



The Family Place Parent Child Center

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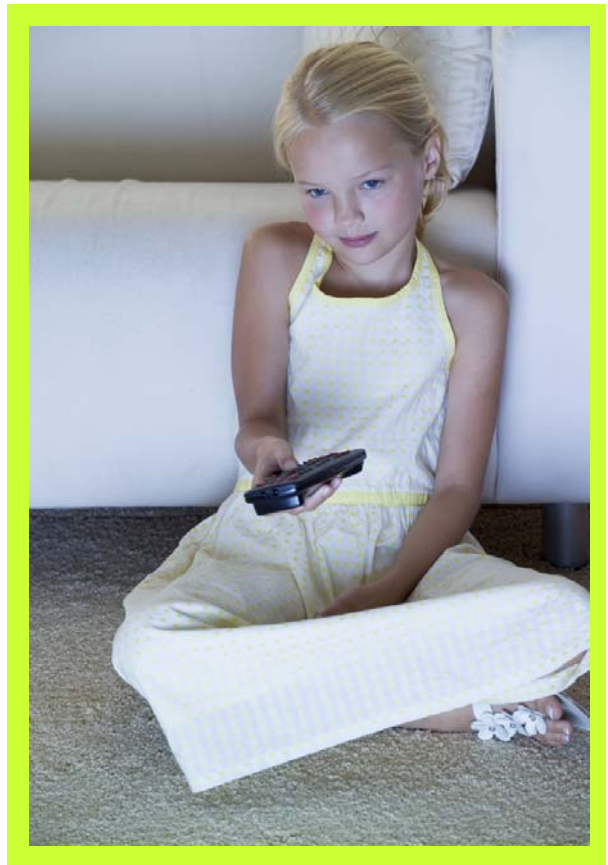
Parents: Savvy, Smart, and In Control

Feeling out of control and overwhelmed? Maybe even a little frightened? You should. 12 Billion dollars a year are spent targeting children through television, radio, printed material, music and the Internet. Media are business and commercial interests. They are not selling baby videos, cute fuzzy toys linked to “educational” programming, or fun convenient factory-made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches because they know what is best for your children. They do not have your children’s best interests, health or well-being at heart. They want your money. Period.

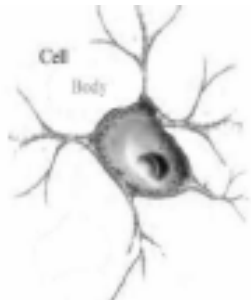
Enormous advertising agencies have entire divisions devoted to targeting and isolating children. Magazines like *AdKids* share trade secrets like making the most of the “nag” factor – measuring how much begging, whining, and cajoling it takes before a parent gives into a child’s request. It’s no wonder that conscientious and loving parents feel battle fatigue. They’re up against massive power and money systems that are threatening their very authority. A parent knows his child better than any person in the world. He has a megaconglomerate telling him that if he loves his baby the way he should, he’ll prop the infant up in front of the television in front of a video *guaranteed* to make the child smarter. What good parent wouldn’t cough up the \$15.95 it takes to give his child the intellectual edge?

What the friendly megaconglomerate has failed to mention is that a baby’s brain cannot tolerate so much stimulation. The infant may be mesmerized, even hypnotized by the images on the screen, but that should **not** be confused with learning or growing. The images on a screen are too intense. They deprive the baby’s brain of the typical way it needs to grow. This example shows how media affects our children’s lives, and how parents are losing their authority over their children’s growth and development, physically, mentally, emotionally, and morally.

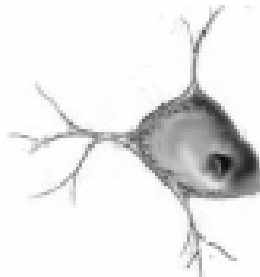
Before you ban Friday Family Movie Night, consider some of the benefits that media offer: information, entertainment, and enjoyment. None of these is a bad thing. They reduce our stress and help keep us healthy and happy. Media is as much a part of our lives as the air we breathe. Kids will wear T-shirts and caps with sports team names on them (advertisements), mothers will carry handbags with a designers logo on it (more ads), Dad picks up the evening paper religiously, and little sister adores her monthly science magazine. Everyone loves Friday Family Movie Night at the end of the week.



A healthy enriched brain cell



A brain cell “on t.v.”



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The crucial difference between employing media as a tool, and being enslaved by it, is **education**. Becoming media literate, media savvy, media smart – whatever you choose to call it- is the best way to harness the positive and filter out the negative of media in our lives.

1. Learn the media “tricks of the trade” like flattery, repetition, fear and humor. Commercials operate at an emotional level and at a rate too fast for our brains to understand (30 frames per second versus the 8 frames per second our brain can process)
2. Get the screens out of kids’ rooms. Supervision is essential, especially for the very young.
3. Teach your children how to be media smart. Young children can understand advertising toys and sugary cereals. Older children and teen should know about gender stereotypes and sexual socialization.
4. Censor media that runs counter to your family values or that are not developmentally or age appropriate.
5. Grow your child’s brain – engage them in conversation (beginning at birth!), read to them, encourage lots of open, free play both alone and with friends. *-Marla Ianello works at The Family Place*

More information on this topic can be found through the New Mexico Media Literacy Project (www.nmmlp.org), and the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (www.commercialexploitation.org). Resource information also available at The Family Place.

- By age 70, most people will have spent 10 years of their lives watching television.
- The only activity that children engage in more than using media is sleeping.
- The brain is more active during sleep than when watching television. Children average 1500 hours in front of televisions per year, viewing 20,000 commercials – making them the fastest growing consumer population, influencing the spending of billions of dollars per year.
- Television and video games act as narcotics. They create a stimulus addiction. Children who are suddenly taken “off” of television experience real physical withdrawal including depression and anger.

source: New Mexico Media Literacy Project



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