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**Counter The Effects Of Media Violence On Children**

**By Brent Sitton**

Despite the fact that their own ratings systems found the material appropriate only for adults, the motion picture, music, and video game industries practice "pervasive and aggressive marketing" of violent movies, music, and electronic games to children. – Federal Trade Commission finding regarding child entertainment

The values depicted on TV and movie screens are a far cry from the values you want your children exposed to in their formative years. For example, the average American child will have watched 100,000 acts of televised violence, including 8,000 depictions of murder, by the time he or she finishes the sixth grade. In a typical American home, the TV set is on for over seven hours each day, and the average child spends more time watching that TV than they do in school, or doing any other activity besides sleeping. And, while your children are glued to the tube watching so-called child entertainment, they will see between 1,000 and 2,000 television ads promoting alcohol every year.

It's difficult to control parental outrage in the midst of that kind of media influence. How do you teach your child the concepts and character traits that translate into better learning habits at school, better behavior at home, and better citizenship in the world? How do you define loyalty to a five-year-old? How do you teach a four-year-old about bravery and respect? And how do you explain love?

These aren't simple words that can be taught to your child by rote. They're complex concepts that your child needs to know, understand, and adopt at an early age if they're to succeed in life.

The key to teaching children sophisticated character traits – such as courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love – is character-based education. The heart of character-based education is guiding your children toward TV shows, kid movie, and books that reflect positive values. While you may not be able to give your child the words that explain diversity, you can exert and control parental influence by giving him or her any Winnie the Pooh book, which demonstrates that theme in ways a child can easily understand. Pooh Bear also interprets the concept of family and the value of friendship.

## Counter The Effects Of Media Violence On Children

Thomas the Tank Engine teaches lessons about cooperation, sharing, and the value of hard work. Your child may not realize that they're being taught a lesson while reading about or watching Thomas and his friends, but by the end of the book or TV show, they will have learned a complex concept – and been entertained in the process.

For older readers, *The Wizard of Oz* follows a similar theme. When the Scarecrow complains of his lack of a brain, the Cowardly Lion discusses his lack of bravery, or the Tin Man wishes he had a heart, your child learns what intelligence, bravery, and love are, and why they're so important. Dorothy tirelessly tries to find her way home, and in doing so surrounds herself with new friends who work together to overcome their weaknesses and harness their strengths. Even though your child is engrossed in the story, the concepts of family, courage, cooperation, home, and love are made clear.

When you look at the values presented in the media, it becomes clear that positive character traits are poorly defined for children. What one child learns about bravery and loyalty from watching two bank robbers in a kid movie is much different than what another child learns about bravery and loyalty

through reading about or watching Winnie the Pooh helping a friend out of a jam.

As parents, combating the negative influence of media by filtering the content to which our children are exposed – such as looking at a movie rental review – may not be enough. Even if our children are an exception to the national average – over six hours of daily exposure to the media – it's safe to assume that their peers have internalized negative media messages and will influence our children. To counteract negative media and peer influences, we must take charge of our children's character education. That's not easy, given that our active lives and hectic schedules leave little time for reviewing and selecting appropriate reading and viewing material for our children.

Still, you should do what you can to guide your family toward materials that reinforce values that you hold dear. Evaluate the content of each children's book, television show, and movie rental review for positive and negative examples of the following ten traits: self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, and faith. Also, look for negative behavioral influences, such as violence, profanity, nudity, sexual content, scary elements, and the use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Then, make your selections according to the messages that each book, television show, or movie sends your children.

Brent Sitton is the founder of

<http://www.DiscoveryJourney.com>

, which has tools to counter the effects

of media violence. We have compiled a list of violence-free Kid Movies. Each movie rental review lists negative behaviors.

<http://www.discoveryjourney.com/movierentalreview.htm>

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<http://www.discoveryjourney.com/kidmovies.htm>

## **Who Says Life Doesn'T Repeat Itself?**

**By News Canada**

(NC)–There is a growing awareness that children who witness family violence experience severe emotional and behavioural problems. As they grow older, boys are at greater risk of abusing others, and girls are at greater risk of experiencing abuse in their relationships.

In a sample of federal inmates who had a history of family violence, more than half (56%) reported that they witnessed some form of violence as children.

Men who witnessed their mothers being physically abused by their fathers were three times as likely to be violent against their female partners than men who grew up in non-violent homes.

In a one-year period, a total of 57,182 women, along with 39,177 children, were admitted to 448 shelters that provide residential services to abused women in Canada

The majority of children accompanying their mothers to shelters were very young: three-quarters were under ten.

The number of children under twelve whose parents separate or divorce has tripled over the past twenty years.

Sources: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, Canadian Council on Social Development.

In an attempt to break the cycle of violence, many communities across Canada have implemented programs designed to help affected children better deal with their experiences by providing them with safety and protection, self-esteem development and coping skills. Frequently these projects also help abused mothers who need assistance with parenting.

For more information on these and other innovative crime prevention efforts currently in place across Canada, visit the National Crime Prevention Centre Web site at

[www.crime-prevention.org](http://www.crime-prevention.org)

or call

toll-free 1-877-302-NCPC.

News Canada

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