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Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

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9 June, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

BNE: Ronald McDonald has had a makeover. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food chain of restaurants is to become a more athletic, active and health conscious icon. TV ads will start screening on June 10 revealing the new look, sportier Ronald kitted out in a more figure-hugging jumpsuit. He will be overflowing with vitality as he juggles fruit, snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays basketball and soccer. The ads exude energy and fitness. Succulent, fresh strawberries abound, while hamburgers and fries are conspicuously absent. There will be nothing of what McDonald's actually sells in the colorful commercials.

The company is attempting to jettison traditional images of cholesterol-laden fries and fat-soaked burgers to encourage children to get on the move. Jeff Carl, McDonald's corporate vice-president of global marketing, said of this change of tack: "We felt it more appropriate to expand the discussion to all foods at this point." He made no indication that the company would replicate the health conscious message of the ads into his restaurants' menus. Mr. Carl explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to get up on their feet and start moving." This may help to reduce the burden of blame on McDonald's for obesity in children.

WARM-UPS

1. HEALTHY KIDS: Are kids healthier today than ever before? Do kids need to get on their feet more? Write down three things that kids need to stop doing to become healthier. Write down three things that kids need to start doing to become healthier. In pairs / groups, compare your ideas.

2. McDONALD'S MESSAGES: McDonald's is trying to portray an image of healthy living and eating. Do you believe their ads? In pairs / groups, talk about how much truth you think there is in the following Mc-Messages:

- a. McDonald's food is healthy.
- b. McDonald's restaurants are real restaurants.
- c. Smiles and fantastic service are for free.
- d. Hamburgers do not result in obesity, not exercising does.
- e. McDonald's "Happy Meals" are great for kids.
- f. Ronald McDonald's official corporate title is "Chief Happiness Officer".
- g. McDonald's is the best place for kids' parties and free, cheap, plastic Disney toys.
- h. Horsemeat is not used in the hamburgers.
- i. French fries are always hot.
- j. McDonald's cares more about children exercising than profits and image.

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Ronald McDonald / makeovers / clowns / fast food / strawberries / snowboarding / colorful TV commercials / french fries / being on the move / obesity in children

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. STORY PREDICTION: In pairs / groups, use the words from the "CHAT" activity to predict the story in the article. Change partners and compare your stories. If you have different ideas, talk about which is likelier to be in the actual article.

5. McDONALD'S: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with McDonald's. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. McDonald's will open fitness gyms inside its restaurants. | T / F |
| b. Ronald McDonald will wear a sportier jumpsuit while snowboarding. | T / F |
| c. McDonald's will start selling succulent strawberries. | T / F |
| d. New McDonald's TV ads do not show any hamburgers or fries. | T / F |
| e. The company is trying to jettison traditional images of cholesterol. | T / F |
| f. A marketing chief made a confusing statement about food. | T / F |
| g. The marketing chief said McDonald's menus would be healthier. | T / F |
| h. McDonald's wants children to lead more active lives. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. makeover | mirror |
| b. kitted out | get-up-and-go |
| c. vitality | noticeably |
| d. succulent | millstone |
| e. conspicuously | dressed in |
| f. jettison | lush |
| g. laden | approach |
| h. tack | loaded |
| i. replicate | image change |
| j. burden | abandon |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. ads will | start screening |
| b. kitted out | tack |
| c. overflowing | absent |
| d. exude | the move |
| e. conspicuously | with vitality |
| f. jettison traditional images | conscious message |
| g. get on | energy and fitness |
| h. change of | of blame |
| i. health | in a more figure-hugging jumpsuit |
| j. reduce the burden | of cholesterol-laden fries |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

BNE: Ronald McDonald has had a _____. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food chain of restaurants is to become a more athletic, active and health conscious _____. TV ads will start screening on June 10 _____ the new look, sportier Ronald _____ out in a more figure-hugging jumpsuit. He will be overflowing with _____ as he juggles fruit, snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays basketball and soccer. The ads _____ energy and fitness. Succulent, fresh strawberries _____, while hamburgers and fries are _____ absent. There will be nothing of what McDonald's actually sells in the colorful commercials.

icon
exude
conspicuously
makeover
abound
vitality
kitted
revealing

The company is attempting to _____ traditional images of cholesterol-_____ fries and fat-soaked burgers to encourage children to get on the _____. Jeff Carl, McDonald's corporate vice-president of global marketing, said of this change of _____: "We felt it more appropriate to _____ the discussion to all foods at this point." He made no indication that the company would _____ the health conscious message of the ads into his restaurants' menus. Mr. Carl explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to get up on their feet and start moving." This may help to reduce the _____ of blame on McDonald's for _____ in children.

tack
obesity
jettison
replicate
burden
laden
expand
move

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'food' and 'chain'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT HAMBURGER SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about hamburgers and fitness.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| • makeover | • jettison |
| • icon | • soaked |
| • kitted | • tack |
| • exude | • replicate |
| • abound | • feet |
| • absent | • obesity |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What was your first thought when you saw this headline?
- b. Do you think Ronald McDonald is a dangerous man?
- c. Do you think Ronald McDonald is good for kids?
- d. Do you think Ronald McDonald represents fitness and good health?
- e. What do you think of McDonald's trying to promote fitness?
- f. Do you think it is morally and ethically wrong for McDonald's ads to feature strawberries but not burgers or fries?
- g. Do you think McDonald's should be commended for encouraging an active lifestyle for kids?
- h. Can you remember the first time you went to McDonald's?
- i. Are you satisfied that McDonald's meals represent a balanced diet?
- j. What changes would you recommend to McDonald's bosses?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. Do you like McDonald's?
- c. Do you think McDonald's will survive in an increasingly health-conscious world?
- d. What is the reason for McDonald's being so successful?
- e. What do you think McDonald's will be serving ten years from now?
- f. Should parents limit the number of times a year children visit McDonald's?
- g. What do you think of a snowboarding Ronald McDonald?
- h. Should sports stars avoid being sponsored by McDonald's?
- i. Do you have a favorite burger?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: This role play is to discuss whether or not the new McDonald's ads, which are devoid of any burgers or fries, are misleading to children. Team up with classmates who have the same role as you and develop your ideas and "strategies".

Introduce yourself to the other role players before the role play begins.

Role A

You are Ronald McDonald. Ever since you started snowboarding, playing soccer and eating strawberries you have become incredibly fit and healthy. You believe kids can eat as much McDonald's as they want as long as they exercise. Getting on the move is key to children's health.

Role B

You are an advertising ethics officer working for your government. You believe McDonald's is guilty of false advertising. You know everyone knows that McDonald's is unhealthy. You want McDonald's to end its strawberry and fitness campaign and advertise more honestly about the dangers of cholesterol.

Role C

You are a concerned parent who wants his/her kids to be healthy. You have had enough of McDonald's gimmicks – the cheap Disney toys that shamelessly lure children into the restaurants, the token attempts at health food (salads) and now snowboarding, sporty Ronald. You want McDonald's to stop its propaganda for kids. You hate Ronald McDonald. Obesity isn't a happy condition.

Role D

You are a kid. McDonald's is your favorite. You think Ronald is cool – he's always so happy – such a good role model for kids. The burgers are much better than your mum's/mom's cooking. The McDonald's Happy Meals are the best. You think Ronald's new message of fitness is great. You will definitely become more active – just like Ronald. What a guy!

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

Talk about whether you agreed with what you said in your roles.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

BNE: Ronald McDonald ____ ____ ____ ____ _____. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food chain of restaurants is to become a more athletic, active and ____ ____ ____ _____. TV ads will start screening on June 10 revealing the new look, sportier Ronald ____ ____ ____ ____ more figure-hugging jumpsuit. He will be ____ ____ ____ ____ as he juggles fruit, snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays basketball and soccer. The ____ ____ ____ ____ and fitness. Succulent, fresh strawberries abound, while hamburgers and fries are ____ ____ ____ _____. There will be nothing of what McDonald's actually sells in the colorful commercials.

The company is ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ traditional images of cholesterol-laden fries and fat-soaked burgers to encourage children ____ ____ ____ ____ _____. Jeff Carl, McDonald's corporate vice-president of global marketing, said of this change of tack: "We felt it more appropriate ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ to all foods at this point." He made no indication that the company ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ the health conscious message of the ads into his restaurants' menus. Mr. Carl explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to get up on their feet and start moving." This may help to ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ on McDonald's for obesity in children.

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on Ronald McDonald. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

- 3. FITNESS 4 KIDS:** Make a poster for children that highlights the advantages of an active lifestyle and the dangers of a sedentary one. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you have the same ideas?

- 4. LETTER:** Write a letter to the boss of McDonald's telling him/her your thoughts on the latest media role for Ronald McDonald. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. makeover | image change |
| b. kitted out | dressed in |
| c. vitality | get-up-and-go |
| d. succulent | lush |
| e. conspicuously | noticeably |
| f. jettison | abandon |
| g. laden | loaded |
| h. tack | approach |
| i. replicate | mirror |
| j. burden | millstone |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. ads will | start screening |
| b. kitted out | in a more figure-hugging jumpsuit |
| c. overflowing | with vitality |
| d. exude | energy and fitness |
| e. conspicuously | absent |
| f. jettison traditional images | of cholesterol-laden fries |
| g. get on | the move |
| h. change of | tack |
| i. health | conscious message |
| j. reduce the burden | of blame |

GAP FILL:

Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

BNE: Ronald McDonald has had a **makeover**. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food chain of restaurants is to become a more athletic, active and health conscious **icon**. TV ads will start screening on June 10 **revealing** the new look, sportier Ronald **kitted** out in a more figure-hugging jumpsuit. He will be overflowing with **vitality** as he juggles fruit, snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays basketball and soccer. The ads **exude** energy and fitness. Succulent, fresh strawberries **abound**, while hamburgers and fries are **conspicuously** absent. There will be nothing of what McDonald's actually sells in the colorful commercials.

The company is attempting to **jettison** traditional images of cholesterol-**laden** fries and fat-soaked burgers to encourage children to get on the **move**. Jeff Carl, McDonald's corporate vice-president of global marketing, said of this change of **tack**: "We felt it more appropriate to **expand** the discussion to all foods at this point." He made no indication that the company would **replicate** the health conscious message of the ads into his restaurants' menus. Mr. Carl explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to get up on their feet and start moving." This may help to reduce the **burden** of blame on McDonald's for **obesity** in children.