

The Devastating Effects of Today's Media on Children's Health and Behavior

Managing media for early childhood professionals

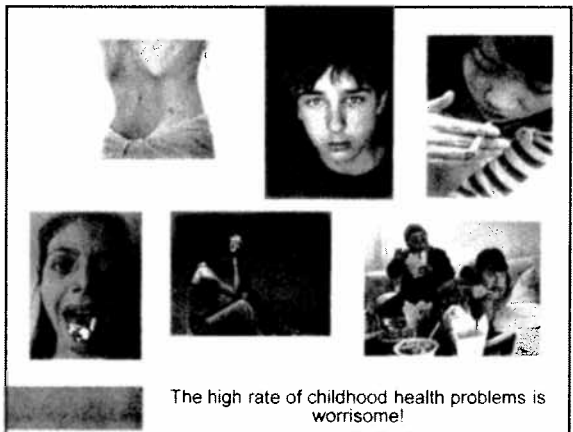
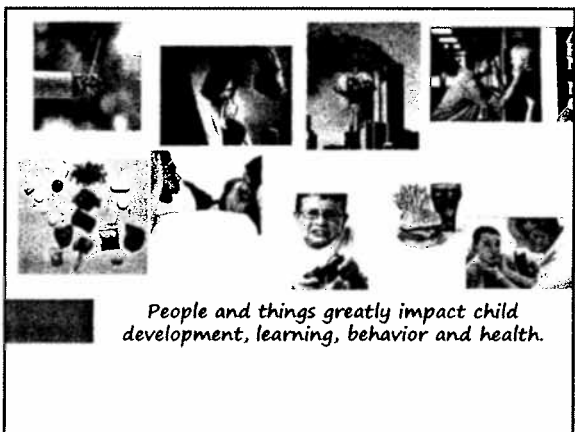
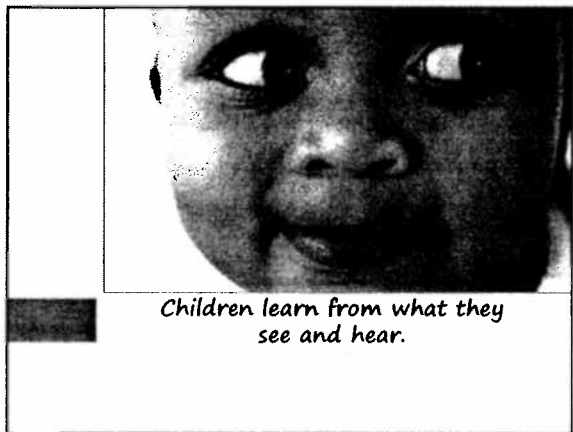
Your presenters

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Television content

- **Increasing amounts of harmful content:**
 - Advertising, violence, sexual scenes, substance use, reality shows with unhealthy relations and behaviors.
- By age 18, average child has seen **200,000 violent acts** on TV alone.
 - Cartoons: high rate of harm to characters, made to look funny
 - Glamorized violence: weapons make people powerful, attractive
- **#1 substance portrayed is alcohol** (70% of prime-time shows).
- 75% of prime-time shows have **sexual content**. Only 14% of those show risks, responsibilities. More sexual content in teens shows than adult shows.
- **Learning channels:** reality type shows, frightening images (historical, survival, explicit medical)

TV advertisements

- **Commercials for TV shows:**
 - **Recurrent scenes with violent content (even bloody dead bodies), unhealthy interactions between characters.**
- **For food and beverages:**
 - **Unhealthy fast food, high calorie fat/carb snacks**
 - **Soda**
 - **Alcohol ads show young people having a great time**
- **Video games, toys (dolls)**
- **Beauty, diet products**

More on advertising

- ❖ **Smoking media characters** are depicted to entice youth: young, rebellious, independent, healthy.
- ❖ **Alcohol ads:** made to entice youth (young, fun, attractive drinkers), relatively more advertising in teen shows and print.
- ❖ **Violent movies, games and music** is aggressively marketed to children (1999 FTC finding).
- ❖ **Prescription drugs:** kids learn there is a pill for everything (Cialis-really???)

Cable TV and movie exposure

- **Higher levels and more explicit violence, sexuality, substance use, profanity** than network TV.
- **Tobacco use** in 75% of G to PG-13 movies, 90% of R-rated.
- **Alcohol use:** even in G-rated, often shown as normative or funny, even for teen use
- 22% of recent movies show **illicit drug use** (#1: pot).
- **Ratings** don't predict frequency of violence, 90% of PG-13 have violence (half of depictions are lethal).
- **R-rated movies:** Highest levels of illicit drug use, explicit violence and sex.

Child exposure to Internet

- ❖ 25% of 5-6 year olds use computers on a typical day
- ❖ **Content is NOT regulated.**
- ❖ Browser pages even filled with unhealthy content
- ❖ **Pornography** (50% of teens have seen)
- ❖ **Explicit real-life violence** (38% of 10-14 year olds have seen)
- ❖ Chat and skype with dangerous strangers
- ❖ Play addictive games

Video and computer game exposure

- ❖ Non-violent games can develop hand-eye coordination and teach basic education (language, spelling, math)
- ❖ Can teach pro-social values
- ❖ But >50% of existing games contain violence (90% of those rated E-10+ or T)
- ❖ 4-8 graders **prefer games that reward violent acts** with points.
- ❖ 70% of 4-12 graders have played **M-rated** games.
- ❖ **Addiction** is a real risk.

Media influence on child substance use

- ❖ Higher levels of media exposure **increases marijuana, tobacco and alcohol** use.
- ❖ **Message:** smoke, drink, and use substances to be glamorous and cool, no or low risk (used to be "just say no").
- ❖ **R-rated movies:** viewing them increases risk of trying marijuana 6-fold. Watching 3 per month increases risk of drinking alcohol 5-fold.
- ❖ **Advertising is working to get kids to "just say yes":** exposure to tobacco marketing doubles risk of teen smoking.

Media and child anxiety and depression

- ❖ Higher **TV and movie viewing:** higher rates of nightmares, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, PTSD symptoms and physical complaints.
- ❖ **High video game use** (>45 mins/d): associated with increased depression and anxiety.
- ❖ **Seeing violence (real or not) results in long-lasting fear and anxiety**
 - Before age 8 kids can't distinguish fantasy from reality on a screen very well
 - Flash-backs long after, think they will be victims
 - Leads to depression, low motivation, substance use, trouble sleeping.
 - Covering little children's eyes isn't enough: they still "see" it

Media increase obesity and eating disorders

- ❖ Early TV viewing and physical activity both predict BMI at age 6. Each hour of TV at age 5 increases BMI by 7% as adults!
- ❖ Higher exposures increase **unrealistic expectations and body dissatisfaction:** leads to eating disorders, depression, substance use.
 - All media show females with unnaturally thin, buxom bodies acting sexually. Boys: unusually buff. Perfect teeth, hair, skin.
 - Even young children are now becoming unhappy with their bodies. (Fiji)
- ❖ **Advertisements** for junk food and fast food clearly linked to unhealthy eating and obesity.
- ❖ **Message to kids:** look perfect (otherwise you aren't worthy), but eat unhealthy fatty and caloric foods!

Media effects on early social behavior

- ❖ Frequent TV exposure at 18 months of age
 - Associated with decreased prosocial behavior
 - ❖ > 2 hrs of daily TV viewing at 2.5 years of age
 - Fewer social skills at age 5
 - Appears reversible if stop excessive exposure
 - ❖ Every hour of TV viewed per day at age 3
 - Linked to a 10% increase in victimization by classmates at age 10
- Media and sleep in early childhood**
- ❖ TV hours per day directly linked to irregular naptime and bedtime schedules

Media influence on early child attention

- ❖ Children 0-2 years watching > 2 hours of TV per day have higher likelihood of having **ADD**.
 - May only be true for non-educational entertainment content.**
- ❖ Daily TV for 18 month-olds: **attention problems (hyperactivity, inattention)** at age 3
 - Optimal learning: infants and toddlers need to focus on one thing until they want to shift.
 - May be less appealing to focus on static tasks like reading when are used to fast moving more exciting exposures.
- ❖ Evidence that 24 months is age of ability to begin to comprehend video content (possibly 18 months).
- ❖ May not be able to learn verbs from video until age 4.


Media influence on speech, language

- ❖ Mothers who show videos to 6 month infants are much **less likely to verbally interact**.
 - ❖ Co-viewing increases verbal interaction
 - ❖ Young child educational content increases verbal interaction compared to non-educational content
 - ❖ But educational content is not more likely to be co-viewed
- ❖ **Language delays** with large amounts of TV or videos.
 - ❖ At 6 months: duration and older child/adult content both associated with **lower** cognitive and language development at 14 mos
- ❖ **Preschoolers with greater non-educational media exposure:** less reading and teaching activities at home
- ❖ **Best indicator of healthy language development** is adult-child conversing (can reverse negative TV effect)

Games

➤ **Limit game time and content**

- Only educational games in early childhood if at all.
- Take games away immediately if see more aggressive behavior, addiction signs, talks or acts like aggressive characters.
- Play new games together at first.



Computers and Internet

➤ **Computer games, educational sites**

- Preschoolers: could be allowed in limited amounts (math, language), no violent content
- Use pop-up blockers.
- Set parental controls: only allow certain sites.
- No browser home pages.

➤ **Best to delay Facebook** until middle school, need to check content regularly.

➤ **No chat rooms, skype, games** that you play with strangers online.


REMOVE TV, INTERNET, VIDEO GAMES, MOVIE VIEWING ACCESS IN KIDS' BEDROOMS !!!

- Decreases exposure to media
- Improves sleep
- Enables adult monitoring.
- Decreases smoking in teens.
- Decreases obesity in children.

Music: modern rap, hip-hop and others are not suitable for children (Rape, drug and alcohol, hate, violent lyrics.)


Texting: wait to get until high school, if at all. Periodically check content.

Teach kids truth about advertising: very little Unhealthy eating and body image messages.



Talk about unrealistic bodies (especially girls): unusually attractive bodies acting sexually, makes normal girls feel bad about themselves.

Body type ≠ being happy, being a good friend or mate.



Strategies for enacting media limits

- **Assess media access, content** in your home and childcare areas.
- **Assess your own media use-** impacts your approach.
 - Media use by caretakers, parents - mom on Facebook, child drowned
- Almost all electronic media can be password protected, time-limited, or have parental controls applied or service disrupted, or a power cord can be hidden or taken with parent. Only 20% of parents use the V-chip in TVs.
- Kids will insist they aren't affected by media, but they are.
- **Stop debate from children about limits.**

Replace media time with better activities

- ◆ Talk and read
- ◆ Play: crafts, dress up, play acting, walks and other outings, board and card games, educational/physical video games
- ◆ School work and school activities
- ◆ Chores, cooking
- ◆ Exercise, sports
- ◆ Make or listen to music
- ◆ Naps!



