

Could The Cosby Show Help Us Now?

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Maybe I'm old fashioned, but aren't parents supposed to set the rules in their house? In the Sunday Styles section of The New York Times, [Jan Hoffman](#) wrote the article "[Masculinity in a Spray Can](#)" about the use of body wash, face wash, exfoliator, hair gel, body hydrator, body spray, deodorant and shaving cream *by 10 to 14-year old boys* who say they feel more confident and attractive when they wear the products. The article pointed to one desperate mother who keeps the windows open in her car when she drives her sons to school because of the overwhelming smell of the products they use. I was not impressed. She's driving them to school! That's a gift of her time and money. Can't she set the rules about the use of unnecessary body products so she's not held victim in her own car?

Companies like AXE say they market body products to 18-24 year olds, but those ads appeal to children who want to be more attractive, and more adult-like. In our over-sexualized culture, I think it's the parents' job to demand that kids act like kids.

Since my son is only one and a half, my beliefs haven't been tested yet. So please, feel free to tell me how naïve I am. Regardless, here is my future household rule: I won't permit my preteen son to use body products. If he uses them in spite of my rule, then I'll take a lesson from [The Cosby Show](#). Do you remember the [fabulous pilot episode](#) in which ninth grader Theo gets four D's on his report card? Cliff explains how D's means no college, but Theo says he doesn't care. When Theo asks his father to love him regardless of his grades, Cliff responds by saying, "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard in my life!" and tries to teach Theo a lesson about education and money. Okay, you want to be an adult at 15 and make your own decisions? Then pay rent and pay for your clothes and your car and food. Oh, you can't afford that? Then live in my house and live by my rules. Work harder and go to college!

What would Heathcliffe do if Theo began wearing body products to school at age 11? Would he accept it as harmless fun or treat it as a crossing of line between child and adult?

What do you think?