

# It's a New Year. Don't Be Fooled.



I don't want to go all "Debbie Downer" on you at the beginning of a New Year but I thought a good theme to start 2023 would be to talk about not getting manipulated in the grocery store. Plan Z Dieters know to read labels and avoid the middle aisles of the grocery store. But the temptations don't stop there. In fact, they start the minute you walk in the door.

It's a game folks, and "they" are winning.

Who is "they"? "They" are the grocery chains and the massive food manufacturers, and I was once on their team.

In my early 20's I worked for Quaker Oats in the Marketing Department. I loved it. I was involved with Aunt Jemima products including the pancake mixes and syrup. We also oversaw the cookie mixes and all the boxed mixes for things like cornbread or grits in a bag. Down the hall were the folks in charge of Life Cereal.

Further down the hall were the folks in the Sales and Distribution unit. Our department developed the marketing campaigns and the commercials. Their job was to ensure the

product had the best advantage in the store so it would be grabbed from the shelf, put in the cart and taken home to be consumed.

The Sales and Distribution unit spent considerable time negotiating shelf positioning for the products. They talked end caps and shelf talkers. They had a language all their own. Shelf positioning is a huge game of trading favors and discounts to get your product where “they” want it. The food manufacturer wants to sell their product. The grocery store wants the biggest margins they can get.

If you venture into the aisles when you go into a grocery store, keep in mind that the items positioned at eye level are always going to be the most expensive. The items at the bottom are most likely to be the cheapest. The top shelf is a crap shoot. No one wants the top shelf or the bottom, so they do deals to get to be in the middle.

End caps are another story. The end caps are positioned as you turn the corner in any aisle. They always make those positions look like they are great deals when they probably aren't. They also give them themes. Maybe you weren't planning to make Valentine's Day cookies. They put a few great cookie mixes up there along with the canned frosting. Now it looks tempting to take those things home and make cookies with your kids or grandkids. They make cookie baking sound easy and fun. Grandparents get sucked in every time. They plaster red cardboard hearts across the display and tug at your heartstrings. That's manipulation.

Shelf talkers might as well be called shelf stalkers. They scream at you to take notice and “buy me”. We always think the pricing on those things is to our advantage. Sometimes it's not.

Here is a tip for grocery shopping with children. That special

cereal with the big marketing campaigns (read: commercials) will be right in line with your child's arm height and length. They know kids lunge for things they see on TV. That's manipulation.

Mostly I spend time telling people to stay out of the aisles almost altogether. For today I decided to just start with this and let you absorb the information. I have also shared advice on how to buy sparkling water or spaghetti sauce,

We all go innocently into the grocery store to buy food. Since it's such an important part of our lives, we believe the grocery store will be a safe place filled with the smell of baking bread. How can anyone be so mean as to manipulate us when our health and our food consumption are at stake? Believe me when I tell you they didn't start baking that bread inside the store for nothing. That smell of bread sells more bread. And the milk and the eggs are in the BACK of the store for a reason. They want you to pass through the bakery to get there. Those donuts will taste mighty fine with that glass of milk. Don't let "them" fool you.

Happy New Year! May 2023 be one of hope, peace and health for all.

Cheers!