



*T*eachers
*R*esisting
*U*nhealthy
*C*hildren's
*E*ntertainment

TRUCE

Media Violence and Children

Action Guide *2004-2005*

Media is a powerful force in children's lives. It influences most aspects of children's development and learning. Many children spend more time in front of a screen — with TV, movies, videos, computers and video games — than in school. Shows, advertisements and the toys and other products related to them control children's play and learning.

Too much of what children see on the screen is *violence as entertainment*. It undermines lessons we teach at home and school about how people treat each other, and encourages the use of violence to solve problems and to have fun. We have seen the effects of this glamorized violence in such events as school shootings.

Media violence is a public health issue that affects all our children.

Teachers and parents, please join the TRUCE Campaign Against Media Violence

Our Action Guide will help you to:

- Promote children's informed and responsible use of media.
- Counteract the negative effects of media violence on children.
- Take action to reduce media violence in children's lives and in society.

Facts About Children, Media, and Violence

What do we know?

- Children average 35 hours per week of screen time—including TV, video games and videos.
- Heavy TV viewers are less imaginative, more aggressive, and are more likely to have attention problems have lower academic performance, and be aggressive later in life.
- The average child sees 8,000 murders and 100,000 other violent acts by the end of elementary school.
- In July of 2000, a Joint Statement from the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Medical Association concluded that viewing media violence can make children more aggressive, fearful, disrespectful and insensitive to the effects of violence.
- Playing violent video games has been directly linked to increased aggressive behavior.
- Violent movies and TV shows, like Star Wars, Spider Man, and wrestling, are used to sell violent toys and products to children even when these shows aren't rated as appropriate for their age.
- Toys linked to violent media encourage more violent play, which takes the place of imaginative and creative play.
- Young children are most at risk for the harmful effects of media violence.

For more information: TRUCE PO Box 441261, West Somerville, MA 02144
truceteachers@aol.com www.truceteachers.org

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What You Can Do

Parents and Children

- ◆ Protect children from exposure to media violence as much as possible.
- ◆ Get TV sets, video game systems, and computers out of children's bedrooms.
- ◆ Talk with children about your concerns about media violence. To help you begin, here's a letter from teachers that you can read and talk about together [See the letter below].

Dear Kids,

A lot of kids really love to watch TV and videos. Many of the shows they watch have lots of fighting. The fighting often seems fun and exciting and a great way to solve problems.

Many teachers are worried about the violence children see on TV. They say a lot of kids act out the fighting they see when they play. Teachers also say they think TV fighting is making more kids use fighting in school to solve their conflicts with each other.

Kids often answer, "But we're only pretending. It isn't real. We're just playing." They say their pretend violence is different from real fighting.

But teachers say that when kids pretend to fight like TV characters, other kids often really get hurt. And sometimes kids seem surprised when this happens.

Some kids agree they're surprised when someone gets hurt. They say they're the good guys & good guys have to fight bad guys, that's why they fight.

Teachers see that a lot of little kids look up to good guy TV characters and want to do what they do. So the teachers think violent TV shows can teach kids that it's okay to fight and hurt people.

Because teachers are worried about TV violence and kids are getting hurt, teachers want to help grown-ups and children talk together about it and decide what to do so everyone stays safe.

- WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT TEACHERS ARE SAYING?
- WHAT DO YOU THINK GROWN-UPS SHOULD DO ABOUT VIOLENCE ON TV & VIDEOS?
- WHAT CAN GROWN-UPS DO TO HELP CHILDREN BE SAFE & LEARN NOT TO FIGHT?
- WHAT CAN YOU AND OTHER CHILDREN DO?

Thanks a lot for listening to and talking about our letter,
From Many Teachers All Over the Country



- ◆ Talk to children about what they see on the screen, including media violence. Aim for a give-and-take discussion rather than a lecture where you give the answers. Listen carefully, find out their ideas and fears, clear up misconceptions, and share your ideas and concerns about media violence.

Parents and Children Can Talk Together about TV and Other Media *

- **Discuss** each others reactions (both positive and negative) to what you saw.
 - *What did you think about that show/game?*
 - *Did you like it when _____ happened? Why do you think it happened?*
 - *I didn't like it when _____. I wish they didn't have to hurt each other. What do you think?*
- **Help** them sort out fantasy from reality.
 - *What was pretend and what was real? How could you tell?*
 - *Help clarify confusion by saying things such as, "In real life things don't work that way. I wonder how they made _____ happen on that show."*
- **Help** them develop an understanding of advertisements and advertising.
 - *How can we tell the difference between these ads and the show?*
 - *I wonder why they made the ad like that?*
- **Compare** what they saw to children's own experience.
 - *Could anything like _____ happen to you? When? How could it be the same/different?*
 - *What would you do if you were in that situation?*
- **Talk** about the violence and other mean-spirited behavior that children see on the screen.
 - *What do you think about how _____ solved their problem?*
 - *If you had a problem like that what could you do / say?*
 - *Can you think of a way to solve that problem where no one gets hurt?*
- **Ask** questions that focus on stereotyped images and behaviors.
 - *I wonder why it's always men with big muscles that go to fight? Did you notice that?*
 - *The women always seem to need to get rescued by men. Have you noticed that? I wonder why?*
 - *I wonder why the "bad guys" have foreign accents? Wear dark colors? Have darker skin?*

* Adapted from *Remote-Control Childhood* by Diane Levin



Parents and Community

- ◆ Work together to reduce violence in the media and to create an environment more conducive to children's healthy development.
 - Contact TV stations, movie companies, toy manufacturers and local newspapers to voice your concerns. Urge other adults to do so too. (See "Key Addresses & Phone Numbers"). Help children write letters, also. Here are letters that can serve as a guide.
 - Ask your pediatrician and other health care professionals to become informed and advocate on this issue.

Sample Letter to Broadcasters/Toy Producers/etc.

Dear _____ [TV Broadcasters/Toy Company President/Toy Store Manager]:

I recently _____ [watched an episode of/shopped at]. I found _____ [this program/toy] harmful to children because of the lessons it teaches about violence.

As an _____ [educator/parent], I am deeply concerned about the escalating violence in our country and the role [your program/product] may play in promoting it. I will tell at least ten others about my concerns with _____ [your program/product] and urge them to protect their children from it.

I hope you share my concerns about violence and children. I urge you to play your role in helping to reduce the epidemic of violence in homes, schools, and communities by refusing to sell toys of violence.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter for Children to Voice their Ideas about Media Violence

Dear _____ [Company's Name]:

I have been learning about _____ [TV/toys] that are good and bad for children _____ [at home/school]. I am writing to you to talk about _____ [show/toy]. I think it is _____ [good/bad] for children because _____

I hope you will listen to kids and _____ [keep having shows like this one/replace the violence with shows that are healthy for children/make toys that help children play without violence].

Sincerely,

_____ [your name], ____ years old



Teachers *Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment*

- ◆ Help children develop thoughtful and responsible media viewing habits.
 - Decide together how much “screen time” is okay each day or week. (With young children, we recommend starting with the least amount that can work with your schedule and your child’s.)
 - Discuss and work out which shows and video games are okay and which are not.
 - Make a chart (with simple picture illustrations for non-readers) of shows which your children want to watch and which you can agree are good choices. Check the chart regularly to help you discuss how things are going.
- ◆ Encourage your child’s play as a way to help them work out their own ideas and develop a sense of mastery. [Use the TRUCE Toy Action Guide available at www.truceteachers.org]
- Promote creative and imaginative play which children control, instead of play that looks like they are imitating what they see on the screen.
- Choose toys carefully.
 - *Provide play materials that can be used in many ways over a long period of time, such as blocks, play dough, dress-ups, and props for dramatic play.*
 - *Limit the number of highly realistic toys and other products (such as lunch boxes, tee shirts and breakfast cereals) that are linked to TV programs.*
 - *Avoid toys that are linked to movies, TV programs, and video games that are rated for older children or adults.*

Parents and Other Parents

- ◆ Talk about your concerns and approaches to media violence and media-linked toys.
 - Help each other find solutions to problems media violence creates for you and your children (how to make good choices about what to watch and buy; how to turn off the TV while you’re making dinner).
 - Agree on how you’ll deal with TV and other media when your children are at each other’s houses.
 - Support each others’ choices to resist media’s negative influence.

Parents and Teachers

- ◆ Ask your child’s school to develop policies and educate parents about the problems created by media violence and how to deal with them.
- ◆ Work with schools to develop curriculum that incorporates healthy play, media literacy, and conflict resolution and violence prevention programs.
- ◆ **Promote school-wide activities which help create a community of aware parents and teachers**
 - *Sponsor school events such as a TV Turn-Off Week or a violent toy trade-in [see Organization Resources: TV-Free America and Lion and Lamb Project].*
 - *Create media resource library to help parents use media wisely.*
 - *Have the PTA organize workshops and guest speaker events for parents on this topic.*
 - *Sponsor school-wide activities to involve children in alternative activities such as after school clubs.*

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MEDIA ACTION GUIDE

- ◆ Fill in the local phone numbers of TV networks, government officials and toy manufacturers and put this list by your phone so you can voice your opinions easily and often.

KEY ADDRESSES & PHONE NUMBERS TO HELP YOU TAKE ACTION

National TV Networks

ABC Entertainment

500 S. Buena Vista St.
Burbank, CA 91521
(818) 460-7477 www.ABC.com
Local affiliate # ____ 781-449-0400

CBS Audience Services

51 W 52nd St.
New York, NY 10019
(212) 975-4321 www.CBS.com
Local # _____ (617) 787-7000

Discovery Channel

7700 Wisconsin Ave., Ste. 700
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 986-0444 www.discovery.com

Disney Channel

3800 West Alameda Ave.
Burbank, CA 91505
(818) 569-7500 www.disney.go.com

Fox Broadcast Studios

P. O. Box 900
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
(310) 277-2211 www.fox.com
Local # _____ (781) 467-2525

NBC Entertainment President

30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112
(212) 664-4444 www.NBC.com
Local # _____ (617) 725-0777

Nickelodeon

1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036
(212) 258-7579 www.nick.com

PBS

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 223124
(703) 739-5000 www.pbs.org
Local # _____ (617) 300-5400

TNT & CNN/Turner Broadcasting

1 CNN Center
PO Box 105366
Atlanta, GA 30348
(404) 827-1500 www.turner.com

Cartoon Network

1 CNN Center
PO Box 105366
Atlanta, GA 30348
(404) 827-1500 www.turner.com

Toy Manufacturers & Retailers

Bandai America, Inc.

12851 E. 166th St.
Cerritos, CA 90701
(310) 926-0947 www.bandai.com
Makes Power Rangers

Hasbro Toy Group

1027 Newport Ave.
Pawtucket, RI 02862
(401) 431-8697 www.hasbro.com

Jakks Pacific Inc.

22619 Pacific Coast Hwy. Ste. 250
Malibu, CA 90265
(310) 456-7799 www.jakkspecific.com
Makes WWE wrestling action figures

Mattel Toys

333 Continental Blvd.
El Segundo, CA 90245
(310) 252-2000 www.mattel.com

McFarlane Toys (Irwin)

15155 Fogg St.
Plymouth, MI 48170
www.spawn.com
Makes violent media-linked action figures

Nintendo of America

PO Box 957
Redmond, VA 98073
(800) 255-3700 www.nintendo.com

Saban Entertainment

10960 Wilshire Blvd., 22nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(310) 235-5100
Makes Mighty Morphin Power Rangers

Sega Enterprises

255 Shoreline Drive
Redwood City, CA 94065
(414) 508-2800 www.sega.com

Sony Computer Entertainment America

919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor
Foster City, CA 94404
www.playstation.com

Toys R Us

461 From Road
Paramus, NJ 07652
(201) 262-7800 www.toysrus.com

Government Officials

Federal Communication Commission

(regulates TV)
Mass Media Complaints:
Chief of Complaints
1919 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20554
(202) 418-1430 www.fcc.gov

Federal Trade Commission

(oversees marketing)
CRC-240
Washington, D.C. 20580
(877) FTC-HELP (382-4357)
www.ftc.gov

President of the United States

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC
(202) 456-1414
email: president@whitehouse.gov

US Senator _____
Phone # _____

US Senator _____
Phone # _____

US Rep. _____
Phone # _____

Governor _____
Phone # _____

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ACTION GUIDE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

- Cantor, J. (1998). *"Mommy, I'm Scared" How TV and Movies Frighten Children and What We Can Do to Protect Them*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace
- Cantor, J. (2004). *Teddy's TV Troubles*. Madison, WI: Goblin Farm Press [Children's book about fears caused by TV.]
- Coco, L. (1996). *Children First: A Parent's Guide to Fighting Corporate Predators*. (Corporate Accountability Research Group, PO Box 19312, Washington, DC, 20036).
- De Gaetano, G. (2004). *Parenting Well in the Media Age: Keeping Our Kids Human*. Fawnskin, CA: Personhood Press.
- Garbarino, J. (1995). *Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Greenman, J. (2001). *What Happened to the World? Helping Children Cope in Turbulent Times*. Bright Horizons (download copies at: www.brighthorizons.com/talktochildren; order copies from: www.NAEYC.org).
- Grossman, D. & DeGaetano, G. (1999). *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action against TV, Movie & Video Game Violence*. New York: Crown.
- Healy, Jane. (1999). *"Failure to Connect: How Computers Affect Our Children's Minds and What We Should Do About It."* New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kids First! (2001). *A Parent's Guide to The Best Children's Videos, DVDs & CD-ROMs (2nd Ed)*. Los Angeles: Mars Publishing.
- Levin, D. (1998). *Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Levin, D. (2003). *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times: Building a Peaceable Classroom (2nd Ed.)*. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility & Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Levin, D., Gerzon, C. & TRUCE. *Help Children See through Violence and the Media*. For free copies contact: Mass. Violence Prevention Task Force, Dept. of Public Health, 250 Washington St., Boston, MA 02108. (Order guides and download Spanish version at: www.violenceprevention.com).
- Levine, M. (1996). *Viewing Violence: How Media Violence Affects Your Child's and Adolescent's Development*. New York: Doubleday
- Walsh, D. (2001). *Dr. Dave's Cyberhood: Making Media Choices that Create a Healthy Electronic Environment for Your Kids*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Videos

- Game Over: Gender, Race, and Violence in Video Games*. Media Education Foundation [See Organizations]. Addresses the fastest growing segment of the media and how it exploits gender, race and violence.
- Mickey Mouse Monopoly: Disney, Childhood, and Corporate Power*. Media Education Foundation [See Organizations]. Takes a critical look at Disney's role in shaping childhood and the ideas Disney movies teach about race, gender and ethnicity.
- Unplug Your Kids*. National Center on Media and the Family [See Organizations]. Shows how children learn values, attitudes, and behaviors from the mass media and offers suggestions for using media in a healthy way.

Organizations:

American Academy of Pediatrics

141 Northwest Point Boulevard
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
847-434-4000; www.aap.org

- Prepares position statements, informational pamphlets for pediatricians and the public on media violence issues.

Campaign for Commercial-Free
Childhood (Formerly: Stop
Commercial Exploitation of Children).
Judge Baker Children's Center,
53 Parker Hill Ave., Boston, MA
617-278-4105;
www.commercialexploitation.org

- Coalition working to stop marketing practices that harm children.

Center for Media Literacy

3101 Ocean Park Blvd., Ste. 200
Santa Monica, CA 90495
800-228-4630; www.medialit.org

- Best catalog of media literacy materials including media literacy curriculum, *Beyond Blame*.

Children Now

1212 Broadway, Suite 530
Oakland, CA 94612
510-763-2444; www.childrennow.org

- Reports and materials on media and children. Advocacy and organizing on media issues.

Coalition for Quality Children's Video and Kids First

112 W. San Francisco St., Ste. 305A
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505-989-8076; www.cqcm.org/kidsfirst

- Promotes and rates children's videos (see: "Books" above) and other helpful video resources.

Commercial Alert

3719 SE Hawthorne Blvd, #281
Portland, OR 97214
501-235-8012;
www.commercialalert.org

- Advocates for policies to limit harmful marketing and commercialism directed at children.

Lion and Lamb Project

4300 Montgomery Ave., Suite 104
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-654-3091; www.lionlamb.org

- Supports family and community efforts to promote healthy play and nonviolent toys.

Media Education Foundation

26 Center St.
Northampton, MA 01060
800-659-6882; www.mediaed.org

- Producers of high quality media literacy videos for educational purposes.

MediaScope

12711 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 440
Studio City, CA 91604
818-508-2080; www.mediascope.org

- Clearinghouse for media violence materials; research and advocacy.

National Institute on Media & the Family

2450 Riverside Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55454
888-672-KIDS;
www.mediaandthefamily.org

- Newsletter rating media products' impact on children; produces media literacy materials.

TV-Turnoff Network

1200 29th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
202-333-9220; www.tvturnoff.org

- Organizes annual TV turn-off week and materials to support efforts in your community.

UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children & Violence on the Screen

Nordicom, Goteborg University
Box 713
SE 405 30 Goteborg, Sweden;
www.nordicom.gu.se

- Publishes & distributes materials about media violence & children on a global level.

TRUCE is a national group of educators deeply concerned about how children's entertainment and toys are affecting the play and behavior of children in our classrooms.

TRUCE's goals are:

- To raise public awareness about the negative effects of violent and stereotyped toys and media on children, families, schools and society.
- To work to limit the harmful influence of unhealthy children's entertainment.
- To provide children with toys and activities that promote healthy play and non-violent behavior at home and school.
- To create a broad-based effort to eliminate marketing to children and to reduce the sale of toys of violence.
- To support parents' and teachers' efforts to deal with the issues regarding media.

For more information about what you can do and to make a contribution to cover our printing and disseminating costs, contact us: TRUCE, PO Box 441261, Somerville, MA 02144
truceteachers@aol.com www.truceteachers.org

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