“The Teacher”

Media Reference Material

Media has a tremendous influence on our lives individually, and as a community, as a county, a state or even a country. Media effects the way we dress, the way we talk, the way we act, the way we eat; it even effects the way we decorate our homes. You may not believe that media has so much control over our lives, but this resource package will give many candid illustrations and solid evidence to show this is possible.

Media includes the internet, journalism, radio, magazines, advertisement, soliciting, propaganda and the infamous “boob tube” (television). We will mainly consider TV in this material, but the principles presented here can apply to all areas of media. This reference material is blunt and to the point. All of this material was compiled from many resources, including magazines and books. Media is not the source of all the problems presented in this material, but it is certainly a contributing factor. We will consider ways to cope with the media in future materials.

Fast Food Mentality

Certainly, media isn’t’ all bad. It gives us a window on the world, makes us laugh, gives us the news, entertains us and provides the “thrill of victory” and the “agony of defeat” from the wide world of sports. While media can justly claim its credits, it must also assume its liabilities. While we know that TV and media isn’t all good, we tend to respond to the badside of media as we do to fast food restaurants: ‘*we enjoy items on the menu that we know aren’t good for us*.’ If we make a steady diet of junk food soaked in fat, salt and excess calories, we should add a hospital bill to the price of our hamburgers.



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This “fast food mentality” involving the media causes us to pay a big price for the “enjoyable” junk we allow to enter our minds. Anyone who denies the influence of media on our lives needs to have a lesson in “reality.” Advertisers spend millions of *dollars (sometimes for just one minute of ‘prime time’ commercial time*) to sell their products. Either they are totally stupid or they know that the media works to influence us.

So, what is the real problem? Do we throw away the media? Of course not. We are still the ones with our hand on the “on/off” switch, and that switch works both ways. We can complain about the poor influence of television and media, but we have the ability to control media rather than it controlling us. We need to learn how to view and listen to the media.



High School Student

Alien Invasion

If a STRANGER knocked at our door and said, “Pardon me, Buddy. I’d like to make an appointment with you and your family for two hours each day to teach you about life,” how would you respond? We would probably slam the door in his/her face. We certainly would not give them the time of day or access to our family. Yet, television and media enter our homes as “entertaining” guests or “experts in the field.” While it enchants us, media teaches us. It spells out lessons about relationships, values and lifestyles. Hundreds of writers and producers especially from New York and Hollywood establish and control the media, giving us their viewpoint, their ideas, their perspective and their slant about what life is all about, what counts in life, what priorities we should have, what attitudes and behaviors we should adopt as our own, and how we should solve our daily problems.

You may argue that there are some shows that do not influence us, but every show has a purpose or “moral.” There is no such thing as “neutral” programming. Every program and every form of media has an underlying message to teach. For instance, it is common for us to believe the unbelievable (“That’s Incredible,” “National Enquirer”) to accept the unacceptable (Satanic music, Murder, deceit, violence, illicit sex) and desire the unreal (the perfect bodies we see, the perfect diet, the perfect fashion, super powers, macho rule over people, etc.)

Two men went to see the new 3-D movie, which began with a thrilling roller-coaster ride. As soon as the picture started, one fellow turned slightly green. “I’m sorry,” he said to his companion, “But I’ve got to leave. I feel sick.”

“**Will you sit down and stop acting like a child?” the other demanded. “It’s only a movie**.”

A minute later the roller coaster roared down a steep incline and the first man groaned, “I’ve got to get some fresh air.”

“**Sit down**,” whispered his friend. “**You’re embarrassing me. This is just a movie**.”

After another ‘loop de loop’ the pale one rose. “Forgive me,” he said, “But I can’t take this anymore. I really have to leave.”

“**Listen**,” his pal sternly roared**, “Will you sit down before we both fall out of this thing and get killed**.”

# Deceit

A whole generation laughed at the screwball antics of “I Love Lucy” and “The Honeymooners.” Lucy used every imaginable subterfuge to keep Ricky from finding out what she had done that he would disapprove of. Ralph was always hiding the truth from Alice. Other popular deceit-ridden programs were “Three’s Company,” “Hogan Family,” “Alf,” “Growing Pains,” “Family Ties,” “World Class Wrestling,” “Cheers,” “My Two Dads,” “King of Queens,” “Everybody Loves Raymond,” … to name a few. All of these shows and hundreds of other media programs “stretch the truth,” “fib,” “tell rumors.” There are an estimated 250 words in the English Language that are synonyms for lying. Subterfuge is another one.

We have whitewashed truth … whatever that is. In fact, lying has become so acceptable, we have lost sight of what truth is. The next time you watch a sitcom, ask if – in the midst of all the funny stunts, practical jokes and “one liners” – the story revolves around a lie or a cover up. How many of your favorite programs depend on deceit to keep you interested?

Deceit eats at our moral fiber, producing lack of trust and discomfort towards society. It also yields a pessimistic environment in which everything begins to approach a gloomy, distrustful view of life in general. Sounds unrealistic? Look around and listen to all the complaining and negative attitudes. By the way, how many people do you truly trust with your personal secrets? I’ll bet not many.

… and now a word from our sponsors

Advertisement

Media’s first mission is not to inform the public or even to entertain. It is to move goods, to round up viewers for the “main event” – the commercial. All media presentations are SPONSORED by some organization, which promotes its values, its products and its “means to gain an end.” Advertisers spend big bucks for the chance to stimulate desires. Basically, commercial television and media promotes and arouses desires in order to sell products.



Why is it that 95% of all television promotes youth, beauty, wealth and sex appeal as their major selling tools? How many “real people” do you see on your favorite programs and commercials? By far most television personalities are gorgeous, sexy, rich and young. Where are all these people on the street? … they hardly exist.

We love the excitement, we crave the over-glorified products and people, our emotions are stirred by the popular, the romantic and the make believe, and we want to “keep up with thy neighbor.” America and the world may be nations with the best customers, but we are also the most discontented people. **We buy what we do not need with money we do not have to stay ahead of people we do not know**! So much of the media tempts us, lures us and teaches us to consume … not to be rational consumers who make sound financial and practical decisions.

Media’s advertising makes us think that owning things makes us important. It teaches us that “the good life” is measured by the size of our bank account, the designer clothes we wear or the sports car in our driveway. Let’s face it, in many places, “money talks.” Why do you wear the clothes you do? Why do you speak the lingo that you do? Who taught you the way to choose music, food, clothes, cars, those of the opposite (or even the same) sex? Why do guys wear earrings an/or have long hair? Why do girls “paint” on some of their clothes and pierce their ear eight times? Why the untied sneakers? Who taught us to disrespect our parents, our teachers and most any other authority? And finally, why do we need a car that can do “0 to 60” in one second? So, we can run over someone in less time?



If we are honest most of our values (learning what is right and wrong) comes from our favorite shows, our favorite music and our favorite “media” people. Without Michael Jackson, I doubt society would be thrilled with the “moon walk;” without the incredibly competitive nature of sports most of us would not get so emotional over a sports event; beer wouldn’t be so acceptable if our favorite commercials and stars didn’t speak so well of it, our music stars promote sex, drugs, violence, disrespect … We could go on and on.

The bottom line is that media has produced a dissatisfied world. The symptom of discontentment is that most of us always want something. When we get what we want, “the thrill” lasts a short time and then we want something else. The worst effect is that we actually come to believe that we need what we formerly only wanted. Why shouldn’t we feel this way? After all, we constantly hear about “new” products, “new and improved” products and “new” ways to spend our money. It is difficult to save money or have self control when we are given the opportunity to have fifty credit cards, easy access to loans and an environment of unrestraint all around us.

Violence

Eight out of every ten television programs contain violence. (By the way, children’s cartoons show a violent episode every two minutes.) By the age of fifteen, the average teenager has watched 1300 people violently destroyed! What are the name brands? Try “Death Wish,” “Dirty Harry,” “Rambo,” “Dukes of Hazard,” “The A-Team,” (who never shows a real murder take place, just the gun shot and the dead body!) “Smokey and The Bandit,” “Cannonball Run,” any “Halloween” or horror movie, most science fiction films, the old westerns, etc. etc. Oh, I almost forgot … professional wrestling, hockey, football, basketball, and boxing. Who are the stars? Sylvester Stalone, Clint Eastwood, Arnold Swartzenagger, Charles Bronson, Chuck Norris, Jackie Chan, Eddie Murphy, Stephen Segal, Bruce Willis and hundreds more.

Writers of these violent programs tend to divide the world up into “good guys” and “bad guys” as if evil didn’t affect all of us. Our heroes and heroines choose violence as often as the villains do, often breaking the law and moral codes as well. We applaud their actions. Does “might make right?” For most violent programming it does.

Revenge is the name of the game and only misfits can be bothered with resolving conflict and reconciling/restoring a friendship. In the past, two guys in a fight would be forced to shake hands to settle the issue; today we go get a bigger weapon to get revenge. If someone threatens or hits me, I have to hit them back just to “save face.” Media, especially television, thrives on quick solutions and fast action. After all, “blowing someone away” is exciting while, saying “I’m sorry, please forgive me,” is disgustingly boring and sounds so wimpy.

Winning At All Costs

In most media life there is a contest between winners and losers. For the most part, only winners matter. There is little to no room for ties or losers. What does the second-place finisher get on most game shows or sports contests. How about the competitor, who does his/her best, but doesn’t even place? Winning the prize is worth everything, even at the sacrifice of the contestant’s dignity. Twenty years ago, the Super Bowl Pre-game show lasted one hour. Today it starts two weeks before the football game! Who won the Super Bowl in 1960? The great majority of people wouldn’t know that there was no Super Bowl then.

We may take the “raised index finger” lightly, but the concept of “we’re number one” is vastly important to us. “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing (Lombardi).” “Nice guys finish last (Durocher).” In real life, to be excited about changing our babies’ diaper or getting a “B” in school is weird, but to act like a total alien from mars during a sports event is encouraged. We get so excited when our team wins “the big one,” that we destroy tens of thousands of dollars worth of stadium equipment. Who are the popular kids in school? Not the ones who are respectful, decent and kind, but often it is the sports stars that get drunk on the weekend to celebrate their victory or who allure partners to have cheap sex with.



Let’s talk turkey even though it’s not Thanksgiving. What is the purpose of extracurricular activities? To be honest, that is no longer clear. But no educator would deny that the major purpose of extracurricular activities is to enhance the child’s total EDUCATIONAL experience. They are available in order to develop the child in activities of SECONDARY importance, which are not part of the regularly scheduled curriculum. Up until recently, extracurricular activities have been held as a PRIVILEGE based upon whether or not the child has met minimal academic standards regarded as absolutely indispensable.

So, what has happened over the last fifty years? Today, the extracurricular philosophy DISCRIMINATES against the less talented for the sake of performing or winning. We have truly lost perspective in regard to why schools and school sports exist. As a result, there is a loss in the opportunities for overall development of character, perseverance (endurance) and general improvement in areas other than sports. The message to many students is that they can try and try, but in the final analysis, their personal contribution to the team is of little to no value. We exalt “Joe or Jane athlete” and laugh at or ignore the nerd who is uncoordinated. How many times have you mocked the “plump” person on the track team without any thought of their personal dedication and commitment?

Have you ever thought about why tax-paying parents should have to pay to watch their child play a sport at their own school? Does the money raised really go to benefit their children and community? Why is it that in most high schools a low percentage of students participate in any one extracurricular activity, while most other team members are spectators? We have developed a society that accepts and praises the highly talented and tries to hide the less talented. It is no wonder so many students don’t even try out for these activities. Wouldn’t it be something if sports were for fun and participation, and not to create a “I’m great, you’re not” society?

Sex

This is literally a “touchy” subject. Media offers us a sex-saturated society in which sex is considered the ultimate good in life although commitment and love is not necessary. Sex no longer expresses commitment and marriage, but good clean fun that requires nothing and offers everything. As a result, youth is worshipped and age is a curse. Unfortunately, we must live in a real world.

By 1978, prime time television shows unmarried sex outnumbering marital sex almost 11 to 1. Consumers buy everything from the right deodorant to the flashiest car because of the sexual overtones involved and the promise that these products make us sexier. Advertisers use young, sexy people to promote soap, jeans, underwear, beer, cars, tobacco, gum, soda, etc. etc. … even bathroom disinfectants! There are commercials showing adolescents under ten years old making sexual gestures and kissing. It might interest you to know that the cosmetic industry competes with the transportation industry for highest profits. This means that we need to “cover up” as much as we need to get around! It’s not that make-up is wrong, but many people go on painting campaigns to be “accepted.”



People love to brag of their sexual exploits and conquests. They speak of “how good it feels,” how many times they “do it,” they lust after the “untouchable,” and they are proud to be in a sex-ridden society. It is considered normal to have sex with a person one hardly knows. Teenagers that are virgins are outwardly laughed at. Isn’t it interesting that most people who desire commitment prefer to marry a virgin? You see, we love to have what we want and when we want it. The media has encouraged people to lose most or all self control sexually. … Well, at least they warn us to wear a condom so we don’t get AIDS.

You know that sex is out of hand by your own experience. Anywhere you look, there is uncommitted (non-married), unloving (one-night stands), formerly unaccepted (homosexuality) sex permitted, cheered and fought for. Hugh Hefner, the “Playboy,” may be considered a hero by some, yet, he refused to let his own eighteen-year-old daughter pose for his pornographic magazine. Almost every advertisement, newspaper, radio program, MTV video, magazine, television show, TV commercial, and billboard appeals to one’s sex drive.

How about reality? Over the past 30 years, America has aborted 30,000,000 babies, child abuse has increased more than five times, the divorce is 60 percent, sexual violence (rape, incest, sodomy) is reported many times daily, AIDS is a household word, anorexia, VD and other murderous sicknesses were barely heard of in the past and now we personally know affected. So many kids are torn apart because of their home situation … and yet we love our casual sex! When are we going to face reality? No child throws a party when his/her parents split up. It isn’t a thrill when Johnny sees his mother in bed with someone other than dad. Any couple who cares for one another endures many hardships and unpleasant situations. Media rarely shows people getting genuinely sick and throwing up … not real sexy. Before marriage or a committed relationship, a couple is much more polite and courteous to one another. In time, these people belch, flagellate and make loud noises in the bathroom. This is reality!



An interesting reality is that most people want a genuine, committed, loving relationship, but their role models teach them the opposite. Real life is NOT what most media tells us. We may want commitment and love, but it is extremely difficult to find it or to learn and develop it in a society flooded with no responsibility, naked bodies, lack of commitment and extreme selfishness. The phrases “if it feels good, do it,” “as long as no one gets hurt it’s okay,” “everybody’s doing it,” “if you love me, you’ll let me,” are only a few lines we have been taught to help us get more confused in order to give in to desires we once thought improper.

End Justifies the Means

In conclusion, probably the most dangerous philosophy taught or role modeled for us by the media is this concept of “the end justifies the means.” This means that as long as we obtain our goal, it doesn’t matter how we get there. This is why we cheer when Vin Diesel or Dirty Harry “blows someone away” because we feel the guy deserved it … even though they may have broken the law and murdered someone. The end justifies the means is seen when someone lies, cheats, steals, or whatever to get the promotion at their job. The problem with a society based on this philosophy is that we are centered on “ME.” We rarely put someone else’s welfare even close to our own. This causes a lot of hatred, inequality and discrimination. I hope we value the UNITED States more in the future than we do now.

