

The Ever-Present Media - What Can Be Done About It?

Of the many things that have a negative impact on the young child's well-being, such as lack of rhythm, overstimulation of the senses, and poor nutrition, it is easiest to see the harmful impact of media. When a child who normally watches television, is put into a television-free environment, one sees a significant change in the child within days. After a week or two, parents often say with amazement, "I never knew what a wonderful child I had. He seems so different now." As we seek practical ways to bring greater protection to children, we will need to develop a many-pronged approach, but one area which is ripe and ready to be developed is an active campaign against media for young children. There has been a turning point in the consciousness of Americans regarding media, so that most are now aware of at least some of its negative impact, particularly programs with violence.

One place to focus attention is National TV-Turnoff Week, which takes place each year in April, and this year it is estimated that 4 million people took part by turning off their television sets for one week. Some Waldorf Schools have been taking part in this program, and it would be wonderful if all or nearly all could undertake this with their families. It is the right moment to make a concerted effort against the media, and TV-Turnoff Week gives a framework in which to work. In case you find your will wavering regarding media, perhaps you can draw some inspiration from a most unlikely source - the star Madonna. In *Redbook*, January 1997, she described her attitude towards TV this way: "TV's poison," she says, "... to grow up and not have a sense of responsibility, to have everything taken care of, to be plopped in front of a television instead of being read to or talked to or encouraged to interact with other human beings is a huge mistake, and that's what happens to a lot of children."

When asked about her daughter Lourdes being exposed to Internet when she is a bit older, Madonna's reply was, "She's not going on-line. No!... If she wants to talk to people, she can invite them over. The people who like going on-line the best are people who can't sustain a relationship for more than five minutes."

We would love to hear from those who participated in TV-Turnoff Week this year or comparable programs. Is there someone at your school - a teacher or a parent - who could share their experiences or offer a bit of time to help mentor another school who wants to enter the program next year? Please let the Kindergarten Association know, and we will share the information in the fall.

Helpful Books:

Breaking the TV Habit by Joan Anderson Wilkins, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982.

How Television Poisons Children's Minds by Miles Everett, Miles Publications, Box 1073, Windsor, CA 95492. Also available through the Rudolf Steiner College Bookstore.

"*Home Together*" by Robert Hickman in *More Lifeways*, Hawthorn Press, 1997.