



PARENTS **PARKids** CHRONICLE

Growing in Grace at Grandview Park

CHILDREN AND THE MEDIA

BY GREG LONG

You may recall that about a year ago I shared the results of the "Parenting Survey" many of you took. Since then my desire has been to address some of the topics you suggested, and in the past year I have already included articles in this newsletter on a few of those topics (family devotions, arguing and complaining, ways to spend time with your children, children and work, etc.). This month we address another topic that came up: children and the media. (The following originally appeared in the May, 2004 edition of the Parents Chronicle.)

Should children be "sheltered"? Paul makes it clear that it is impossible, and even undesirable, to completely

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disassociate ourselves from ungodly people—to do so, we'd have to "leave this world" (1 Cor. 5:9-10)!

On the other hand, we all want our children to be protected from danger—that's why we shelter our

children from playing in the street. There are also certain things children should never experience, hear, or see. In fact, all Christians are called to be "wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (Rom. 16:19).

Children today are bombarded by TV, movies, the Internet, and video games, and no one can deny their impact.

For instance, the average American child watches four hours of TV per day. At that rate, the child will spend more hours watching TV (18,000) by the time he is 18 than going to school (13,000) (M. Chen, *The Smart Parents' Guide to Kids' TV*). By the time the average American child is six, she will spend more time watching TV than talking to her father in her lifetime (C.D. Devore, *Kids & Media Influence*).

Researchers have found that every hour preschoolers watch TV each day boosts their chances—by about 10%—of developing attention deficit problems later in life (*Pediatrics*, April 2004).

One parent remarked regarding the Internet: "You think your kid is safe because they are in your house in their own bedroom. Who can hurt them when you are guarding the front door? But (the

Internet) is a bigger opening than the front door" (www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7668788/).

You know, we don't "shelter" our engine from motor oil just because oil contains particles harmful to the engine. Instead, we use oil filters to filter out all that grit.

So, perhaps instead of "shelter", "filter" is a better word. We can't completely shelter our children from the world, but we allow the Bible to guide us as we filter out things that would harm our children.

David said, "I will lead a life of integrity in my own home. I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar" (Ps. 101:2-3). God's Word calls us to "think" about—to fill our minds with—things that are "true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, [and] praiseworthy" (Phil. 4:8).

At the bottom of this page I've shared some sobering statistics regarding children and the internet. On the back of this issue of the Parents Gazette there are some resources to help us filter media influences on our children.

Out of a national sample of 1,501 youth ages 10 to 17 who use the Internet regularly:

- **71% reported receiving messages online from someone they don't know.** When teens receive messages online from someone they don't know, 40% reported that they'll usually reply and chat with that person. Only 18% said they'll tell an adult.
- 45% have been asked for personal information by someone they don't know.
- 30% have considered meeting someone that they've only talked to online. 14% have actually met a person face-to-face they they've only spoken to over the Internet (9% of 13-15s; 22% of 16-17s).
- 11% had formed close relationships with people they did not know in person.
- 13% had received a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet in the last year.
- 4% had received an aggressive sexual solicitation — a solicitor who asked to meet them somewhere; called them on the telephone; sent them regular mail, money, or gifts.
- 9% were threatened or harassed.
- 4% said online solicitors asked them for nude or sexually explicit photographs of themselves.
- **34% had an unwanted exposure to pictures of naked people or people having sex in the last year.**
- In households with home Internet access, only 55% of parents said they did have filtering or blocking software on their computer at the time they were interviewed.
- 20% of teens ages 13-19 reported having sent a sexually suggestive image or message via cell phone.

See <http://www.netismartz.org/safety/statistics.htm>.

ARE YOU MONITORING YOUR CHILDREN'S INTERNET ACTIVITIES? _____

One school IT Director recommends the following:

1. Learn to use the computer, learn about the dangers of the Internet, communicate with your children, and communicate with other parents.
2. Get filtering software (if you have elementary aged kids) and logging software (if you have middle school and high school age kids). Filtering software allows or denies access to web sites, either based on lists of approved/blocked sites, or based on the content of the individual page. Logging software records web sites visited, chat conversations, words typed on the screen, and may take pictures of the screen. All families should consider purchasing filtering software, and families with teens should consider purchasing logging software. Logging is more important than filtering for older students because instant messaging and e-mail are where the action is. If your teen is online for any length of time, but you are not logging their IM conversations and e-mail, you really don't know who they are talking to and who is talking to them.
3. Do not let your kids access the Internet anywhere where there is not a filter or they are not monitored by a responsible adult.
4. If you have junior or high school aged kids, find out now if they have a blog or are a member of a social networking site (MySpace, Facebook) and see if what they have posted puts them in danger of being targeted/exploited by an Internet predator. Make them show you their page if they have one (if they balk... well, who is in charge? them or you?). Check and see who is linking to their site and check the pictures posted as well. (Many are posting pictures using their phones.) You might want to set up your own account and require your child to be your "friend" so you can monitor their use. Work out blogging and social networking website standards for your children which you can enforce and they can abide by.
5. If your kids have cell phones, find out what kinds of pictures and messages they are sending and receiving.

Filtering software:

- <http://www.afafilter.com>
- <http://www.cybersitter.com>
- <http://www.netnanny.com>
- <http://www.covenanteyes.com>

Logging:

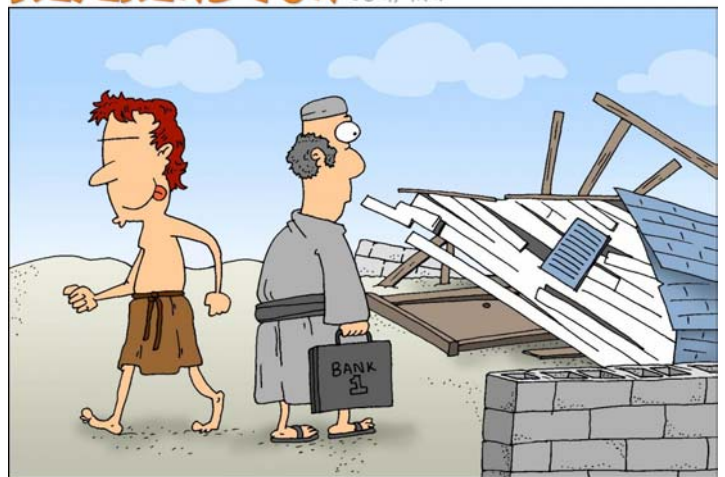
- <http://www.eblaster.com>
- <http://www.overspy.com>
- <http://www.covenanteyes.com> (accountability software)

READ MY QUIDS _____

HUH?

- *On a Japanese food processor:* Not to be used for the other use.
- *On a string of Christmas lights made in China:* For indoor or outdoor use only.
- *On a Swedish chainsaw:* Do not attempt to stop chainsaw with your hands.
- *On a clothing label:* Machine wash cold, gentle cycle, tumble dry low. Torch up with iron, if necessary.
- *On the "CycleAware" helmet-mounted mirror:* Remember: Objects in the mirror are actually behind you.
- *On a car lock that loops around both the clutch pedal and the steering wheel:* Warning--remove lock before driving.
- *On a packet of juggling balls:* This product contains small granules under three millimeters. Not suitable for children under the age of 14 years in Europe or 8 years in the USA.
- *Instructions on a packet of peanuts served on an internal flight in China (written in both English and Chinese):* Open packet and eat contents.
- *On a bathroom scale:* Wash and dry separately.
- *On an aspirin bottle:* Do not use product if bottle is opened.
- *In a brochure for Healthometer EVERWeigh bathroom scales:* The capacity of the scale is 330 pounds. To prevent damage, do not try to weigh more than 330 pounds.
From *The Bride of Anguished English* by Richard Lederer (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 149-150.

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...AND THEN THE FOOLISH MAN SIMPLY FORECLOSED AND WALKED AWAY

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