

Families and Media is a project of the English Sector Episcopal Commission for Social Communications of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). The project's purpose is to help families navigate through the various forms of media found in the home, and to provide parents, teens and younger children with references to obtain valuable background information.

Suggested bulletin insert #4

Families and the News

Modern media provides important information about major events in our communities and around the world. We receive a barrage of information from the moment we wake up (from radio newscasts, newspapers, television newscasts and the Internet) to the moment we go to sleep. Graphic and dramatic images, especially in “breaking news” situations, can have lasting effects on both adults and children. Teaching children how to be perceptive news consumers will allow them to understand the world around them better.

Ten Tools for Families in a News-Hungry World

- Talk to your children about the news they see, hear or read. Ask them for their opinions and discover if they fully understand the news. Keep any discussion age appropriate.
- In the case of breaking news coverage involving graphic or disturbing events, limit the amount of coverage to which children are exposed. Do not allow young children to view these events alone.
- Discuss the morality of news events, when appropriate, so you can use these events as lessons about how to act properly in the world, and about the consequences of wrongdoing.
- Teach your children there are always two sides to every story, and that even criminals are innocent until proven guilty.
- When a news report depicts a “stereotype”, explain how stereotypes lead people to jump to conclusions and make wrong decisions.
- Explain how the different forms of media report news differently: radio, television, newspapers and the Internet.
- If a news story bothers your child, acknowledge her/his fears and explain that you are there to offer protection and support. Let children know that just because they heard or saw a disturbing news event, it doesn't mean something bad will happen to them.
- When major events happen, initiate a discussion with your child and look at other ways of obtaining more factual information about the event.
- Use news reports to encourage your children to find out more about the conditions other children face around the world, and ask them to consider ways to help these children.
- When young children witness violence from another part of the world, they may not understand it is far away and not an immediate threat. Reassure them they are safe.

Additional Resources on the News for Families

Media Awareness Network – Talking to Your Kids about the News

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/tip_sheets/news_tip.cfm

Media Awareness Network – Helping Kids Cope with Media Coverage of War and Traumatic Events

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/tip_sheets/helping_kids_cope.cfm

Talkingwithkids.org – Talking with Kids about the News

<http://www.talkingwithkids.org/television/twk-news.html>

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – Children and the News

<http://aacap.org/page.wv?name=Children+and+The+News§ion=Facts+for+Families>

Center for Media Literacy – Trauma on the News: Should Children Watch

http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article395.html

Kaiser Family Foundation – Children and the News: Coping with Terrorism, War and Everyday Violence

<http://www.kff.org/entmedia/3210-index.cfm>

Catholic Organization for Life and Family

The Media: A Fascinating Challenge for the Family

<http://www.colf.ca>

For more information, contact the English Sector Episcopal Commission for Social Communications at cecc@cccb.ca. This document is available online at www.cccb.ca.

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