the slots, and push buttons. They were excited by the clanging sounds of falling coins and the bells and whistles inherent to slot machines. I was convinced that these parents had absolutely no idea that they were exposing their children to an activity that is really only designed for adults, and as such, were unaware of the potential long term implications of such a behavior. So, in your opinion, has society gone too far?