

# **MEDIA AND OUR KIDS**

## **(Video games, movies and the internet)**

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Let's face it, for many of us, our memories of play revolved around dolls, trucks, swings, balls, bats, bikes, and perhaps an outside tree-house. We loved to listen to the kids' request session on Sunday morning radio. We played board games and cards and had friends over to play. So what has changed from those 'good old days'?

One of the differences between then and now is that so much entertainment today requires no initiative or physical activity. Kids sit and watch movies on TV or watch DVD's. They play video games, or hand held games. They sit for hours on the Internet, being potentially exposed to adult porn sites or talking in meaningless chat rooms. Why and how did this happen?

I think it has just basically sneaked up on parents. Today we live in such a technological and sedentary world that we have allowed our kids to follow it without question. In the 60's and 70's our life-styles were different, with one parent often home to supervise kids' play time.

And this is precisely the point. The word 'play' suggests activity, and kids are getting 'played to' instead of the other way around. Just sitting also encourages kids to snack as they watch. Snacks are usually full of saturated fat, salt or sugar. We have a major weight problem with all age groups here in the U.S. and much of it can be attributed to poor diet and lack of activity. We also notice here that many school kids are not given a recess. They go to the cafeteria for lunch and then go back to class.

I have always told my kids that their minds are a blank canvas. Once images are painted on that canvas, they are not easily removed. We need to protect our kids' minds from negative input. Movies today are far more graphic than we ever knew. TV programs are much more explicit than ever before. Kids' minds become numbed to the horror of those images. Their brain 'canvas' is painted over and over with violent and extreme images, and we wonder where some kids get such cruel and violent ideas from.

A major improvement today, is the positive difference in children's stories. We were brought up on 'Hansel and Gretel', 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'The Seven Dwarves', and 'Punch and Judy'. Why we didn't have nightmares I will never know! Many children's stories these days have a much more positive and gentle message.

There is much to be said for getting 'one's hands in the soil'. As well as the lack of activity that video games, internet and movie watching brings, kids today are not often doing anything tactile – not getting their hands dirty by playing in the dirt. We were visiting New Zealand just a few months ago and saw a dear

little 2 year-old girl wearing what started off to be a spotless baby pink top and bottom. She had found a dirty puddle and, before long, she was covered in mud and was completely unaware of the amused crowd that had gathered around her.

Dare I suggest that at least three times a week parents turn off the TV, ban the video games and internet, and send kids outside to play? If the yard is not fenced, put your children in the car and take them to the park. Let them feel the bark on the trees and check out the bugs on the ground. Teach them about handling little creatures with care. Play a game with them. Bookstores have game books that you can use if you run out of ideas. Keep it simple and see what fun your children can have.

There are many more healthy ways to entertain your children than letting them sit and munch while painting with permanent markers on their memory canvases.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.