



Work Life Services Newsletter October 2023

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Monitor the Messages Children See and Hear

Many adults think kids have an easy life. In truth, today's child can face a lot of stress.

Confusing messages shoved at kids by television, radio, social media, computer games and the Web can make childhood downright hard, says Bill Womack, M.D., associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Washington School of Medicine.

"Most parents are not aware of how important it is to understand the role pop culture plays in their kids' lives," Dr. Womack says. "It can shape their ideas and values."

"Electronics is their world," adds Richard Selznick, Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. One result: young children often see sex and violence.

Dr. Selznick suggests you find out what your children hear and see. It is OK to limit their time with electronic media, he says. "Replace some of that time with physical activity, reading, family interaction and socializing with friends." Kids also need some time alone, adds Dr. Womack.

Both doctors stress communication. Ask your children about their music and television shows. "It might not seem as if you have a lot of influence on your teenager," says Dr. Womack. "But what you say to your child is very important, even when it seems as if it might not be."

Culture crash

Sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between signs of pop culture influence and drug or substance abuse. If you notice any of these signs in your children, you should investigate the cause:

- Dropping grades
- Constant negativity
- Ducking responsibility
- Curfew problems
- Drinking or drugs

- Constant moodiness
- A sudden shift in friends
- Growing discomfort around the family
- Loss of interest in useful activities such as school, sports, art or clubs

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