



KIDS TODAY

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Oklahomans Examine Impact of Media Violence on Children and Families

The impact of entertainment media violence on children and families will be examined in a five-part series scheduled from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. on October 8, 22, November 5, 19, and December 3. The series will be open to the public and offered at various locations across the state including Lawton, Norman, Okemah, Oklahoma City, Ponca City, Tulsa and Woodward.

The first four sessions are a satellite videoconference featuring experts on media violence. The fifth session December 3rd is a local public deliberation forum that will help community members discuss and address solutions to the issues covered in the satellite series.

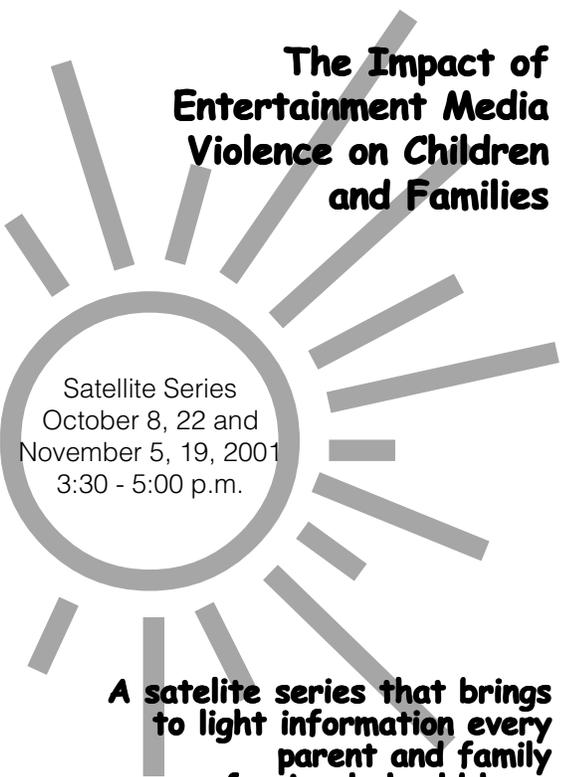
The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service is hosting the local showing of the series in collaboration with other state and local partners. The satellite series will originate from Iowa State University and will bring to light important and startling facts about the impact of media violence on children and families. This is an important event for parents and everyone concerned with children to attend.

Each satellite session will feature nationally and internationally known speakers presenting information based on more than 40 years of research. Among the things participants will learn are:

- Violence is increasing among our nation's children.
- Viewing entertainment violence is associated with increases in aggressive attitudes and behaviors, particularly in children.
- Prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to emotional desensitization to real-life violence.
- The effects of media violence are measurable and long-lasting.

For more information on Oklahoma locations, contact the local Cooperative Extension office in Comanche, Cleveland, Kay, Okfuskee, Oklahoma, Tulsa and Woodward Counties, or Sue Williams at 405-744-6825 or Debbie Richardson at 405-744-6231. Information will also be posted on our website www.fcs.okstate.edu.

The Impact of Entertainment Media Violence on Children and Families



Satellite Series
October 8, 22 and
November 5, 19, 2001
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

A satellite series that brings to light information every parent and family professional should know

Satellite series topics:

- The impact of violent television and movies
- the effects of violent video games
- the influence of media violence on children at different ages
- media literacy to help parents and children become critical viewers

Character Critters Program Includes Parents

An educational program sponsored by the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension is getting rave reviews around the state. Character Critters is a program designed to enable parents and other adults help children learn about positive character development, including lessons on trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. These six aspects of character are taught through animal stories, learning experiences in classroom interest centers, parent events, and take home activities.

Oklahoma reported 11,224 confirmed cases of child neglect in the fiscal year 2000. This neglect of children's needs, especially the need for character education, can be attributed to the breakdown of family support systems. This can be caused by economics, mobility, isolation, television replacing family time, substance addiction and inappropriate role models.

There are currently 45 counties across the state that are active in presenting the Character Critters program. Approximately 4,000 children and 2,000 parents have been involved in the program so far. After participating in the program, parents have been reported as giving very high marks to the program. They said they would practice the six pillars of character themselves, talk to and spend time with their child and choose activities that would help the child's development in these six areas.

Teachers said the program helped them to practice the six pillars themselves and to teach the con-



cepts to children. Many of the teachers who have used the program in the classroom reported a notable increase in the use of the pillar words by the children. Positive changes in the children's behavior and a marked decrease in hitting also were noted by teachers. "When this program was first initiated in Oklahoma we wanted to increase parent, family, school and community involvement in character education," Wilson said. "I think that following the first year of implementation, we're definitely headed in the right direction."

More information about the Character Critters program is available at the local county Extension office or online at <http://fcs.okstate.edu/parenting>. Click on the Building Character link.

Make Packing School Lunches a Family Affair

Packing school lunches with children is a great way to ensure they get a nutritious lunch while teaching them about good nutrition. "Try to offer foods from three or more of the major USDA Food Guide Pyramid food groups in every lunch," said Janice Hermann, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension nutritionist. Using the Food Guide Pyramid encourages healthy food choices.

"Be creative, offer a variety of different foods that taste good and are healthy too," she said. Hermann also recommended having children help prepare lunches. "Children like to help in the kitchen and are more likely to eat food that they prepare themselves," she said. "Kids are likely to want foods that are high in fat and sugar, so don't be surprised when they ask for such. Treat it as an educational opportunity to talk about nutritional choices."

Offer more nutritious desserts such as fresh fruit, fig bar cookies or nonfat oatmeal-raisin cookies. Still, Hermann recommended that parents let their child choose one 'treat day' each week, where he or she can have a special dessert or side dish. This is a simple method of helping children to keep from feeling deprived when their friends have candy or similar "goodies" in their lunches.

Finally, be aware that sack lunches often sit without benefit of refrigeration for several hours. "It's important to keep food safe to eat," Hermann said. "Always wash fruits and vegetables well, and use foods that will not spoil if not refrigerated."

Anyone seeking additional information about packing healthy school lunches should contact their OSU Cooperative Extension county office, usually listed under "County Government" in most local telephone directories.

Helping Children Cope with Stress and Transitions

At one time or another, adults wish to be a child again by thinking there would be no cares or worries. The fact is that children today experience more stress and strain than we sometimes realize.

Not all stress is unhealthy. It is an expected and normal part of human development.

The struggles of learning to walk, ride a bike, or read are examples of how stress can be a positive challenge. These challenges help children develop and mature. Other ordinary stresses are those tensions that are a part of daily life such as having to wake and get ready for school in the morning.

Children are especially stressed any time they are given too much responsibility or information, are expected to deal with too many changes, or are overloaded emotionally.

Events which may be particularly stressful can include going to child care, preschool or school for the

Signs of Stress:

Each child responds to stress in a different manner. Some signs of stress include:

- a change in appetite
- sleeplessness
- complaints of headaches
- stomachaches or nausea
- starting or going back to thumb-sucking, nail-biting, bed-wetting or nightmares
- loss of interest in activities the child normally enjoys
- loss of motivation or difficulty concentrating
- irritability or withdrawing
- increased hostility, aggression, or fighting with other children.

For children, an important buffer against stress is a healthy parent-child relationship:

- Talk with as well as listen to your children.
- Spend time alone with each child daily.
- A hug, kiss or smile can offer reassurance and relief.
- Provide a sense of security. Set guidelines for behavior, develop a comfortable daily schedule and help your child find acceptable ways of dealing with feelings.
- Be realistic in terms what you expect based on their age, abilities, and temperament. Expecting too much or too little can create a stressful situation.
- Provide opportunities to be successful. Success is important in building a positive self-concept and feeling of self-worth. A child who feels good about him/herself can more easily deal with stress.
- Teach your child how to relax. Playing, running, laughing, building or drawing are some positive ways. Children learn and work better and are healthier when given time for play and self-expression.
- Teach your child how to make decisions and solve problems. Give them choices along with the chance and time to solve their problems. Help children to plan and time their activities, perhaps allowing extra time or

first time; fights or arguments with friends and family members; observing violence; difficulties with a teacher or caregiver; a move to a new home; parents' divorce or separation; death of a family member; or parents' loss of a job.

The appearance of one of the signs of stress, especially for a short time, is probably no cause for great concern. However, children may need extra help if the behavior continues over a period of time, occurs with other noticeable changes in behavior, or interferes with their normal growth and development.

Most of the time a parent's efforts will be enough to help a child through a stressful event. However, if the situation is more severe, continues for a lengthy time, or also affects the parent, then seeking outside help can be a good idea. Another trusted adult, school counselor, mental health counselor, pastor, or the local Child Guidance Center in the county health department can provide assistance.

Ways to Calm a Baby:

- Sing or play soft music.
- Hold him/her against your chest, pat on the back gently, and walk around or rock back and forth.
- Hold the baby's arms close to his/her body; swaddling or wrapping in a blanket comforts some babies.
- Take baby for a ride in the car or for a walk in the stroller.
- Maintain calming movements for about 5 minutes at a time.

Your grandchild has gone off to college!

Use your influence to help your grandchildren succeed. Pass on these seven tips and be available to listen and discuss their joys and concerns.

1. **Watch your habits.** Illegal drugs may get the most attention but they are way behind alcohol in the number of people who abuse them. The alcohol habit is a contagious pitfall because many feel "loosened up" socially, get a high, or escape from their problems temporarily. Alcohol is a depressant. Depression is common in college students. Many students ruin their college career with too much drinking.
2. **Sleep, food and exercise.** It's easy to "overdose" on salt, fat, sugar and caffeine. Mistakes here can make you sleep poorly, therefore need more sleep, feel tired and then depressed. Students who "sleep in" too often, usually can trace their problem to these intakes. Skipping sleep, food or exercise in order to study, work or party will make getting sick more likely. A good diet and exercise can relieve depression, but sugar, alcohol, and over-eating worsen it.
3. **Live on campus, if possible.** Students often consider only rent when working out the cost of a place to live. Problems here include shopping for and preparing meals and spending time and money commuting. Living off-campus just makes it harder to hang around for all the activities or to get back to campus for social events, interest groups, cooperative studying, and socializing. You may put in more hours at an outside job since you are off-campus anyway. Commuters are at a greater risk of dropping out of college.
4. **Manage your schedule.** Keep the number of courses you take at the average or a little below. A habit of signing up for the minimum or dropping courses when things get tough, can lead to dropping out altogether.

5. **Manage your money.** If you always feel you are out of money, don't have enough, or waste too much, you eventually will come up with the idea of taking on more hours at a job. Drop-out statistics show that for students working long hours and making long commutes, the chances of making graduation on time are nearly zero!
6. **Watch out for vultures.** Many businesses will constantly offer you more credit cards and more opportunities to buy new things. The last thing you need is more demands to make you feel down! Keep your financial life as simple as possible. Groups advocating everything from just another philosophy to violence and criminal activities are active on every campus. Spend your time as carefully as you spend your money, and don't risk a commitment to a group that might mean trouble.
7. **Keep your college records up to date.** Make sure the college administration knows of any decision to drop a course. Deciding not to show up without officially dropping a course will result in an "F" that will lower your grade average. You need the very best grades you can accomplish—for your record, your future resume, and to get into special courses and programs in the later years of college. Many majors require grade-points higher than the average.

One of the best ways to keep your child on the right path is to walk there yourself.

From College Keys: Getting In, Doing Well, & Avoiding the 4 Big Mistakes by Roger McIntire.

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