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Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

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Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Discussion	7
Speaking	8
Listening Gap Fill	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

9 June, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

BNE: Ronald McDonald is having a change of image. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food chain of restaurants is to become sportier. Ronald will start promoting a more athletic and active lifestyle to kids. TV ads will screen from June 10 with the new look clown wearing a more figure-hugging jumpsuit. In the ads he is overflowing with energy. He juggles fruit, he snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays soccer. The ads are packed with images of energy and fitness. There are juicy looking, fresh strawberries everywhere, but not a hamburger nor a french fry in sight.

McDonald's is trying to abandon traditional images of fries and burgers dripping with cholesterol. It wants to encourage children to get on the move. Jeff Carl, vice-president of global marketing, said: "We felt it more appropriate to expand the discussion to all foods at this point." He didn't mention whether the healthful message of the ads would mean healthier menus in the restaurants. Mr. Carl simply explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to get up on their feet and start moving." This may help improve McDonald's image. The company is often blamed for increasing obesity in children.

WARM-UPS

1. HEALTHY KIDS: Are kids today healthy? 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 wants an image full of healthy living and eating. Do you believe their ads? In pairs / groups, talk about how true you think these Mc-Messages are:

- 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 results in obesity.
- e. McDonald's "Happy Meals" are great for kids.
- f. Ronald McDonald's official 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 about children.

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

Ronald McDonald / image changes / 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 sporty business suit while snowboarding. | T / F |
| c. Ronald McDonald is overflowing with energy in new TV ads. | T / F |
| d. New McDonald's TV ads do not show any hamburgers or fries. | T / F |
| e. The company is trying to abandon images of cholesterol. | T / F |
| f. A marketing boss 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. mascot | bubbling over |
| b. chain | being overweight |
| c. promoting | group |
| d. overflowing | push |
| e. packed | correct |
| f. abandon | symbol |
| g. encourage | increase |
| h. appropriate | full |
| i. expand | encouraging |
| j. obesity | give up |

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

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. a change of | lifestyle |
| b. fast food | of global marketing |
| c. active | with images |
| d. overflowing with | chain |
| e. The ads are packed | the move |
| f. fries and burgers | in children |
| g. get on | image |
| h. vice-president | up on their feet |
| i. encouraging children to get | energy |
| j. increasing obesity | dripping with cholesterol |

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 is having a change of _____. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food _____ of restaurants is to become _____. Ronald will start promoting a more athletic and active _____ to kids. TV ads will _____ from June 10 with the new look clown wearing a more figure-hugging jumpsuit. In the ads he is _____ with energy. He juggles fruit, he snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays soccer. The ads are _____ with images of energy and fitness. There are juicy looking, fresh strawberries everywhere, but not a hamburger nor a french fry in _____.

sportier
packed
image
lifestyle
overflowing
chain
sight
screen

McDonald's is trying to _____ traditional images of fries and burgers _____ with cholesterol. It wants to encourage children to get on the _____. Jeff Carl, _____ -president of global marketing, said: "We felt it more appropriate to expand the discussion to all foods at this point." He didn't mention whether the _____ message of the ads would mean healthier _____ in the restaurants. Mr. Carl simply explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to get up on their _____ and start moving." This may help improve McDonald's image. The company is often blamed for increasing _____ in children.

move
feet
healthful
dripping
obesity
vice
menus
abandon

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 kids' 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:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| • image | • abandon |
| • athletic | • encourage |
| • jumpsuit | • expand |
| • overflowing | • menus |
| • packed | • feet |
| • sight | • 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 health?
- e. What do you think of McDonald's trying to promote fitness?
- f. Do you think it is wrong for McDonald's ads to show strawberries but not burgers or fries?
- g. Do you think it is good that McDonald's is encouraging an active lifestyle for kids?
- h. Can you remember the first time you went to McDonald's?
- i. Do you think McDonald's meals are balanced?
- j. What changes would you suggest 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 still be serving hamburgers ten years from now?
- d. Why is McDonalds so successful?
- e. Is McDonald's the best fast food restaurant?
- f. Should parents limit the number of times a year their children visit McDonald's?
- g. What do you think of a snowboarding Ronald McDonald?
- h. Should sports stars avoid being in McDonald's TV ads?
- 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 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. Since you started snowboarding, playing soccer and eating strawberries you have become very 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 officer working for your government. You think McDonald's is lying in its TV ads. 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 hate McDonald's gimmicks – the cheap Disney toys that bring children into the restaurants, the poor attempts at health food (salads) and now snowboarding, sporty Ronald. You hate Ronald McDonald and want him to stop lying to children. Obesity in children isn't good.

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.

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 is having _____. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food chain of restaurants is to become sportier. Ronald will start promoting a more _____ lifestyle to kids. TV ads will screen from June 10 with the new look clown wearing a _____-_____ jumpsuit. In the ads he is overflowing with energy. He juggles fruit, he snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays soccer. The ads are _____ of energy and fitness. There are juicy looking, fresh strawberries everywhere, but not a hamburger nor a _____.

McDonald's is trying to abandon _____ fries and burgers dripping with cholesterol. It wants to encourage children to _____. Jeff Carl, vice-president of global marketing, said: "We felt it more appropriate to expand the discussion to all foods at this point." He _____ the healthful message of the ads would mean healthier menus in the restaurants. Mr. Carl simply explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to _____ and start moving." This may help improve McDonald's image. The company is often blamed for _____ 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 lazy 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 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. F c. T d. T e. T f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| a. mascot | symbol |
| b. chain | group |
| c. promoting | encouraging |
| d. overflowing | bubbling over |
| e. packed | full |
| f. abandon | give up |
| g. encourage | push |
| h. appropriate | correct |
| i. expand | increase |
| j. obesity | being overweight |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. a change of | image |
| b. fast food | chain |
| c. active | lifestyle |
| d. overflowing with | energy |
| e. The ads are packed | with images |
| f. fries and burgers | dripping with cholesterol |
| g. get on | the move |
| h. vice-president | of global marketing |
| i. encouraging children to get | up on their feet |
| j. increasing obesity | in children |

GAP FILL:

Ronald McDonald to promote fitness

BNE: Ronald McDonald is having a change of **image**. The mascot clown from the world's largest fast food **chain** of restaurants is to become **sportier**. Ronald will start promoting a more athletic and active **lifestyle** to kids. TV ads will **screen** from June 10 with the new look clown wearing a more figure-hugging jumpsuit. In the ads he is **overflowing** with energy. He juggles fruit, he snowboards with superstar basketball player Yao Ming and plays soccer. The ads are **packed** with images of energy and fitness. There are juicy looking, fresh strawberries everywhere, but not a hamburger nor a french fry in **sight**.

McDonald's is trying to **abandon** traditional images of fries and burgers **dripping** with cholesterol. It wants to encourage children to get on the **move**. Jeff Carl, **vice**-president of global marketing, said: "We felt it more appropriate to expand the discussion to all foods at this point." He didn't mention whether the **healthful** message of the ads would mean healthier **menus** in the restaurants. Mr. Carl simply explained that Ronald is "encouraging children to get up on their **feet** and start moving." This may help improve McDonald's image. The company is often blamed for increasing **obesity** in children.