

# Information Release



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*Giving Canadian Children Tools to be Media and Life Wise*

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## **TIPS TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH DISTURBING IMAGES IN THE MEDIA** *Open Discussion in an Age Appropriate Manner is Key*

**TORONTO** – During uncertain and traumatic times, the media play a substantial role in helping us understand complex events, including natural disasters, taking place throughout our world. Whether it's television, newspaper, magazines, films or the Internet, the media are an integral part of children's lives for entertainment, information and education. Media literacy is educating children to better interpret, cope with and understand the media by providing them with tools to learn how to "watch carefully, think critically and navigate safely."

"It's crucial to engage in meaningful discussions regarding media literacy with children" said Linda Millar, a 30-year educator from Ottawa and Education Consultant for Concerned Children's Advertisers (CCA). "This not only keeps the lines of communication open, it lets them know they can ask questions about information they are receiving and images they are seeing in the media."

Millar reminds us that disturbing media images have the potential to evoke many different feelings in our children. She offers these tips for parents to help their children deal with disturbing images and information portrayed through the media.

- **Watch the news with your children.** Talk to them about the images and sounds they are seeing and hearing. Correct misconceptions and speak in simple language with age appropriate terms they can understand.
- **Be aware of your children's reactions and conceptions.** Encourage them to ask questions about what they see in the media and don't understand.
- **Let their questions be your guide.** Respond with honesty in a manner that is appropriate for their age. Monitor conversations with friends and family to be sure that they are not repressing their feelings.
- **Put things in context.** Explain that the media has a responsibility to report on all world events – good and bad – and that even though they may see the same images multiple times, in reality each have happened only once.
- **The world is a big place.** Take out a world map and show them where the images they are seeing are coming from and how far away it is from their home.
- **Clarify the facts.** Children often misconstrue information. Encourage them to ask a grown-up they trust (i.e. parent or teacher) to find out if what they're hearing is true.

- **Be sensitive.** Remind your children that many of their classmates, friends and neighbours may have family or friends that live in the area of conflict. Discuss how important it is to be sensitive when talking about disturbing images, including natural disasters, around other individuals.
- **Encourage your children to find a creative way to express their feelings.** Help them choose an activity such as writing a letter to a community newspaper, a government official or an organization to voice their feelings. They might also want to contribute as a volunteer or start a project at school to help others feel better in these difficult times.
- **Remind your children how important they are to you and your family.** Make a plan to do something special - go for a walk, a drive in the country, visit relatives or call them on the phone.
- **Check out CCA's TV&ME and Long Live Kids programs.** Parents interested in additional information and resources about helping children cope with the media and other issues, including bullying, poor self-esteem, substance abuse, peer pressure and healthy active living, can refer to CCA's TV&ME and Long Live Kids programs at [www.cca-kids.ca](http://www.cca-kids.ca).

"Above all, trust your instincts about how your child is feeling and follow those instincts when responding to those feelings," said Millar. "You know your child better than anyone else."



TV&ME is an educational program created by CCA and funded by Corus Entertainment Inc., which brings discussions about real life and television into the classrooms and homes of Canadian children.



Long Live Kids is an additional program offered by CCA to address the issues of childhood obesity and related preventable chronic disease. This one of a kind collaboration brings together industry, issue experts and government to provide Canadian children with the tools for healthy eating, active living and improved media literacy.

CCA is a non-profit organization of 20 Canadian member companies, supported by over 40 partner companies, including child-centred advertisers, broadcasters and agencies. CCA member companies have a concern for all issues affecting children, as well as a commitment to understanding and contributing solutions to the media and life challenges that children face each day.

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