

On Combat

by Lt. Col Dave Grossman (with Loren Christensen)

Chapter Seven

The evolution of combat and domestic violent crime

"The evidence is overwhelming. To argue against it is like arguing against gravity. American Psychological Association on the wealth of information linking media violence and teen violence."

- *The New York Times, May 9, 1999*

Through violent programming on television and in movies, and through interactive point-and-shoot video games, modern nations are indiscriminately introducing to their children the same weapons technology that major armies and law enforcement agencies around the world use to "turn off" the midbrain "safety catch" that Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall discovered in World War II.

In terms of combat evolution, this indiscriminate use of combat conditioning techniques on children is the moral equivalent of giving an assault weapon to every child in every industrialized nation in the world. If, hypothetically, this were done, the vast majority of children would almost certainly not kill anyone with their assault rifles; but if only a tiny percentage did, then the results would be tragic and unacceptable. But it is increasingly clear that this is not a hypothetical situation. Indiscriminate civilian application of combat conditioning techniques as entertainment has increasingly been identified as a key factor in the worldwide, skyrocketing violent crime rates outlined earlier. Thus, the influences of weapons technology can increasingly be observed on the streets of nations around the world.

Weapons lethality and murder rates

"God made man, but Mr. Colt made all men equal."

- *Anonymous*

The resistance to killing addressed in the last chapter also exists in peacetime, and weapons provide psychological and mechanical leverage to enable killing in peace as well as in war. The lethality of weapons, in peace and war, is a contest between a weapon's effectiveness (the state of technology trying to kill you) and medical effectiveness (the state of technology trying to save you). Thus the difference between murder and aggravated assault (trying to murder someone) is also largely a factor of the effectiveness of available weapons vs. the effectiveness of available medical lifesaving technology.

Throughout most of human history, the effectiveness of weapons available for domestic violence did not change significantly. The relative effectiveness of swords, axes, and blunt objects was basically unchanged, and killing (as an act of passion, rather than a premeditated act, such as poisoning or leaving a bomb) was only possible at close-range by stabbing, hacking, and beating. Bows were kept unstrung and, therefore, were not in a state of readiness for an act of passion. It required a premeditated act, plus training, plus physical strength to kill with a bow. Like bows, early muzzle loading gunpowder weapons were generally not kept in a state of readiness because once they were loaded, the humidity in the air could seep into the gunpowder, making the load unreliable. Killing with these weapons generally required time, training and premeditation.

Only in the late 19th century, with the widespread introduction of breechloading, brass cartridges, was a true act of passion enabled by state-of-the-art weapons technology. Powerful weapons that could be used with minimal strength and limited training could

now be kept loaded. This achievement in weapons effectiveness has been virtually unchanged since the 1860s. The early Colt revolver or a double-barrel shotgun was essentially as effective for close-range killing as any small arms available today.

Thus, the effectiveness of weapons available for domestic violence has remained relatively stable throughout most of human history. It made one, huge, quantum leap in the late 19th century, and then has not moved significantly, with the key exception of psychological conditioning methods designed specifically to enable killing.

Advances in medical lifesaving technology

"Without advances in trauma care, there would have been 45,000 to 70,000 homicides nationwide in each of the past five years instead of 15,000 to 20,000."

- *"A Hidden Remedy for Murder"*

(reporting new research on the impact of medical technology on murder rates)

By Michael S. Rosenwald, Boston Globe, 8/4/2002

Since 1957, the U.S. per capita aggravated assault rate (which is, essentially, the rate of attempted murder) has gone up nearly five-fold, while the per capita murder rate has less than doubled. The reason for this disparity is the vast progress in medical technology since 1957, to include everything from mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, to the national 911 emergency telephone system, to medical technology advances. Otherwise, murder would be going up at the same rate as attempted murder.

In 2002, Anthony Harris and a team of scholars from the University of Massachusetts and Harvard, published a landmark study in the journal, *Homicide Studies*, which concluded that medical technology advances since 1970 have prevented approximately three out of four murders. That is, if we had 1970s level medical technology, the murder rate would be three or four times higher than it is today.

Furthermore, it has been noted that a hypothetical wound that nine out of ten times would have killed a soldier in World War II, would have been survived nine out of ten times by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. This is due to the great leaps in battlefield evacuation and medical care technology between 1940 and 1970--and we have made even greater progress in the years since. Thus, it is probably a conservative statement to say that if today we had 1930s level evacuation notification and medical technology (no automobiles and telephones for most people, and no antibiotics), then we would have ten times the murder rate we currently do. That is, attempts to inflict bodily harm upon one another would result in death ten times more often.

Consider, for instance, some of the quantum leaps in medical technology across the years. Just a century ago, any puncture of the abdomen, skull or lungs created a high probability of death, as did any significant loss of blood (no transfusions) or most large wounds (no antibiotics or antiseptics), or most wounds requiring significant surgery (no anesthetics, resulting in death from surgery shock). Also, consider the increasing impact of police methodology and technology--fingerprints, communications, DNA matching, video surveillance, and others--in apprehending killers, preventing second offenses, and deterring crime.

Each of these technological developments, in their place and time, should have negated the effects of weapons evolution and saved the lives of victims of violence. When assessing violent crime across any length of time, we should ask what proportion of trauma patients survive today, and what proportion of those would have died if they had 1940-level technology (no penicillin), 1930-level technology (no antibiotics), 1870-level technology (no antiseptics), 1840-level technology (no anesthetics), or 1600-level technology (no doctors, no anatomy).

The medical technology continues to move forward, saving ever more lives every year. In an article entitled "New Battlefield techniques," NY Times reporter Gina Kolata interviewed Dr. Paul K. Carlton Jr., the recently retired surgeon general of the Air Force. He told of field surgeons who carry everything needed in a backpack, including "sonogram machines the size of cassette recorders, and devices the size of a PDA that can do a complete laboratory analysis on a drop of blood."

Dr. Carlton used the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan as an example of what is now possible.

Of 250 seriously injured patients, only one died. "It was the lowest died-of-wounds rate in the history of war," he said.

One man suffered a catastrophic wound to his rectum, prostate, anus and bladder. The ghastly injury plunged him into shock immediately, but one of the backpack surgical teams got to him right away and did a damage control surgery. Then, he was put on an airplane equipped as a critical care unit and flown a few thousand miles to another hospital for another surgery to stabilize him. Then he was flown to Germany for reconstructive surgery.

" He's home with his family now," Dr. Carlton said. In any other war, he added, "he would have been dead."

A little over a year later, in the invasion of Iraq, new bandages with a powerful clotting agent that can stop arterial bleeding were introduced, providing yet another major leap forward in lifesaving medical technology. That same technology is also holding down the murder rate back home.

Landmarks in the Evolution of Medical Lifesaving

- c.1690: French army institutes first scientific, systematic approach to surgery
- c.1840: Introduction of anesthesia overcomes surgical shock
- c.1840: Introduction in Hungary of washing hands and instruments in chlorinated lime solution reduces mortality due to "childbed fever" from 9.9% to .85%
- c.1860: Introduction by Lister of carbolic acid as germicide reduced mortality rate after major operations from 45% to 15%
- c.1880: Widespread acceptance and adaptation of germicides
- c.1930: Sulfa drugs
- c.1940: Penicillin discovered
- c.1945: Penicillin in general use, and ever-increasing explosion of antibiotics thereafter
- c.1960: Penicillin synthesized on a large scale
- c.1970: CPR introduced on wide scale
- c.1990: 911 centralized emergency response systems introduced in U.S. on wide scale
- c.2002: Harris, et al., landmark study by U.Mass and Harvard, published in the journal Homicide Studies concludes that med tech advances since 1970 have prevented approximately three-out-of-four murders

(Note: Dates generally represent century or decade of major, large-scale introduction)

Increases in worldwide violent crime

"I think about your work on the effects of violent pop culture when the news tells us of dictators like Saddam and Kim Jong-Il, who are addicted to American "action" movies. One wonders whether the pernicious effects of our "culture of violence" may be extending

beyond our borders!

Our toxic products tend to sink to the bottom of humanity, where they will do the worst harm, in our society or elsewhere in the world. The American electronic media has much to answer for."

*- Asher Abrams, Gulf War veteran
Correspondence to Col. Grossman*

Thus, instead of murder, we have to assess attempted murder, aggravated assault or some other consistently defined violent attack as an indicator of violent crime, and by this measure the increase is staggering. The study by Anthony Harris, mentioned above, concluded that in the U.S. the aggravated assault rate reported in the FBI Annual Crime Report is a highly accurate reflection of the problem in the U.S. (This study and many others, however, have concluded that the National Crime Victimization Survey is increasingly inaccurate.)

Consider the following per capita crime rates, as reported by each nation to InterPol. (The U.S. data is from the FBI Annual Crime Report, and the Canadian data if from their Centre for Justice.)

U.S., 1957-00 5x

Canada 1962-00 4x

Norway/Greece 1977-99 5x

Australia/New Zealand 1977-99 4x

Sweden/Austria/France 1977-99 3x

8 other European nations* 1977-99 2x

(*Belgium, Denmark, England-Wales, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Scotland, and Switzerland.)

The increase in violent crime in all these nations occurred during a period when medical and law enforcement technology should have brought murder and crime rates down. Similar increases have been noted in India, Latin America and Japan, and all of these nations have identified media violence as a significant new factor that is contributing to this problem. As we shall see, the same factors that caused a revolution in combat are also causing an explosion of violent crime at home.

Military conditioning as entertainment for children

"What boots it at one gate to make defense, And at another to let in the foe?"

- Milton Samson Agonistes

Television, movie and video game violence teaches kids to kill by using the same mechanisms of classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning that is employed by modern soldiers, but without the safeguards of discipline and character development. Since this subject has already been addressed extensively in *On Killing and Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill*, and the impact of operant conditioning in violent video games has been updated in this book, I will not address these topics any further here. One aspect of this problem that should be addressed here is the safety catch used to prevent soldiers from unlawful or unauthorized killing.

I was called as an expert witness and consultant in the case of Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing. The defense contacted me first, explaining that they wanted me to tell the jury how McVeigh's military experience and his Gulf War training had turned him into a killer. I told them that I could not do it. I was still on active duty then, and they argued that the army could not say no. They had a court order signed by the judge in that case, authorizing me \$150 an hour to serve as an expert witness. They had the money to pay me, and the authority to make me, but they did not have the facts on their side.

I told them that the reason I could not and would not do it was because they were wrong about how they perceived McVeigh's military experience. The truth was just the opposite, in that the returning veteran is a superior member of society and is less likely to use his skills inappropriately than is a non-veteran of the same age and same sex. Again they said they were willing to pay me \$150 an hour, but again I said no. Then they told me something that I found to be very interesting. They said, "You don't usually admit this as a defense attorney, but we know that our client is guilty and our primary concern is to prevent the death penalty, and Timothy McVeigh might die if you don't help with his defense." Again I said no...with a clear conscience.

Six months later the prosecution got wind of which way the defense was going and quickly secured me as a consultant, on standby as an expert witness, by government order. Which meant they never paid me a nickel. I showed them data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which demonstrated that our returning veterans from World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War were less likely to be incarcerated than non-veterans of the same age and the same sex. While those who learned leadership, logistics and maintenance skills returned home and put their learning to good use in the civilian world, those soldiers who learned only to kill did not.

Now, this does not mean that our veterans do not have problems. The data simply shows that in each of these wars we gave hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of men weeks, months and years of training on how to kill. Then we sent them to distant lands to fight for us, sometimes for years on end, and when they came home they were less likely to use their deadly skill than non-veterans of the same age and the same sex. The finest killers who ever walked the face of this earth were the boys who came home from World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam, and yet they were less likely to use those skills than a non-veteran. The reason is clear: Combined with learning to kill, they acquired a steely, warrior discipline--and that is the safeguard.

Across a hundred centuries, the fearsome forge of combat has forced the military to evolve the mechanisms to enable killing. Any nation that does not stay abreast of this dreadful evolution will be defeated and conquered. In that same fearsome forge, with the same tragic consequences of failure, the military has learned how to put safeguards on the returning warrior to insure that he is not a threat to the nation that sent him into battle. Any nation that does not do so, might also face defeat and conquest from its own soldiers.

Discipline is the safeguard in a warrior's life. It is the difference between the sheepdog and the wolf. The military does not dress young troops in uniforms, shave their heads and make them march just for the fun of it. They do these things because if the young warrior cannot submit his will to authority about inconsequential things, such as the way he dresses and how he wears his hair, then he cannot be trusted to submit his will to authority for important things, such as employing deadly force only when a situation calls for it, no matter how bad the provocation. At least while the trainee is in the police academy or in military basic training, there is a need for discipline and submission to authority, and that is the safeguard.

Say you are a law enforcement officer or a soldier, and you go to a firing range and shoot at the wrong time or point your weapon in the wrong direction. Or, worse yet, you shoot in the wrong direction. What do you think would happen? A whole world of hurt would come down on your head! The idea of shooting in the wrong direction or at the wrong time is beyond comprehension in the minds of a trained warrior. That is the discipline that the warrior lives by. That is the safeguard.

Media violence and the "Classroom Avenger" profile

A former lieutenant colonel and psychologist, Professor David Grossman, has said that

these games teach young people to kill with all the precision of a military training program, but none of the character training that goes along with it. For children who get the right training at home and who have the ability to distinguish between real and unreal consequences, they're still games. But for children who are especially vulnerable to the lure of violence, they can be far more.

- President Clinton, in his national address in the aftermath of the Columbine school massacre

Psychologist and FBI consultant, Dr. James McGee has conducted the most definitive profile of the school shooters, using extensive data collected from 17 cases. Dr. McGee calls these kids, "Classroom Avengers," and his superb research has been extensively used by local, federal and international law enforcement organizations.

There are many myths about these killers. For example, some individuals claim they were all on Ritalin or Prozac, which is wrong. The truth is that very few, if any, of these school shooters was on these drugs when they committed their crimes. Dr. McGee says there is a lot of "bad" info out there, and even most of the media reports were wrong, based on rumor that cannot be refuted because the reporters do not have access to the juvenile offenders' medical records. McGee had access to the FBI data in these cases, and he believes that one or possibly two of the school shooters was had been on antidepressants and one or two had been on Ritalin, but in most of cases they had been taken off those medications prior to committing their crimes. It may be useful to ask ourselves how many kids (and how many adults) would have committed violent crimes if they were not on powerful, modern antidepressants.

Very few, if any, of the school shooters were on medication, but according to the FBI, all of these Classroom Avengers did have something in common: All of them had refused to participate in any disciplined activity or sport, and all of them were obsessed with media violence.

Consider these facts. When they committed their crimes:

-None of the school shooters was in varsity sports.

-None of them had trained extensively in the strict discipline of a martial art. (One had earned a yellow belt, the lowest rank which took only a few weeks, and after dabbling briefly he dropped out.)

-None of the school killers was in Junior ROTC.

-None of them was a competitive shooter, a very demanding sport with draconian punishments if you fire at the wrong time or in the wrong direction.

-None of the school killers had a hunting license, another activity that requires strict discipline and adherence to the law. (Did you know that if you shoot at a deer from your car, you would lose your car, your gun, your money, and your hunting license? For all you golfers, what would happen if the first time you cheated, they took your clubs and your cart, and banned you from golfing again? There wouldn't be any golfers left! Such draconian discipline and severe punishment is present in hunting because the activity involves deadly weapons, and hunters wouldn't have it any other way.)

-None of them had been avid paintball players, a demanding sport that requires discipline, and one in which the player can get hurt. (You may note that paintball does provide military quality conditioned reflexes and combat inoculation, but no one is attacking this sport, nor should they. The entire medical community--AMA, APA, American Academy of Pediatrics, and many others--has warned us about the health impact of violent video games, but not one scholarly study has indicated that paintball is harmful for kids. Again, discipline seems to be the safeguard.)

The video game industry is particularly incensed by this school shooter profile, and have gone to extreme levels to provide some exceptions. For example, they claim that the Columbine killers were reported to have gone bowling. Which is a pretty pathetic

example, and I believe it simply proves the point if this is the best they can come up with. The primary point to remember is that it is not me saying this about these killers. It is the FBI.

(It should be mentioned that there was one disciplined activity in which several of the school shooters did participate (although several of them later dropped out), and that was band. But no one is sure what to make of that. I am not taking a cheap shot at band, an excellent activity in which all three of my sons participated. This is a puzzle that many good people have examined with sincere concern, developing theories involving such factors as the absence of discipline in some band programs, possible bullying in the band environment, and the non-athletic nature of this activity.)

With a few minor exceptions, none of the school shooters were willing to participate in disciplined, structured, adult led activities, but all of them were infatuated with media violence. In the end, the profile of the school killer is that of a sad, pathetic little kid who is obsessed with violent movies, TV, and/or video games, but who will not participate in an activity in which he might be hurt or have to submit to discipline.

I am not necessarily recommending any of these activities for children, nor am I condemning them. But I am joining our medical community in stating that, from the perspective of my area of expertise in enabling killing in combat, the impact of violent TV, movies, and (most especially) video games on kids should be condemned. Like the Al-Qaida terrorist, or the kamikaze pilot, or the Nazi SS, these kids have immersed themselves in a sick culture, and they have convinced themselves that what they are doing is good, appropriate and necessary. The school shooters are all products of our sick culture, and those who immerse themselves in the sickest part of our sick culture have potential to be very sick indeed.

Warrior training: violence can be good and it can be needed

"To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace."

- George Washington

First annual address to Congress, 1790

While discipline is the safeguard in a warrior's life, the other half of the equation is violence. When Private Grossman stepped off the bus in Ft. Ord, California, in 1974, a man named Drill Sergeant Garito was there waiting for me. I still have nightmares about that man upon occasion. The Stockholm Syndrome set in, I identified with my captor, and he convinced me, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that violence can be good.

In the law enforcement and military environment, can violence be a good thing? Yes, because it is often the only thing that will save your life. When done right, it is honored above all else. In the military, every barracks, range, street, weapon system, and ship is named after military heroes who killed lots of people, and young soldiers know that if they perform the same, they too will be famous.

My co-author tells about a man who took a woman hostage in her mobile home. At one point he inserted the barrel of a shotgun into her vagina and duct taped it into place. When negotiations failed and the man's agitated threats to kill the woman reached a peak, a police sharpshooter fired through the window, disintegrating the man's head. Was violence the solution in this situation? Was violence a good thing? Yes, because today an innocent victim is alive as a result of that action.

Drill Sergeant Garito convinced Private Grossman that violence was good and that violence was needed because there were people out there who would hurt me--and he was at the top of the list. When a soldier or police officer is convinced that violence is

good and needed, when he is convinced deep in his gut that violence is valued and that there are people who need it used on them, then the foundation is established for that person to be a killer. When we add the ingredient of discipline with the capability of violence, we create a warrior.

The media's influence: violent kids without discipline

"Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm."

- Shakespeare
King Henry VI

What if we convinced our children when they were two, three or four years old that violence was good and needed, but we did not teach them discipline? Then we would have created killers, little homegrown sociopaths, as in Moses Lake, Bethel, Pearl, Paducah, Jonesboro, Springfield, Littleton, Taber (Canada), Edinborough, Conyers, Ft. Gibson, Santee, San Diego, and Erfurt (Germany).

We have had a five-fold increase in per capita violent crime in America, Norway and Greece; and a four-fold increase in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Violent crime has tripled in Sweden, Austria and France, and doubled in eight other European nations. Although there are many factors influencing this, let's examine one new ingredient in the equation: the media.

Until children are six or seven years old, they have great difficulty differentiating between fantasy and reality. That is why we do not use them as witnesses in court. We do not send people to prison on the word of a five-year-old, since kids at that age are so malleable and suggestible. When children between two and six years of age see someone on television getting shot, stabbed, brutalized, degraded, and murdered, those images are real to them, as real as anything in their young lives.

Wise men understood this over 2,000 years ago. Socrates wrote, in *The Republic*:
What is this education to be, then? Perhaps we shall hardly invent a system better than the one which long experience has worked out, with its two branches for the cultivation of the mind and the body. And I suppose we shall begin with the mind, before we start physical training.

And the beginning, as you know, is always the most important part, especially in dealing with anything young and tender. That is the time when the character is being molded and easily takes any impress one may wish to stamp on it.

Then shall we simply allow our children to listen to any stories that anyone happens to make up, and so receive into their minds ideas often the very opposite of those we shall think they ought to have when they are grown up?

No, certainly not.

It seems, then, our first business will be to supervise the making of fables and legends, rejecting all which are unsatisfactory; and we shall induce nurses and mothers to tell their children only those which we have approved, and to think more of molding their souls with these stories ... Most of the stories now in use must be discarded.

The worst of all faults, especially if the story is ugly and immoral as well as false – misrepresenting the nature of gods and heroes.

A child cannot distinguish the allegorical sense from the literal, and the ideas he takes in at that age are likely to become indelibly fixed; hence the great importance of seeing that the first stories he hears shall be designed to produce the best possible effect on his

character.

Think of the impact of violent media as a boot camp for kids, their own little basic training. As they sit before the tube, hour after hour, they learn that violence is good and violence is needed. They see it, experience it--and they believe it. They are inundated with the violence factor, but they never get the discipline. Now, if it troubles you that our young soldiers have to go through a process of traumatization and brutalization, you should be infinitely more troubled that we are doing the same thing indiscriminately to our children without the safeguards of discipline.

Police officers see horrible things every day: car accidents, gunshot victims, suicide victims, fights, violent death, and suffering. Soldiers in combat see unconscionable acts of man's inhumanity to man. Would you want your child to see these things? No. Then why would you let them see it on television? Understand that what they see is real to them, and by watching all the blood, gore and revenge, they learn that that is the way the world works.

I was once on a national radio talk show discussing the effects of violent media on kids. A man called in to say that he agreed that it is a violent world and that he wanted his son to be able to function in such a world. To "help" his boy do so, he would take him to see violent movies every chance he got. In fact, the man had just taken him to see Saving Private Ryan, a movie that is probably the most realistic depiction of the horror of combat that has ever been put on film. I asked the age of his son. "Six," the man said.

Six! Maybe a mature teenager seeing that extraordinarily violent movie with his father would be appropriate, but a six-year-old? Never. I said, "Brother, do you understand that for a six-year-old that movie was real? Do you understand that the real soldiers depicted in that movie traveled to a distant land and laid their lives down in the sand by the thousands to prevent the horrors of war from coming to American children? If those young warriors who died on that beach could see you intentionally inflicting the horror of that beach upon your six-year-old son, they would roll over in their graves."

Our job is to protect our children, not rape their innocence when they are six. We can no more share our favorite violent movie (or TV show or video game) with our kids than we can share sex with them.

The effects of violent media on children: fear, bullying and murder

"The oldest sins the newest kind of ways."

- Shakespeare

King Henry IV

Most children who are traumatized and brutalized through their exposure to violent media do not become violent, but they do become depressed and fearful. If you were in the service or are in law enforcement, you no doubt remember people who were washed out of basic training or the academy. These people wanted to be there, but the rigid discipline and the intense violence was just too much for them, and they became depressed and dropped out. Likewise, when two-, three-, four- and five-year-old children are exposed to this environment via media's realistic depictions of death and mayhem, it becomes too much for them and most of them just become depressed and fearful. They "drop out" of this "boot camp" violentization process, but they are forever scarred by their experience.

Most of those who do become violent will not become criminals, they will become bullies. Bullying is the law of the jungle. The alpha male in every tribe, in every herd and in every flock is a bully, which means he gets whatever he wants. In every environment on earth, being a bully is a perfectly adaptive, appropriate and desirable behavior--except in a civilization. In a civilization we must punish and prevent bullying.

Through their early exposure to bloody violence, we convince our youngest children that it is a dark, hard, brutal and desperate jungle out there and, as a result, most of them become victims and others become bullies. Have we got a problem with bullying in our schools? Yes, numerous studies demonstrate this fact, and it is a situation that is getting worse.

It is not just one big kid hassling one little kid, now it is gangs of bullies pecking away at one poor little kid. If you have been around chickens, you know there is always one chicken being pecked by the others, sometimes pecked to death. If you pull the victim chicken out and eat it for dinner (not much of a save from the chicken's standpoint), the remaining chickens will simply choose another to fill that one's place. The same thing is happening in our schools.

Not every child is being bullied. Some children are blessed with wonderful teachers who make school a positive environment that they look forward to. And others have such a toxic environment at home that school is an escape. For many kids, however, school has become a corrosive, toxic, fearful environment.

The Secret Service says that in 1998 we had 35 murders in American schools, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. Remember, medical technology is saving more and more lives every year. Besides the 35 deaths, there were around 257,000 serious injuries caused by violence in our schools that year. How many kids have been killed or seriously injured by school fires in the last 10 years? None. But a quarter of a million were seriously injured by school violence in 1998 alone.

Then there were nearly one million thefts and larcenies in those same months. Many of the kids who lost their bikes, skateboards, lunch money, and backpacks were victims of bullies, alpha males who committed criminal acts, using intimidation and physical force to take what they want. There were 1,500,000 reports of fighting. If you have not been a kid for a while, you should know that fighting is far different today than it has ever been. It is far more brutal and more likely to involve weapons.

My co-author investigated a case where a Vietnamese gang member was angered because another kid "looked at him hard" (meaning the kid glared) as they passed each other in the hall. The gang member skipped his next class and went to a nearby Vietnamese grocery where he bought a meat cleaver. He returned to the school, found the kid who had glared at him, and hacked a large wedge out of the boy's shoulder. As the other kids screamed and panicked, the gang member walked calmly back to store, cleaning the blood and bone chips from the blade on the way, and got a refund, telling the clerk he decided he did not need the cleaver anymore.

In the "good ol' days," it was always boys fighting boys, but about 20 years ago it began to change, with girls fighting girls and, in the last 10 years, girls fighting boys. To the boys' chagrin, the girls are winning. This is because the average girl can kick a boy's tail in junior high, since boys and girls develop at different rates. When they get into high school, though, and the boys have had a developmental spurt, they are fighting the girls and administering a degree of violence and brutality upon them like nothing we have seen before.

There is also a different nature to the ritualistic fight-after-school. Today, it is epidemic and extraordinarily violent. Statistics show 18 million incidents of bullying. Do we have a moral obligation to prevent this? Of course! Just as firefighters have an obligation to prevent fires, law enforcement has an obligation to prevent bullying and violence in the schools.

While there have always been bullies and bullying, there is something new going on, something fueling the fire. The American Academy of Pediatrics says that violence is a learned skill, and it is learned most pervasively through violence in the family and

through--what is the new and toxic addition--violence in the media. The result: bullying and cruelty. What are television programs, violent video games and movies teaching kids about how to respond when being bullied? Payback. It is no longer just fighting back, now it is payback in the extreme. Remember the old television programs and old movies where the sheriff faced down the lynch mob? He would tell them that there is going to be justice in the town, and then he sent them home in shame. Sadly, those old themes are gone.

Hollywood voluntarily submitted to a written code, beginning in 1930 and continuing through 1968 when the MPAA rating system was set up. This "Hays Code" said that,

...the MORAL IMPORTANCE of entertainment is something which has been universally recognized. It enters intimately into the lives of men and women and affects them closely; it occupies their minds and affections during leisure hours; and ultimately touches the whole of their lives. A man may be judged by his standard of entertainment as easily as by the standard of his work.

Movies like *Casablanca* and *Gone With The Wind* were made under a code that a criminal was not rewarded, violent behavior and lawlessness was always punished, and the criminal was never the hero. Well, that code went away in the late 1960s and then we got *Dirty Harry*, Charles Bronson in the *Death Wish* series, and Richard Roundtree in *Shaft*.

Today, there is a new type of hero in action, adventure and horror movies, in plots that almost always play out the same way. They begin with horrific death and destruction so vivid, so in-your-face that audiences, kids included, are virtual witnesses to bloody celluloid realism. Then the audience sits through the rest of the movie as the hero desperately seeks vengeance. Toward the end, it is often the bad guys who are shown playing by the rules, as the hero turns into an avenger, violating codes of ethics and breaking laws along the way. Anthropologists and sociologists say there is great power in the stories we tell ourselves, so when we tell tales of vengeance, we are going to reap avengers.

Say we have a kid being bullied. He feels helpless and powerless to fight back. He is not into sports, martial arts or any activity other than playing video games. He associates only with friends who feel the same way he does. He is, in fact, exactly like all the school killers who shared one common trait: an obsession with media violence. Like all the others, this kid becomes convinced that the right response is anger followed by revenge. What began as an outrageous act of bullying, soon begets an even more outrageous act of revenge. It is an all too common vicious cycle that is happening inside our kids' schools right now.

The 15-year phenomena: a generation later, you pay the price

"A boy's will is the wind's will, And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."
- Longfellow

Most kids inflicted with media violence do not become killers, they just become depressed and fearful. Those who do become violent turn into bullies. Still, enough kids do become killers that we now have this alarming statistic: Anywhere in North America where television has appeared, the murder rate doubles 15 years later. This has happened in South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, and Japan, but it has been best measured in North America. Television appeared first on the East Coast and then on the West Coast. It appeared first in the cities, then later in the countryside. It appeared first in the white community and then later in the African-American community. We got it first in America, and then later in Canada. No matter where it appeared, 15 years later the murder rate at least doubled. Why 15? That is how long it takes kids to grow up. We exposed them to violent media

between the ages of two and six, which convinced them that the world is a dark and violent place, and then 15 years later, when they are teenagers or in their early 20s, we reap what we sowed.

The murder rate in America today is six per 100,000 per year. If six more out of 100,000 people were convinced to kill, the murder rate would double. Remember, murder is just the tip of the iceberg because for every homicide there are tens of thousands of injurious assaults, hundreds of thousands of thefts, millions of acts of bullying, and untold millions who live their life in fear.

The June 10, 1992, issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association, the world's most prestigious medical journal, reported that violence depicted on television "caused" (caused is a powerful scientific word) a subsequent doubling of the homicide rate in America 15 years later. The AMA is so convinced of the impact of violent media, that they said if television technology had never been developed in the United States (or if we had kept our kids away from it) there would today be 10,000 fewer homicides each year, 70,000 fewer rapes and 700,000 fewer injurious assaults.

I was on Meet the Press with Surgeon General David Satcher two weeks after the Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado. The moderator, Tim Russert, held up my book Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill and asked the Surgeon General who could possibly deny, in light of what happened at Columbine, that we are indeed teaching our kids to kill. During the panel discussion, the Surgeon General was asked if he could do a report on the link between media violence and violence in our society, and give us a warning just as his office did about tobacco. He said that he could do another report, but first we should read the 1972 Surgeon General's Report, which had already established the link. He said we could also read the report by former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop that shows a link between media violence and violence in our society. "We don't need more research," he said. "We need action."

The media cover-up: Censoring news that will make them lose money

"When organizations representing all of America's doctors, all her psychiatrists, and millions of parents, call upon an industry to change (i.e., reduce violence on the public airwaves), and then that industry does exactly the opposite (i.e., increases the violence), this can be viewed as nothing short of complete and total contempt for the people of the United States."

- Dave Grossman & Gloria DeGaetano
Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill

No doubt you know that the Surgeon General says that tobacco can cause cancer. Most people, though, are unaware that he has also said that media violence can cause real violence in our society. It is not surprising why so few people have heard of this when you consider that we count on the media for our information. If you were to ask the tobacco industry about the link between tobacco and cancer, they would most likely lie. Some might even believe their lies, but that does not change the fact that what they tell us is untrue. In the recent past, the tobacco industry has presented a stooge researcher and a tamed scientist on a leash to say that tobacco does not cause cancer, and that the AMA and the Surgeon General do not know what they are talking about. What was the one way you could tell when the tobacco industry was lying? Their lips were moving.

So, if you ask the television industry about the health impact of their product, what do you think they would do? They would move their lips. They would bring out their stooge researcher and their tame scientist on a leash, all to say that there is no link between violent media and violence in America. The American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association (APA), the Surgeon General, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) all cry from the mountain about the grave harm being done, but the

media systematically censors their cries. The reason is clear: They are just another industry, like the tobacco industry that refuses to give out information that will cut its own throats.

The American Family Association (AFA) has done good work organizing people to boycott various elements of the media. They publish a monthly bulletin in which they outline what they consider to be the worst television programs, along with addresses and phone numbers of the sponsors. Not surprisingly, the media censors the information about these boycotts. Here is an example.

In early 2000, the Southern Baptist Church, which is the largest protestant denomination in the United States, representing millions of people, along with several other denominations, joined together to boycott Disney, primarily because of the violent, sexually explicit movies that they produce under another name. For several years Disney took quite a beating and their family movies consistently flopped, so the boycott was somewhat effective. But after the initial media report on the boycott there was never a follow-up story. There were plenty of other news and business articles about Disney's problems, but not one mentioned that there was an effective, ongoing boycott of Walt Disney by the nation's largest protestant denomination. Such boycotts are effective, but they are tough to get off the ground because the media refuses to give them coverage.

Here is another example of this censorship (can it really be called anything but that?). In July of 2000, there was a bipartisan, bicameral congressional conference at which the AMA, the APA, the AAP, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry-- those are all of our doctors and all our pediatricians--made a joint statement to congress. They reported that the media is a causal factor of violence in our society, and violent video games are particularly dangerous. If you are like most people, you did not hear about that, though you probably did hear about the deadly problems with Firestone tires.

It is clear what is going on. On one hand everyone has heard and read that Firestone tires may have been a causal factor in approximately 250 deaths across several years (it has not been proven as of this writing). On the other hand, the Journal of the American Medical Association says that the product presented by the media is a key, causal factor in 10,000 murders a year, yet no one hears a word about that. The reason is clear: We do not have a free press. When it comes to the media's liability, negligence and culpability, the information is systematically censored.

I was on the now defunct television program Politically Incorrect, sharing the stage with three Hollywood media types. Their big argument was this: "Well, people buy it, so we sell it." They admitted that it might hurt people, but their only defense was to blame the buyer. I told them that was "drug dealer logic," except that most drug dealers do not sell their product to little children.

The media also argues that it is the parent's job to control what kids watch. Do not regulate our product, they say, because it is the parent's job to monitor their children. Well, what if the pornography industry tried that? We know that the First Amendment protects adults to view porn, but what if a six-year-old child walked into a porn shop with a \$10 bill, and the proprietor shrugged and rented him a video, arguing that it is the parent's job to monitor what he watches? What if the gun industry tried this? They could argue, "We're protected by the Second Amendment. Don't you dare regulate children's access to guns; that is the parent's job." What if the automobile industry used this argument, or the alcohol, or tobacco industries tried it? What if the child abuser tried that line? "I know that little girl was only eight, it's the parent's job to keep her away from me."

It is indeed the parent's job to protect their kids from guns, alcohol, tobacco,

pornography, sex, drugs, and cars, and we have laws that help them do that. So why are parents being left to their own devices when it comes to violent media? The information exists about its toxicity, but the media uses their control over the public airwaves to censor it. Sadly, this censorship is impacting us at the cost of 10,000 murders a year.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says that of all the causes of violent crime in American, media violence is "the single most remediable factor." Just as there are many causal factors to, say, heart disease, there are also many casual factors to violent crime in our country. However, out of all the factors that influence it, media violence is the single most remediable.

In that joint statement made to the U.S. Congress by the AMA, the APA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, they said: "Well over 1,000 studies point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children."

Until 2001, no one had demonstrated that when media violence is removed from the lives of children that their violent behavior goes down. That is, until the Stanford Study.

The Stanford Study: The light at the end of the tunnel

"Long is the way, And hard, that out of hell leads up to light."

- Milton

Paradise Lost

In the spring of 2001, Stanford University released a landmark study that showed less television equals less violence. The study found a 50 percent decrease in verbal aggression and a 40 percent decrease in physical aggression, just by encouraging kids to turn off their televisions and video games. Thomas N. Robinson, an assistant professor of medicine at Stanford and the study's lead author, said, "What this says is there is something you can do in a practical way, in a real-world setting, and see the effects."

The Stanford data was gathered at two similar San Jose elementary schools. Researchers first carefully assessed the baseline level of aggressive behavior in 192 third- and fourth-graders through playground observations and interviews. They then introduced a curriculum at one school meant to encourage children to cut back on video games and watch less television. Two-thirds of the pupils agreed to participate in an initial, 10-day effort to turn off their televisions, which was monitored by slips signed by parents. Over half of them limited their television watching to less than seven hours per week during the next 20 weeks.

After 20 weeks, the researchers found a 40 percent reduction in physical aggression, and a 50 percent reduction in the level of verbal aggression in the overall population at the experimental school, compared with the other that did not follow the curriculum. The children who were the most aggressive at the outset of the study had the most to gain, and did in fact show the greatest benefit. The researchers also noted a significant reduction in obesity and overeating problems in the school where the curriculum was introduced.

Remember, according to the U.S. Secret Service, in 1998 alone there were 35 kids murdered in acts of school violence and a quarter of a million "seriously injured." However, it has been many years since a single child has been killed or seriously injured by school fire. This means that the likelihood of your child being killed or injured by school violence is thousands of times greater than the probability of them being killed or injured in a school fire. Thus, we have the moral obligation to spend at least as much time and energy on school violence as we do on school fires. Every school has sprinklers, alarms, drills, and extinguishers in preparation for fires, so why don't we prepare for what

is killing our kids?

If we had a quarter of a million kids seriously injured by school fire every year, and we knew that fire drills would reduce that by 40 percent, would we have a moral obligation to conduct fire drills? You bet. So, if we have a quarter of a million kids a year seriously injured by school violence, and we knew that educating them about the health impact of media violence would reduce that by 40 percent, would we have a moral obligation to conduct media violence education? You better believe it.

When I was in first grade and the teacher told us that cigarettes could kill people, I thought immediately of my dad who smoked. I loved my dad and did not want him to die, so I hid his cigarettes (he convinced me that that was not a good idea). The generation in elementary school that was first taught about the health risks of tobacco is the same one that grew up and played pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey with the tobacco industry.

Today we are on the threshold of a generation that is being informed of the health impact of media violence, the result of which, if corrective measures are implemented, will be a major victory for America's children and for the American people. We have never had anything that demonstrated a fraction of the result of the Stanford study. We have wonderful programs in place, such as aggression replacement, peer mediation, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT), all outstanding efforts, but not one has demonstrated a fraction of the impact of simply teaching kids to just turn off the television. Turn off the toxic culture.

Here is what I call my "milk and cookies equation." Say there is a kid hooked on some kind of an addictive drug. We could give him all the milk and cookies in the world but he would still do everything he could to get his fix. If the drug were suddenly yanked out of his life, he would suffer and struggle through the withdrawal process until he returned to normal. It is only then, when he is no longer hungry for his fix, that he would be ready to accept the food. The Stanford Study made it clear the positive impact that happens when we take the addictive drug of violent media out of children's lives.

I had the opportunity to work with a wonderful lady who runs a state sponsored school in Canada for violent Native American boys from the backwoods country. The kids in this Canadian school were placed there because they are prone to violence, so much so that the Mounties had to be called almost daily. The program was designed so that kids would attend the school for a short while and then get cycled out at the end of the semester.

With one group of boys, the principal removed television and all violent video games from their lives. Remember that the Stanford Study found that the most violent kids were impacted the greatest when television was taken out of their lives. At the Canadian school, there was a 90 percent reduction in violence among the boys who had television and video games removed, compared to any previous group of boys who had been through that school.

The Center for Successful Parenting is now the national distributor for the Stanford Curriculum. You can get more information at the CSP web site at www.sosparents.org.

Hollywood vs America: "Anyone who thinks the media has nothing to do with it is an idiot"

"The dream factory has become the poison factory.

Michael Medved"

- Hollywood vs. America

Has there always been violence? Will there always be violence? Of course, but we know now that when the ingredient of media violence is added to everything else, violence

skyrockets. After the slaughter at Columbine High School, the president of CBS television made a slip. When asked if he thought the media had anything to do with the Columbine shootings, he answered, "Anyone who thinks the media has nothing to do with it is an idiot." How much clearer can it get?

Shortly after the Littleton killings, the California Senate unanimously approved a resolution on media violence. By chance did you read or hear anything about this unanimously approved senate resolution? Probably not, because it was censored. Here is what Ted Turner said: "Television violence is the single most significant factor contributing to violence in America." He didn't say it is the only factor; he said it is the most significant one. Now, if Ted Turner knows that but he keeps selling it to kids, what does that make him? A hypocrite? A child abuser? An accessory to murder?

So why does he keep doing it? Money. It makes him rich. Rich like a drug dealer. Does a drug dealer know he is hurting people? Of course. Does he care? Not one bit. Do the media people know that they are hurting people? Of course. They even admit it. Do they care? Apparently not.

We are dealing with an industry functioning at the moral level of drug dealers; in fact, one of their objectives is to convince us to legalize drugs. Once they sell out to drug dealer logic, then the next natural step is to legalize drugs and identify with the dealers and other criminals. How low can they go? There is a wonderful, insightful book by Michael Medved called *Hollywood vs America*, and I encourage you to read it. I have been on Michael's national radio show several times. He is a brilliant man who writes a weekly column for *USA Today* and is one of our nation's most respected commentators on the media. "Hollywood vs America." That really says it all.

On one occasion, I was on CNN's *Larry King Show* and then later served as a member of a panel at a national conference chaired by King. He is great man and his program is not hurting anyone--except maybe the occasional crooked politician. Still, he is part of the media industry, so his first response to its culpability was denial.

At one point in the program, King said, "Colonel, there's violence in the Bible. Why don't we take the Bible away from kids, too?"

"The difference," I told him, "is that the American Medical Association has not identified the Bible as a key causal factor in half of all the murderers in America. No one should be talking about very young children and the written word because they cannot process it until they are around eight years old. What they see goes into their eyes, it is decoded in their logic center, and it trickles and filters into their emotional center." I went on to explain oral communication. "No one should be talking about the spoken word, as it cannot be processed until around age four. Spoken language goes into the kids' ears, where it is decoded in the logic center, and then trickles and filters into the emotional center." Then I explained the dramatic difference with what the child sees. "Violent visual imagery can be fully processed as young as 14 months. The images seen by an infant go straight into the eyes, and then into the emotional center where they have an immediate impact on how that baby views the world."

Now, one or two violent shows will not immediately transform a young mind, but the average child in America spends more time in front of the tube than he does in school. In school, he learns reading, writing, arithmetic, and every other academic subject, but it is from television that he learns about death, horror and destruction.

Violent imagery can have a profound and tragic impact on a child. Comparing it to Grimm's *Fairy Tales* or comparing it to the Bible is like comparing cigarettes and chocolate.

Loren Christensen knows a young couple whose daughter was 17 months old on September 11, 2001. Like most people in America, the couple sat transfixed by the horrific images on their television: planes flying into the sides of the Twin Towers, smoke, screams, panic, the collapse of buildings, more screams, sirens, more panic, the urgency in the reporters' voices, and bellowing black smoke and lapping flames shooting from the Pentagon. Their 17-month-old daughter watched, too, sitting amongst her toys on the floor, her large innocent eyes glued to the violent images. Within an hour, she began to whine and wanted to be held, and by mid-afternoon the little girl was clearly anxious and clingy, her eyes large with fear. It finally dawned on her mother that her daughter had been watching the television screen, too. After that, the parents no longer watched the news when she could see it.

Here is another look at how kids process information at different ages.

-**Your** eight year-old is away at camp. He gets a letter from home that informs him that the dog was hit by a car and died.

-**Your** four-year-old child comes home from daycare and you sit him down and tell him that the dog was hit by a car and died.

-**Your** two-year-old child is standing out in the front yard and witnesses a car run over the family dog. The dog whines, cries and dies as it messes itself and bleeds a big bloody spot in the middle of the road, all the while the child watches with wide eyes.

Which do you think is going to have the most profound impact on the child? Obviously, the violent visual imagery is much more harmful to the child, because of the age at which each child processes the information and because of the visual nature of the information.

Learning violence: We are biologically primed to seek survival data

"Base is the slave that pays."

- Shakespeare

King Henry IV

The International Committee of the Red Cross took a handful of experts to Geneva, Switzerland, for a conference on the impact of media violence on atrocities worldwide. One of the attendees was a British biologist who discussed how living creatures are biologically primed to learn certain things at specific ages. For example, if a little bird does not hear its species' song in the first year of its life, it will never sing it later. This is because the bird is primed to learn only one song, and if he fails to learn it when it is supposed to, it never will.

Human beings have a capacity to learn violence the same way. We do not need violence any more than we need crack, nicotine or alcohol, but if we are exposed to it at a young age we become hooked. Humans are biologically primed to seek survival data, and violence is the ultimate survival data. What is the one event on the playground guaranteed to draw every child like a magnet? A fight. Children fight to see a fight, because if there is violence in their environment, they must witness it so they can adapt to it as quickly as possible.

Your brain, a self-programming computer that fills the space between your ears, is designed to help you survive. You do not have strong limbs, deadly fangs or sharp claws, but you do have a brain, and your survival depends on it adapting quickly to changes in your environment. If violence occurs in your presence, you have to learn to run or use violence in self-defense. Most kids run, or they become fearful and depressed. A few, however, learn to adapt to violence, and to use it.

When a boy between the ages of two and five watches his father beat his mother every night, he probably learns to hate that behavior and to hate his father. Fifteen years later, when he is grown and has a wife and kids, it is probable that under stress he will beat his

wife, too.

We know that not every kid who watches his father beat his mother will grow up to be a spousal abuser, but that kid is more likely to repeat the behavior than one whose father did not abuse his mother. This is because any behavior observed in the first six or seven years of a kid's life is hard to unlearn. As the child's brain develops, Mother Nature is a harsh gardener, pruning the unused, fertilizing the useful. That seven-year-old does not hide his eyes as his father strikes his mother, but he huddles in the corner, watching and learning. His biological drive for survival and to adapt to his environment demands that he watch and learn.

Once puberty begins, a second biological drive kicks in, one that is immensely attractive: sex. Procreation. Say you show a porno movie to a three-year-old; don't do it, it's not good for him, but the truth is that the kid could care less. He would just flip to another channel since the images wouldn't mean anything to him. Show porn to a 12-year-old, however, and he is riveted. His heartbeat goes up, his respiration goes up, and other things go up. He has an immediate and profound biological response to the pornographic images. Violent visual imagery is to a two-year-old as pornography is to a 12-year-old. The two-year-old boy's heartbeat goes up, his respiration goes up, and he is riveted. It is what he is biologically primed to seek.

I had an opportunity to talk with one of the vice presidents at Random House, the publisher of *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill*. He told me that he believes that television is the single greatest threat to the book industry today. When television viewing goes up, reading goes down. When the number of television channels goes up, the number of newspapers goes down. We spent 5,000 years struggling to become a literate society and now, for the first time in history, we are stepping backwards.

I had the occasion to be interviewed by Katie Couric on NBC's *The Today Show*. She looked at me with those big eyes (which were kind of ... distracting) and asked, "Colonel, I watched all that stuff when I was a kid and I'm not a killer. Why should I worry about my kids?"

I said, "Katie, when I was a kid I never buckled my seatbelt and I'm just fine. So why should I buckle up my kids?"

"Oh," she said.

Although she was playing the devil's advocate, there are many parents who live by that logic. Imagine some bubba from my home state of Arkansas driving through your state with his kids in the backseat, unbuckled and bouncing around like high-speed molecules. A police officer pulls him over, and says, "Sorry, but I'm going to have to give you a ticket because your kids are not buckled in. It's the law." Not surprisingly, my homeboy is going to try to get out of that ticket with a little Arkansas logic. "Well, officer," he'll say, "When I was a kid I never buckled my seatbelt and look at me. I'm just fine. In fact, everybody I know never buckled their seatbelts. And I bet you never buckled your seatbelt, and look at you. You're just fine, too." Do you think that logic will get him out of a seatbelt ticket? I don't think so either. In fact, ol' Bubba should get two tickets: one for not buckling his kids in and the other for, being "felony dumb," as we call it in Arkansas.

I have to admit that at one time I was felony dumb. I heard about the issue of media violence years ago, but I just ignored it. I thought that since it had not hurt me why should I worry about it hurting my kids. Today, I look back and I am ashamed of what I let my kids watch. By the grace of God they turned out all right. Most kids do, in spite of us. But what a stupid risk!

It is important that we learn from our mistakes. My mom did. She never buckled us kids

into our seatbelts and we turned out okay. But when my mom had grandbabies, she "got religion." One time when my kids were little she came to visit me. I was a tough paratrooper then, a sergeant, a man of the world. I went to the airport to pick up my mama, as my two little boys bounced around in the backseat. The first thing she did after she got in the car was to try to take charge. She turned to me, and said, "Dave, buckle those babies up." Well, I figured I didn't have to take that anymore, so I said, "But ma, you never buckled us up when we were kids and --" Bam! She smacked me right up side of the head. End of discussion!

That is the kind of grandparent I am going to be. No, I am not going to thump them, but I will bribe them. My wife and I have cut a deal with our kids and they fully agree. We are going to pay them \$1,000 a year towards the grandbabies' college funds for every year they promise to keep them television-free for the first six or seven years of their lives. I admit this might be over-the-top, but if they can keep those kids violence free, we will have done wonders for them during these most impressionable years.

When the military wants to put together an effective PSYOPs message, they often go to those who make commercials, the people on Madison Avenue. In the field of behavioral sciences, more money has been invested in designing commercials than in any other. It is not a perfect science. If it were, we would all be eating Big Macs three times a day, but it is not for a lack of trying. Madison Avenue has spent billions of dollars to determine the right color and shape of a product, the most effective number of times to show the commercials, and the right flicker rate to ensure that your child walks away from the television screen with two things in his mind: a desire to overeat and dissatisfaction with his possessions.

Besides a pronounced reduction in violence, the Stanford Study showed two other interesting side effects when television viewing was eliminated for a semester: A significant decrease in obesity and a decrease in nagging parents for toys. There is a national problem of obesity among our kids, not only because they sit on their chubby tails for long periods doing nothing but watching television, but also because they are victims of junk food commercials. While there are numerous studies that link television viewing with obesity, there is no study that shows a link between obesity and playing video games. The key factor in the equation is that they sit and watch television commercials that advertise tantalizing burgers, shakes, sugarcoated cereals, fat-laden chips, and sugar-saturated sodas.

Television gives our kids massive amounts of toxic and addictive violence and tweaks their minds with sophisticated psychology to make them overeat and feel a sense of dissatisfaction with their possessions. It is imperative that we protect them during the first six or seven years of their lives.

Violent female role models and an explosion of violent girls

*"Oh woman, woman! when to ill thy mind
Is bent, all hell contains no fouler fiend."*

- Homer

The Odyssey (Pope transl.)

Why do you think males are the biggest perpetrators of violent behavior? Testosterone poisoning? That might very well be part of the reason, but arguably a more significant factor comes from the impact of role models. At about the age of two, a little boy and a little girl look at their naked selves in a mirror and discover their specific sexes (wow, look at that!). Shortly after this discovery, they start seeking same-sex role models, and they usually find it in the media. The little boy turns on the television and he sees male behavior manifested in violence. When he sees this depicted repeatedly on the tube, he begins to think that that is what the male species is all about.

Females are most often depicted in the media as passive and helpless victims. When a little girl sees that over and over, that behavior becomes a role model to her. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movies, last produced in the 1990s, were the last generation of all-male preschool violent role models. They were replaced with the Power Rangers, half of which were females. Let's call it gender equity in preschool violent role models. That generation grew up with the Power Rangers, which cocked and primed them for Xena the Warrior Princess and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and many others.

It was even predicted a few years ago that there would be an increase in violent behavior by young females from their exposure to the bombardment of violent, female role models in the media. Well, the best measure of a scientific theory is its power to predict. In just 10 years, from 1990 to 1999, the aggravated assault rate for juvenile males went down five percent, while the juvenile female aggravated assault rate took a 57 percent hike. Juvenile weapons violations for males went down seven percent, but for females it went up 44 percent. Why are these numbers so dramatic?

To answer that, consider what the tobacco industry did. For years, they primarily marketed tobacco to males but then one day the ad men said, "Wait a minute. Half the population out there isn't smoking as much as they should. We need to hit them, too." So, they started marketing to females and, a few years later, there was a resultant explosion of cancer among women. It was even predicted that if there were an increase in smoking among females that their cancer rates would soar. A few years later, it was predicted that if there were an increase in violent female role models in the media, violent female behavior would soar--and it did.

The future: Kids, the Internet and bombs

*"The childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day."*

- Milton

Paradise Lost

Today, we are seeing a dramatic increase in incidents of planted explosives and suicide/homicide bombers causing massive death and destruction in war torn countries. Is it likely that international terrorists will do the same thing in the United States? I am afraid so, and I am afraid that we are going to see it perpetrated by homegrown terrorists, too.

With all the aforementioned violence enablers in place for our kids, we are going to see bloodletting manifest itself in new ways. The future is bombs, and the kids are going to get the information to make them from the Internet. Once an angry, sick kid downloads the simplistic instructions, he will go to Radio Shack to buy the electronic means, and to another store to buy a propane tank and a candle. That is all he needs to blow up his ex-girl friend's house, or "pay back" the kids who bullied him at school and anyone else who happens to be in the vicinity.

While it may be impossible to keep the information and tools out of kids' hands, we must make every effort to understand what is in their heads and hearts. We know that the goal of every terrorist is media coverage, and to get it they need a body count. With that in mind, consider that video games are won by accumulating points. At the start of most games the player is armed with a knife or pistol, and if the player kills enough people, the kid is rewarded with bigger weapons. When he advances to the upper levels of the game, he is given the ultimate in weaponry: bombs, rocket launchers, grenades and grenade launchers, sticks of dynamite, barrels of gunpowder, and pipe bombs, instruments to kill large quantities of people all at one time. Once they have worked up to a place where they have killed in mass, the game is still not over. Now they use their arsenal of guns to kill whoever is left standing.

The old model terrorist, such as the IRA, planted bombs and then quickly departed the area. In Oklahoma City, Timothy McVeigh left a bomb at the Federal Building and then walked away. Today, there is a new generation of killers who are inspired by video games, and they too will plant bombs, but then they probably will not just walk away. Case in point: If it were not for one flaw in their bombs, the Columbine High School shooters would have caused death and destruction of unthinkable proportions. Their plan was to detonate large propane tank bombs in the cafeteria to kill a mass of kids, and then use guns and secondary bombs to kill the survivors when they fled out the exits. Their goal was to kill everyone in the school. One subtle flaw in their bomb making techniques prevented this video game-scripted model from making that tragedy many times worse than it was.

While we should feel relief that they failed to get the huge body count that they desired, we cannot sit back and get too comfortable, because the mistakes made at Columbine have been analyzed and corrected. The investigating fire chief at Columbine told me that within a week of the shooting there were web sites around the world identifying errors the Columbine killers made in building their bombs--and correcting them.

Our violent future: Respond with caution

" We will not anticipate the past; so mind, young people, --our retrospection will all be to the future."

*- Richard Brinsley Sheridan
The Rivals*

Since Columbine, there have been several cases of kids with bombs and guns caught by the police before they could inflict massive death in their schools. There will be more attempts, and some will succeed. Police, teachers and emergency crews need to be courageous and rescue the wounded, but they need to do so with great caution and with security in place. They need to be alert for a gunman in the middle of the kill zone with a shotgun, or an entrenched sniper gunning down survivors.

There are two lessons regarding bombs that we all need to learn and apply. First, whether the scene is a workplace or a school, never evacuate into a parking lot. Car bombs are the most simplistic type of explosive. While a killer might be able to sneak a 20-pound bomb into a school in a backpack, a car parked next to the building can hold and hide hundreds of pounds of explosives. Do you remember the car bomb at the Sari nightclub in Bali that killed nearly 200 people in October of 2002? This is why people need to be cautious about evacuating a school every time it receives a bomb scare. There will be lives lost should a bomb explode inside a school, but if everyone then rushes out into a parking lot, a well-placed car bomb could kill vast numbers of people, with a sniper picking off any remaining survivors. If students must be evacuated into a parking lot, make it the faculty lot. The second lesson is to stay away from any vehicle, box, bag, pipe, or freshly upturned dirt, objects and locations where secondary explosives might have been planted to continue the carnage.

Paranoia? Over the top? Not at all. These two lessons were learned at the price of blood and lives in nations such as Israel, England, Ireland, Spain, France and Russia. The most significant terrorist act in human history--September 11, 2001--happened to us on our watch in our lives. We must be ever vigilant to more possibilities. School violence could be worse than it already is, but now kids, teachers, administrators, parents and police officers are all working together to do the right thing. Concerned people are hurling themselves on this grenade and trying desperately to contain it.

The majority of kids in our schools are good, but the kids who are bad are the worst we have ever seen. We did it to them; we allowed it to happen, but it is not too late.

Education is the most important solution strategy, and if we teach kids about the unhealthy impact of violent media and encourage them to turn it off, it will have an enormous impact. We know this from the results of the Stanford Study and others.

Many of our so-called problem kids do not live with their parents but are in the custody of juvenile parole and probation services or a foster parent by court order. On my web site, www.killology.com, there is a link to a model juvenile parole and probation order written by a judge. When the judge writes such an order, he not only has the authority to mandate appropriate media viewing for the kid, he has the responsibility to do so. Remember, the Stanford Study and others done in Canada revealed that the more violent the kid, the greater were the results when the viewing of violent movies, television and video games was eliminated.

Making the media link: Ask what they watch

*Find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect.
- Shakespeare
Hamlet*

Police officers investigating crimes committed by kids or even by mentally disturbed adults who have committed, say, massive workplace shootings, should ask the perpetrators if their crime reminded them of a specific video game, television program or movie. They should not be asked if they were inspired by a movie or a video game, as that often makes them angry. Many of them have great pride in what they have done and they do not want to give credit elsewhere. For example, when the detective in the Paducah, Kentucky, school shooting case asked the young shooter if he was inspired by the movie *Basketball Diaries*, the kid became enraged. Later, he told his psychologist, "This is the only real adventure I've ever had and now they are trying to accuse me of being a copycat." The two Columbine high school killers even said in their videotape that no one should think they are copycats. "Those other kids were the copycats," they said, "We had this idea first."

These killers denied they were copycats because deep inside they know they were. The detective in Paducah backed off and then came back with a softer and slightly different approach. "What movie was it like?" he asked, and just like that the kid connected the dots. That is the key question officers should ask: What video game or what movie was it like?

Brain scan research: The final nail in Hollywood's coffin

*"Next time you find your child playing a violent video game or watching an action movie, think. Because you want them to be able to do so."
- Center for Successful Parenting
Brochure on Indiana University Brain Scan Study*

The final nail in Hollywood's coffin will be the brain scan studies that are now coming out around the world.

Once upon a time I could show you two X-rays: one of a smoker's lung, and one of a healthy lung. End of discussion.

Now I can show you two brains scans: one of a healthy child, and one of a child "whacked out" from media violence. End of discussion.

This research has been replicated in Texas and Japan, and as time goes by we will see more and more of it, but the true pioneer in this field was the Center for Successful Parenting, which funded the brain scan research conducted by the Indiana University

Medical Department. Not that this is medical research. I cannot over emphasize how important it is that we listen to the AMA and not Hollywood or the video game industry. When it comes to our children's health we must listen to the medical professors, not the journalism professors.

I'd like to tell a little story to demonstrate how foolish I think it is to give any credibility to the industry that sells this stuff, or to the journalist or the sociology professor, instead of listening to the medical profession.

A police officer told me about two felons fleeing in a car. When the police finally got the car stopped there were cops in front of the suspects' car, so if it pulled forward it would be a clear deadly force threat. The officer said that he went up to the driver's side window with his gun drawn. It was a hot day and the windows were open, so he commanded to the driver, "Stop the car or I will shoot."

He said,

I distinctly heard the guy in the passenger seat say, "Go ahead, man. He won't shoot." So the car started to pull forward and "Blam! Blam!" I put two holes in the driver. Then I distinctly heard 'Einstein' in the passenger seat say, "Whoa! Sorry man."

The moral of the story is this: Be very careful who you get your advice from. If you are getting advice about the health effects of screen violence from Hollywood, the TV industry, the video game industry, the journalism professor, or the sociology professor, then you are about as "swift" as the driver in that car.

So listen to what the Indiana University Medical Department's brain scan research has to tell us. The following is an extract from the Center for Successful Parenting brochure designed to inform the public about this important research.

PARENTAL WARNING VIOLENT MEDIA EXPOSURE HAS A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN

You probably think that the video game your child is playing every afternoon isn't affecting their behavior. Think again. Researchers at the Indiana University School of Medicine recently conducted a study that demonstrated otherwise.

The study

Over a two-year period, researchers at Indiana University School of Medicine studied two groups of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17.

The first group was made up of normal teenagers. The second group consisted of teenagers who had been diagnosed with disruptive brain disorder or DBD. A DBD diagnosis is given to children who have shown significant aggressive behavior and resistance to authority. Subjects from the two groups were paired according to age, gender and IQ.

Step one

In step one of the study, the teenagers and their parents were surveyed about the teenagers exposure to violence in video games, movies and television.

Some of the teenagers had viewed a lot of media violence throughout their lives and some had viewed very little.

Step two

In step two, the teens were tested in a very sophisticated MRI, called fMRI. The fMRI

produces pictures of the activity in the logical part of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex. This part of the brain produces what we think of as adult behavior.

The pre-frontal cortex is responsible for controlling behavior, moderating impulsive urges, thinking about future consequences and decision-making. If children do not fully develop their pre-frontal cortex, they can become problem adults.

The brain scans

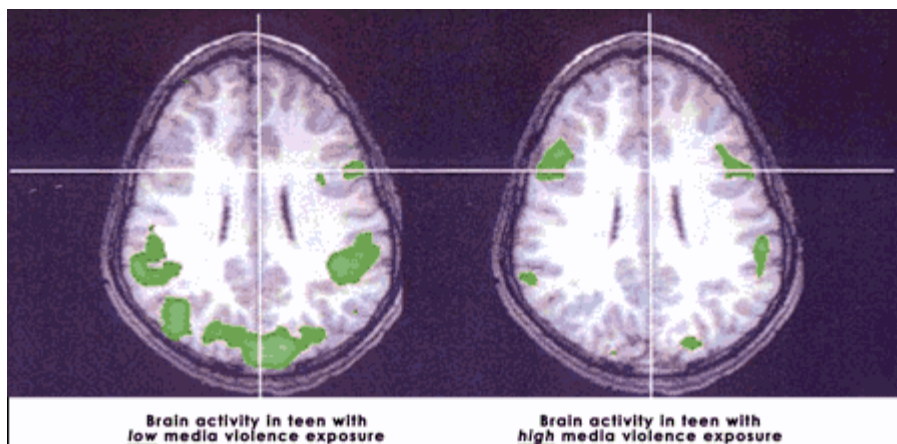
The following two sets of the fMRI pictures or brain scans show the differences in brain activity between teenagers who had been exposed to a lot of media violence and those who had been exposed to very little.

To understand the pictures, you need to know that the scans on the left are teens with low exposure to media violence and the scans on the right are teens with high exposure. The larger the red area and the deeper the red color, the more brain activity is occurring in the logical, adult part of the brain.

This is the area that parents want to develop in their children. Conversely, the smaller the red area and the lighter the color, the less brain activity is taking place.

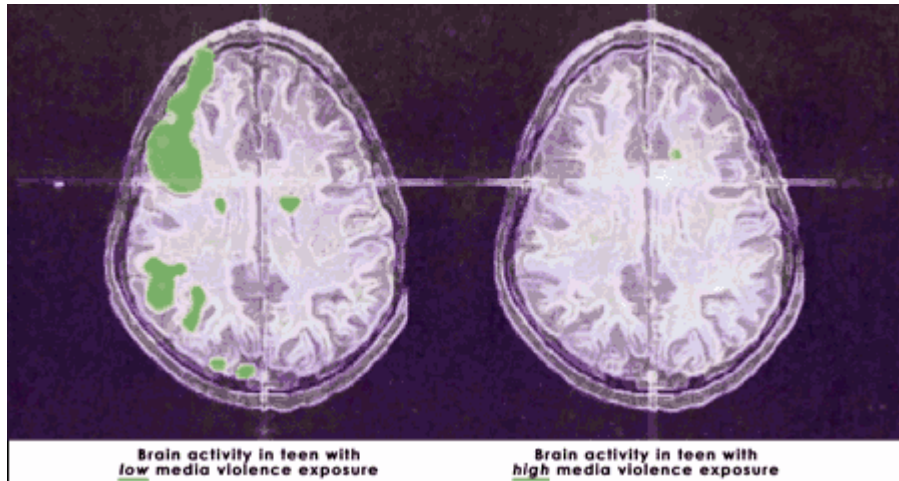
The video game

This set of scans shows brain activity when the teenagers were viewing a video game inside the fMRI. The low media exposure teens are using more of the logical part of their brains than the high exposure teens.



Decision making

This set of scans shows brain activity during a decision making exercise, called Go-No-Go. When it comes to looking into the future, weighing consequences and making decisions, the low media violence exposure group is using a lot of the logical part of their brain; the high media violence exposure group is using very little.



The conclusion

After studying and comparing all of the brain scans of all the teenagers, what did the researchers conclude?

The most surprising result was that normal teenagers with a high amount of exposure to media violence had reduced activity in the logical part of the brain similar to those of teens with disruptive behavior disorder.

All of the teens with DBD--disruptive behavior disorder--had less activity in the logical part of their brains than normal teens. The more violence they had seen, the more pronounced the deficit.

The normal teens that had seen very little media violence had the most activity in the logical part of the brain -the part that parents want to develop in their children.

All of these results indicate that there is a correlation between the amount of media violence children see and their ability to think logically.

Next time you find your child playing a violent video game or watching an action movie, think. Because you want them to be able to do so.

What YOU can do as a parent

- Provide a media-free zone in your child's bedroom - no TV, video games, computer, VCR or DVD players.
- Reduce the exposure children have to violent content in movies, TV and video games.
- Refuse to expose children under the age of 7 to ANY violent content in entertainment.
- Make TV viewing a family activity and have the TV in a common area.
- Turn off the television before school.
- Don't let your children play violent video games. Check www.moviereports.org for reviews of video games.
- Know the content of movies before your child goes to the theater. Check www.moviereports.org for information on violence, sexual content and language in movies.
- Don't let a child under the age of 17 go to an "R" rated movie.
- Monitor your child's use of the Internet. Don't let your child have unlimited access to the Internet.
- Get involved in the Parents Awareness Campaign. All 70 million families in America must become aware of this national health hazard - your child is not really safe until they and their friends are media violence free.

This was just the conclusions based on "Phase One" of a major, three phased research project. More information will be available on the Center for Successful Parenting (CSP) Web site, www.sosparents.org, in the years to come. For now it is sufficient to know that the CSP has concluded that:

- Media violence stunts, or "retards," kids' brain development: Kids with violent TV, movie, and video game exposure had reduced cognitive brain function.
- and
- Media violence makes violent brains: Violent TV, movies, and video game exposure had an effect on normal kids that made their brain scans the same as kids with documented, diagnosed Disruptive Behavior Disorder.

The future: peace warriors and a reckoning for the media

*"Yet sometimes glimpses on my sight,
Through present wrong the eternal right;
And, step by step, since time began,
I see the steady gain of man"*

- John Greenleaf Whittier
The Chapel of the Hermit

Kids' access to violent media is not the only factor attributing to raging, escalating violence. There is also child abuse, poverty, gangs, drugs, breakdown of moral structure, lack of moral training, easy access to weapons, and mental illness. These are all factors, too. Keep in mind, though, what Ted Turner and the American Academy of Pediatrics say is the most "remediable," the most "significant" factor: media violence. Yes, you can just turn media violence off in your house, but there will be millions of other households where kids are watching it because their parents allow them to. They are watching it because it is available to them.

The good news is that we have a joint, moral responsibility to fix this wrong and we are working hard to get more and more people to join the fight with us. One hundred years ago it was legal to sell alcohol to a nine-year-old and the alcohol industry did exactly that, and they even murdered people in their battle to keep doing it. Fifty years ago it was legal to sell tobacco to a six-year-old and the tobacco industry did, and they had an army of people battling any law that would keep tobacco out of the hands of kids. Why was the tobacco and alcohol industry working so hard to keep selling their product to underage customers? Money. The younger the consumers are when exposed to the toxic and addictive substances, the more likely they are to have an addictive response for a lifetime.

Today, television, movie and video game industries are doing the same thing as they sell their toxic and addictive substance to kids. Just as tobacco manifested in an explosion of cancer and heart disease, media violence has manifested itself into the most violent times in peacetime history. Even if we could stop all the media violence today, it would take at least 15 years to see long-term, positive results, though we would experience an immediate impact, just as was found in the Stanford Study when television viewing was curtailed for one semester.

I truly believe we are on the threshold of positive change, but it is going to take time. The brain scan research findings are coming out and schools across America are embracing the Stanford Study and investing themselves in it. Their curriculum has been released nationwide and is available to anyone in any school.

To win this battle we need peace warriors. We have peace officers in America and we have peacekeepers in distant lands. We have activists, educators, students and parents, all working together for peace. You have a choice between the culture of death, or the

side of the peace warriors. Chose your side.

The peace warriors will succeed, and for those who sold death and destruction to our children there will be a reckoning. But first there will be many violent years in front of us, years that will make what we have experienced thus far pale in comparison. We can survive those years, but to do so we need educated, informed warriors. Warriors who remember the dead children they have held in their arms and who understand the causes of violence in our society.

*For they are the sparrows around God's door,
He will lift them up in His own great banner.
But the folks who made them suffer so sore,
He will deal with them in a different manner.
- Stephen Vincent Benet*

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