

Media Violence: What can Parents Do?

When Violence Becomes Entertaining October 20–21, 2011
Cathy Hird, London District Catholic School board

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



our kids only respond to text messages; forget the phone calls

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



the roaming fees on our teenager's cell phone bill are hundreds of dollars.

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



Our kids seem to be speaking a foreign language when giving us technical instructions.

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



Our kids respond with a puzzled look when we explain the early beginnings of learning keyboarding skills.

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



Channel surfing is the preferred way of viewing programs.

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



our kids are simultaneously watching a movie, listening to music, responding to texts, and doing homework.

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



our kids carry PEDs everywhere around the house; *everywhere.*

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



pjh_3guys0422 [RF] © www.visualphotos.com

our kids opt to use their “gadgets” instead of carrying out a conversation with us.

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



we master a version of a software program only to learn that we are two versions behind.

As parents we know we are in the digital age when...



We labour for hours troubleshooting and our kids figure things out in nanoseconds.

Other Realities

“As a toddler my daughter would sit on my lap in front of the computer. She would tell me names of animals and I would post them on screen from a vast library of animal images I had collected. We would play this game often and she became very excited by our “zoo”. The first time we ever visited the “real” zoo, we hurriedly approached a large outdoor area where chimpanzees congregated as they went about their business. I was excited to see them and couldn’t wait to see the expression on my daughter’s face. She looked perplexed as she summed up the goings on in front of her. Suddenly she screamed ZEBRA! She waited patiently, looked at me, and yelled again. Obviously this zoo was broken. She spent the rest of the day yelling at the animals and waiting for them to change. This is one of many experiences that give me confidence in saying that our children will perceive what is “real” differently than we do.”

Fred Sloker, President of Global Mind Games

Impact of Media Violence

- ▶ Scares or traumatizes
- ▶ Promotes stereotypes
- ▶ Promotes high-risk behaviours (sexual behaviours and attitudes, substance abuse)
- ▶ Encourages imitation
- ▶ Alters brain development
- ▶ Models negative behaviour
- ▶ Causes desensitization
- ▶ Stimulates violent or aggressive behaviour
- ▶ Normalizes unhealthy behaviours (interpersonal violence, substance use and abuse, sexual behaviour)



Reducing the Effects of Media Violence . . .

Is it Possible?

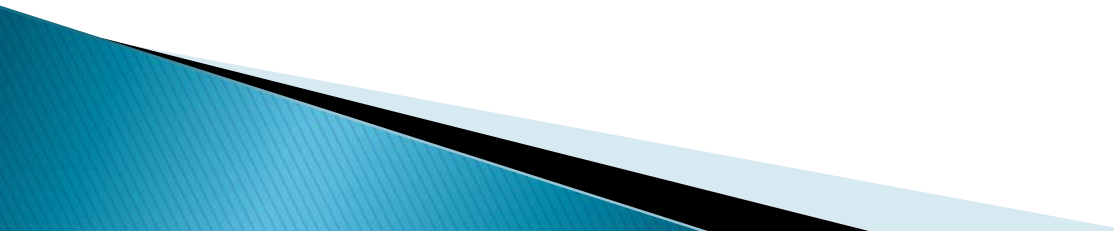
Researchers tell us that ***it is possible*** to reduce the effects of media violence in the lives of children.

Programs and strategies aimed to reduce any type of violence should ***focus on collaborative partnerships***

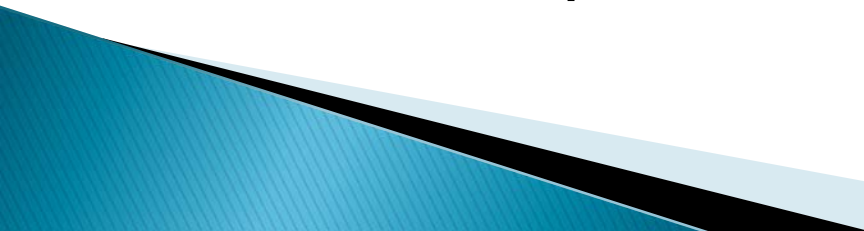
Violence can be most effectively reduced by ***introducing change*** in the culture of the environment.

The combined ***knowledge and commitment*** to creating a culture of nonviolence reduces the sense of helplessness and has long term positive effects.

Guiding Questions:

- ▶ **Why is parental involvement so critical in media literacy?**
 - ▶ **How can parents be meaningfully and actively involved in teaching their children about media violence?**
 - ▶ **How can parents E.L.E.V.A.T.E. their children's capacity to become responsible and informed consumers?**
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Parents as Vital Partners:

- ▶ Parents are the FIRST teachers
 - ▶ Parents have the most CONSISTENT presence
 - ▶ Positive parental involvement is key to nurturing health and well-being in children and youth
 - ▶ A child's success in life is often associated with the presence of a significant adult in his or her life
 - ▶ The innate human need for being, becoming, and belonging happens in the context of relationships
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Ask any educator...

- ▶ Are parents important in the education of students?
- ▶ Is their work made easier with the support of parents?
- ▶ Do they ever think “what if” or “if only” thoughts related to parental involvement?




Parents as Partners

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Accept the Realities about Media Violence

- ▶ Parenting has multiple roles and responsibilities
 - ▶ These roles and responsibilities are related to guiding, caring, and nurturing development
 - ▶ Parent education is critical for carrying out these roles and responsibilities
 - ▶ Accepting the realities about the effects of media violence involves becoming **media literate**
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Components of Media Literacy for Parents

- ▶ Provide guidance to your children about **MANAGING MEDIA**:
 - Set boundaries related to the consumption of media and making positive media choices
 - Generation M – Media Saturated, Multi-Tasking and Multi-Media
- ▶ Understand the components of **MEDIA LITERACY**:
 - Information is power only if children know what to do with it – **DECONSTRUCT, ANALYZE, EVALUATE AND RECONSTRUCT**
 - Be informed about the classroom-based educational component (What is your child learning at school about media literacy?)



Teach, Don't Protect



- ▶ **DIALOGUE** with your children about media violence
 - What is violence?
 - How is violence used?
 - What are the consequences of media violence?
 - Why is there violence in the media?
 - What values are being promoted?
- ▶ **BE INVOLVED** in your children's online lives
 - Become familiar with how the media is being used
 - Guide good judgment and critical thinking (web sites, blogs, music, email, instant messaging, file sharing, cell phone capabilities, etc.)

Media Awareness Game



Media critic George Gerbner warns that our search for a link between media violence and real-life aggression is in itself a symptom of the problem. His decades-long study of media violence indicates the villains are typically portrayed as poor, young male members of visible minorities, and victims are overwhelmingly female. His argument goes like this: by making the world a dangerous place, especially for white people, the majority would be willing to give those in authority greater power to maintain the status quo.

What do you think about his argument?



Your children are fighting over whose turn it is to watch television or play a video game. The argument escalates. While they don't get to the point of hitting each other, the verbal exchanges become blows.

What's the parent's role in teaching children how to use words and stand up for themselves respectfully?



There are researchers who argue that rather than focus on what media do *to* people, we should focus on what people do *with* media.

the coin would



How do you decide what is age-appropriate for your child to view?



How do you teach your children to understand everything that is true?



True or False
Streamed online videos are not rated and can show case very brutal content.

Discussion Starters...

- Research findings
- Healthy conflict resolution skills
- Comparing psychological suspense and gratuitous violence
- Stereotyping
- Components of media agreements
 - How children can keep themselves safe
 - Developing critical thinking skills
 - Being a good digital citizen
 - Keeping a healthy balance
 - Parental role

Media Awareness is a game for three or more players in which the object is for parents to discuss various issues and realities related to media violence.



1. Shuffle the cards.
2. Place the cards face down on the table.
3. The player who rolls the highest number begins the game.
4. Each player rolls the dice. Even number requires the player to respond to the question on the drawn card. Odd number gives the player the option of selecting another player to respond to the question.
5. Game ends when all the cards in the stock pile are drawn.

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E	Educate early
L	Live a balanced life
E	Empathize
V	Validate family value system and feelings
A	Active involvement
T	Teach critical thinking
E	Empower through feedback

What ?
So What?
Then What?

