

YOUNG MEDIA AUSTRALIA

***Choosing Fright-free
Fight-free Viewing***
**Parent Information
Session**

Trading name of

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND THE MEDIA

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CHOOSING FRIGHT-FREE FIGHT-FREE VIEWING PARENT INFORMATION SESSION

The session plan that follows is intended for use by education and welfare professionals who work with parents of under seven year old children.

It is intended that the session plan be flexible enough for use as a presentation tool with colleagues, parent groups or individual parents. It is a guide only, and for maximum benefit the presenter will tailor the content, language, examples and discussion points to most effectively target the level of knowledge and special interests of participants.

As a preamble to the session plan itself, this document also includes:

- Length of Information Session
- Session Aim
- Equipment and materials needed to conduct information session.

There is an appendix at the end of the session plan with several YMA Fact Sheets that give more detail about this issue, and include further references. The Fact Sheets and references can be used as background reading for the presenter, or to hand out to participants where deemed appropriate.

Length of Information Session

Variable depending on audience and time constraints. Minimum 20 minutes, could run for one hour, if extensive time for discussion allowed.

Information Session Aims

The aims of the Information session are to:

- raise awareness of the problem with media violence
- raise awareness of some common impacts of media violence
- provide strategies for parents.

Equipment and materials needed

Equipment

DVD player and TV

Trainer materials

DVD and booklet package *Choosing Fright-free Fight-free Viewing*

Reducing Reel to Real Violence Launch DVD (optional)

Patron and Overview DVD (optional)

Choosing Fright-free Fight-free Viewing PowerPoint presentation, or same information on overhead transparency (OHT)

Background reading (set of YMA Fact Sheets including references):

- *Overview of the effects of violence in the media*
- *Short term and long term effects of violence in the media*
- *Violence: true or false?*
- *Scary stuff: what scares children?*
- *Watching the TV News*
- *Tragic world events in the media: an ages and stages approach to helping your children*
- *Nightmares.*

Materials

You will also need for each participant:

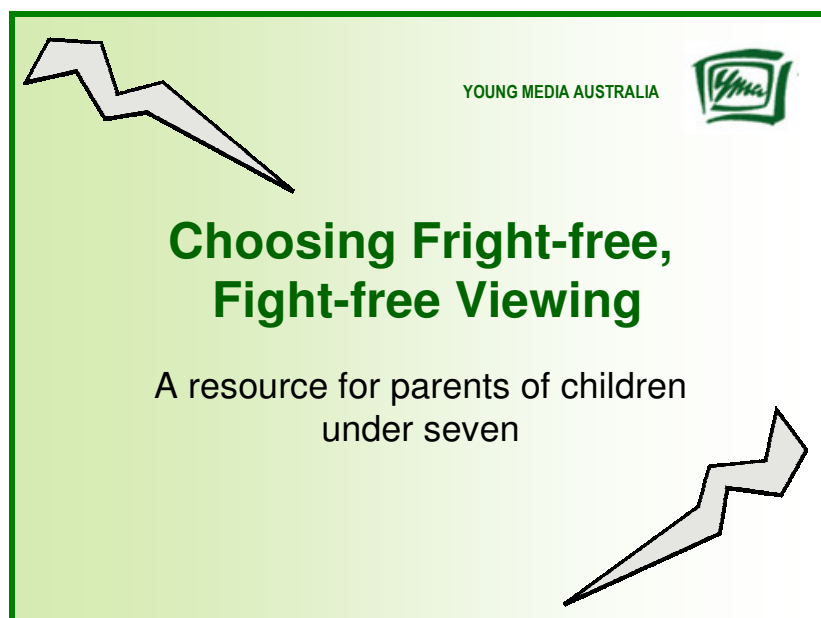
- A *Choosing Fright-free Fight-free Viewing* booklet
- Set of handouts—PowerPoint presentation printed in handout format
- Set of YMA Fact Sheets (if desired)

Session Plan— *Choosing Fright-free Fight-free Viewing*

Introduction

Note for presenter

Slide 1—General Fright-free, Fight-free slide



Introduce self and have trainees introduce themselves

Note for presenter

Tailor according to size of group and how well participants know each other, if at all. If a parent group suggest they include something about themselves, plus how many children they have, their gender and ages. If a professional group, organisation they are from, their role within the organisation and their interest in this topic.

- Program developed by community group Young Media Australia with funding under the Australian Government's National Community Crime Prevention Program.
- The package we will be looking at is designed to help parents of children under 7 years to avoid the unhealthy influence of media violence.

Note for presenter

If there is time you could show *Reducing Reel to Real Violence* launch DVD, and / or the 'fireside chat' contributed by Steve Biddulph to launch program

Context of Choosing Fright-free Fight-free Viewing package

For many years YMA has collected research about the impact of media violence on young children. Evidence is clear that media violence can frighten children, and it can also raise the risk that they will become more aggressive now or in later life. Nightmares, irrational fears, feeling threatened, bullying and fighting can sometimes be traced back to what kids are watching on TV or in movies and the computer games they are playing.

With these impacts in mind, YMA applied for and received funding from the Australian Government's National Community Crime Prevention Program for a project to minimise the impact of media violence on children under the age of seven.

A package was produced consisting of a DVD, a booklet, a section on the YMA website which lists about 200 non-violent media titles, an A3 poster and A4 flyer.

YMA considers that the best way to get this message to parents is through children's professionals. Thus, the accompanying session notes have been produced for use by educators and community workers.

Format of the session

- What the research says
- The problem with media violence (includes playing first half of DVD)
- What can parents do? (includes playing remainder of DVD)
- Other ideas for taking charge of media in the household.

What is the problem with media violence

- So what is the problem with media violence? Research is very clear that exposure to media violence increases the risk that children will:
 1. choose to use violence more often than they would have,
 2. become desensitised to the use of violence by others, more callous, so if they observe real life violence they might think its OK.
 3. overestimate how likely it is that someone will be violent towards them, making them either unnecessarily anxious or aggressive.
- Nightmares, irrational fears, feeling threatened, bullying and fighting can sometimes be traced back to what kids are watching on TV or in movies and the computer games they are playing.

Note for presenter

Use discussion questions to draw out participants' experience of situations where behaviour of child could possibly be linked to media to which they have been exposed.

If you are talking to a group of parents, be aware that some parents may not have thought about a connection between media violence and their child's behaviour before, so helping them to make the link at will help them take on board subsequent messages.

Discussion questions could include (but not limited to):

- Has anyone noticed a link between their child's behaviour and what they have watched on TV
- What about other children?
- Have you observed that some violence is more of a problem than others?
- Has your child been frightened by anything they have seen on TV or in movies?

Note for presenter

Show first 2mins 17 secs of DVD, from beginning to the first time the three Mums are seen chatting. Mum in the middle says "They see heroes from movies use violence to solve problems and they think real life to be the same." Stop before Meredith (in the yellow shirt) starts speaking. Use discussion questions to draw out from participants further thoughts on the problem with media violence.

Discussion questions could include (but not limited to):


- What do you think was contributing to David's nightmares and unwillingness to go to bed?
- What other problems did he have?
- What other problems did these mums think were caused by media violence?

Note for presenter

Try to draw out the main points covered in the booklet "*Fright-full, Fight-full media. Why worry?*" and summarised in Slide 2. When discussion winding up, display slide and use as a summary.

Note for presenter

Slide 2—What is the problem with media violence

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What is the problem with media violence?

Research shows that exposure to media violence increases the risk that children will:

- prefer to use violent solutions to problems
- become desensitised, more callous
- overestimate the likelihood that others will be violent towards them

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Explain:

- Biggest problem is attractive hero winning by using violence successfully
- Computer games reward those best at violence.
- TV News particularly problematic.
- Cartoons can be as much a problem as other media violence.
- Slapstick comedy can make them think that things don't actually hurt when in real life they do.

Note for presenter

Use discussion questions to talk about different ways children can be affected by media violence?. Ensure the following points are covered. (Use booklet as guide “*Fright-full, Fight-full media. Why worry?*”)

- Child becomes fearful
- More clingy, nightmares, doesn't want to go to bed, over-reliance on comfort object
- Child becomes more aggressive
- Play aggressively, don't try to solve problems other ways, laugh at someone getting hurt.


Why is media violence a problem

Discussion question:

- Why do you think media violence could be a problem for very young children

Note for presenter

Slide 3—Why is it a problem?

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Why is it a problem?

- **Children think about and see things differently**
- **Visual images stay with children not words**
- **Telling them it will be alright in the end won't help**

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What can parents do?

Note for presenter

Ask group what sort of things might help? After a few suggestions, play the remainder of the DVD.

Then lead general discussion about strategies shown, both for avoiding violent media, dealing with its effects and general media management tips. Ensure the following points are covered. (Use booklet as guide “*Creating a fright-free, fight-free media zone and Creating a family friendly media zone?*”)

Discussion question:

- What are some of the strategies this family tried to avoid violent media?

Note for presenter

Slides 4 & 5—*Creating a fright-free, fight-free media zone*



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Creating a Fright-free, Fight-free Zone

- Make good choices about what your children watch and play
- Don't buy the merchandise
- Watch with your children and discuss media violence

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Creating a Fright-free, Fight-free Zone

- Keep an eye out for possible impacts
- Deal with aggressive behaviour
- Find the best way to reassure a child who is anxious
- Don't feed fears

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Note for presenter

Slides 6 & 7—*Creating a family friendly media zone*



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Creating a family friendly media zone

- **Seize the day and the remote**
- **Choose carefully (YMA can help)**
- **Relocate—Take the TV out of your child's bedroom**
- **Participate—Make TV viewing one of many activities that you do as a family**

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Creating a family friendly media zone

- **Educate—Teach children how to plan their own TV viewing**
- **Debate—Talk about programs and ads seen on TV**
- **Communicate—Help to shape your media environment**

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Choosing Fight Free media (non-violent media list)

Note for presenter

If web access is available tour around the website talking about features. Or use the Patron and Overview DVD.

- booklet lists about 200 titles of non-violent media
- updated list available on YMA website

- list created by a team of three media reviewers (all qualified in child development) who reviewed hundreds of DVDs, TV programs and video games
- Many will be available from local public libraries, video stores, or for purchase.

Conclusion



- Encourage to think carefully about media violence and children
- There are a lot of violent products out there, but there are also many good products made for under seven year olds that will entertain them, without having to use violence
- Keep media viewing in balance with other activities
- And make sure what they do watch is good for them