

Television - Terrible or Terrific?

Arguments can be made for both cases. But, as with most things, television is neither all good, nor all bad.

THE GOOD

- As an educational tool, television has had, and continues to have an impact on millions of children. Programs like National Geographic, and Discovery Channel, have taught children to respect the environment and all God's wonderful creatures.
- As an informational tool, television is a "window to the world" for all viewers – children and adults. Without leaving home, we are whisked around the world to royal weddings, space walks, volcanic eruptions, evangelistic meetings and presidential elections. We are never more than a click away from a command performance or a record breaking achievement.
- Television is one way to promote family togetherness. Watching a quality program together and discussing it afterwards can be a very enlightening and entertaining way for a family to spend a part of an evening.

THE BAD

- Television viewing is a completely passive activity (unless you are an overzealous sports fan watching an exciting game). It does not require interaction. It does not require movement especially since the invention of the remote control.
- Television viewing gives children an unrealistic view of the world. Because children have a very difficult time separating fact from fiction, they tend to believe most of what they see on television. And that can be a real problem when their television heroes and role models possess less than desirable traits.
- Television viewing replaces more important skill-building activities, especially for younger children. If a child is able to concentrate on a television program for thirty minutes at a stretch, he is also able to concentrate on more productive activities like building with blocks, playing word games, coloring, cutting, and pasting, repeating rhymes and stories so much more.
- Experts believe that viewing violent television programs may make children more aggressive. They are concerned that children will become more desensitized to the violence on television, and thus less sensitive and more accepting of violence in real life.
- Excessive television viewing robs children of the time for other activities like playing with friends and siblings, completing homework assignments and reading, and exercising their way to physical fitness.

Television is a fact of life today. It is the responsibility of the parent to help children make good choices about the programs they watch and to limit the amount of time they watch television while promoting other worthwhile activities.



PROPER TEACHER ATTITUDES

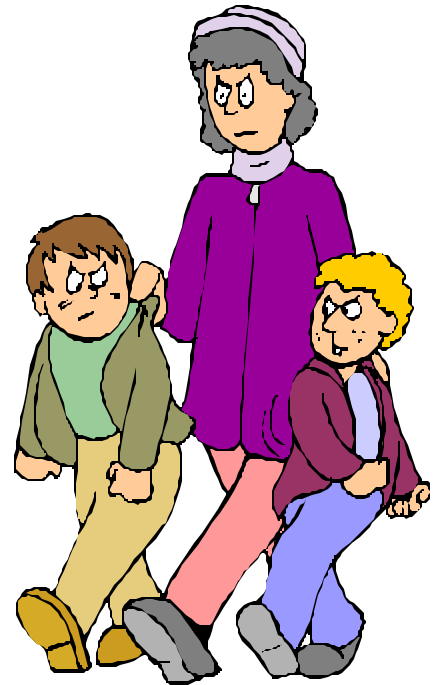
Most students will readily open up in counseling if we use the right approach. Such an approach breaks down the walls of mistrust, but not respect.

But how can we approach our students in a right way? We must first deal with our own attitudes because what we feed our own minds about the situation will come through to flavor the counsel room. If we think, "Here's a spoiled child who needs to be brought down several notches," that will affect our attitudes—and the child will sense it, too. Perhaps the child is spoiled and really should be brought down some notches. But it is also true that he is a child worthy of our love, even more so than we deserve Christ's love. He is a child who is easily molded, and what he finds in us will influence his character.

One basic attitude we need to check ourselves on is, 'What do we see as the reason for this child's misbehavior?' Often, deep down inside, we feel, "He acts this way because he doesn't like me; he wants to make life miserable for me." But that is rarely true, and we cannot expect to feed our minds with that and come out with proper attitudes. Children misbehave for many reasons, but basically because they are human (as we are). They misbehave for attention, for something to do, for acceptance among their peers, and for other human reasons. Adults may carry personal grudges and act because of them, but children rarely do. As we approach the counsel scene when problems have arisen, we must sort all of our feelings and be sure they pass the Christ-conformed test. The child will then sense these attitudes and unconsciously think, "He really loves me." Once this is established, teacher and child are no more enemies, but fellow workers: the child is trying to overcome his problem, and the teacher is trying to help him.

Life is rarely this rosy with troublemakers, though, and at times children must first be convinced that what they have done is wrong. Again, the counsel session is an excellent time to help this individual understand the "why" of certain rules.

"Those who deserve love the least need it the most."



AVOIDING CLAIMS OF NEGLIGENCE

Claims themselves cannot be completely avoided, but successful claims can be greatly reduced. Below are some suggestions for principals and teachers.

1. Adopt a philosophy of paying attention to situations which could cause injury to students. Remember that the test often applied in a negligence case is whether the injury which occurred was foreseeable.
2. Adopt and constantly publicize system, school, departmental, and classroom rules. Do this to and for students. Do this to and for staff.
3. Document what was said when safety instructions are given, when it was said, to whom it was said, and what was done to assure understanding and compliance.
4. Conduct planned inspections both inside and outside buildings. In these days of "energy audits," the same attention should be given to "safety audits."
5. Post understandable warning signs in potentially dangerous locations. Use signs appropriate for the age, training, and maturity of the people affected.
6. If the activity appears to involve inherent risk of injury, try to reduce that risk or consider an alternate activity.
7. Be certain that students can perform what is required in order to prevent injuries. Special care must be given to people with mental or physical limitations.
8. Take extra precautions for away-from-campus activities. Ability to control such activities is very often much less than with in-school activities. The greater the risk of injury inherent in the activity (e.g., going to the beach), the greater are the plans required. Relate quantity of supervision to the age and training of the participants. While permission slips do not automatically relieve educators of legal liability, they do provide evidence of the quality of planning and of knowledge and consent by parents which may be valuable in defending against claims should injury occur. Also, find out whether volunteer drivers are covered by the system's insurance policy.
9. Secure liability insurance. Either be certain that the system provides such protection or purchase coverage for yourself. State professional education groups offer insurance at relatively inexpensive group rates and it is offered as an automatic benefit to NASSP membership. Be certain to read the fine print of all policies to be sure of the nature and amounts of coverage.

SUMMARY

Liability for personal injuries can be faced by all educators, from board members, to teachers, to custodians. In our litigious society every school person can best avoid a successful tort suit by behaving as any "reasonable person" would.

Negligence, or accidental injury, is the most common tort in the school setting. The law has created numerous barriers which make it difficult for a plaintiff to establish a negligence claim. Generally speaking, avoiding injuries by "being on the lookout" for dangerous situations and taking appropriate precautions ahead of time is the best defense against such claims, as well as protecting the students in your charge.



ATTITUDES

By Connie Wade

Have you ever felt unappreciated, unloved, and unhappy? Most of us have at some point in our lives. It's a normal occurrence and unfortunately, when we're feeling like this, it shows on our countenance and usually, in our behavior. Like "Eyeore" in *Winnie the Pooh*, we find that our day is clouded with a negative spirit that kills our hope and clouds our happiness, satisfaction, and peace of mind.

Luckily for me, I don't find myself feeling like Eyeore very often. I do, however, encounter Eyeore's attitude often in people who just can't seem to see the positive in anything. Their attitude can quickly influence my day if I let it. I read somewhere that a negative attitude can become a stumbling block for others to climb over. I also read of a top executive that wouldn't keep a person with a bad attitude no matter how talented he might be because bad attitudes affect and poison other employees. I believe it!

How important is attitude? Attitude is more important than facts, circumstances, what others say, your past, your education, or money. Attitude is your disposition, your outlook, your very character. The Bible says: "As a man thinketh, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

I find myself gravitating toward the people in my life that, by a word, look, or deed, make me feel like I am one in a million. Their sunny, positive attitude is "catching" and makes such a difference in how I perceive my job, friends, interruptions, and inconveniences. They point out the rainbows in the rain, the positive in the negative, and just the thought of them can make me smile. In the book, *The Awesome Power of Your Attitude*, by Dale E. Galloway, there was a certain fellow who was explaining to a friend about his days in college. He said, "I never actually was in the top half of my class, but I can say that I was in the group that made the top half possible." Guess what? I would like this type of person around me as I work. How about you?

There are two of my high school teachers who stand out in my mind when I think of positive and negative attitudes. One was definitely an Eyeore and I'm sorry to say that I (along with a lot of other students) hated her class. The other was totally opposite. He was happy, witty, and had a waiting list to get in his class. I don't think this was because he was such a great teacher, because I've had better, but because he had such a positive attitude. He made me feel like I was something special. We all looked forward to his class.

I can hear you say, "But you don't have Rodney in your class!" Quite honestly, I don't remember a time when there wasn't one or two mischievous kids in class when I was a student or when I was a teacher. (Actually, the number of disruptive students grew in number as the years progressed!) As teachers, not only do we juggle all those personalities, learning styles, and behaviors, but every class seems to have at least one student who can take a perfectly good day and in a matter of minutes turn it into a nightmare. Your leadership as a teacher becomes positive if you choose to offer praise instead of condemnation, suggestions rather than demands, and look for the good in every bad situation (or person)!

Attitude affects relationships. Attitude has a direct effect on how we get along with other people. There will always be people with negative attitudes in our lives and how we react CAN make a difference. I'd like to think that the person who coined the phrase "grin and bear it" was a teacher working desperately to overcome a negative attitude!



LET CHILDREN ENJOY THEIR CHILDHOOD

By Connie Wade

It won't be long until you will be assessing children to see if they are ready to progress to the next grade. As Adventists we believe strongly in waiting for a child to be "ready" before being plunged into academia. Personally, I find that we are constantly having to defend our position. I am sure though, if we took a poll, most teachers having experience with beginning scholars, would choose to put their own child in school later rather than earlier.

If a very young child seems totally uninterested in school and has little or no attention span, he may not be ready for school. He needs time to run and play. We can give arguments about developmental readiness and quote Jim Grant, Raymond and Dorothy Moore, and the latest brain research until we are blue in the face; however, our words usually fall on deaf ears.

Here and there I have found clippings to give to parents to help them understand that readiness and intelligence are not the same thing. Still, I haven't always impressed them! A recent article by Desa Philadelphia in the December 2, 2000 *Time* magazine was entitled, "KINDERGARTEN - AN EXTRA YEAR IN PRE-K IS WORTH CONSIDERING." It states:

"Parents who send their 'late-five' children to kindergarten with classmates who have already turned six years old often think they're giving them a jump start on learning. But a new analysis from the renowned Fullerton study says although late fives at first seem more advanced than same-age peers who start school a year later, any advantage disappears by fifth grade. The Fullerton study is a longitudinal analysis of 130 kids (now adults), all of whom could have started kindergarten as late-fives but half of whom were not enrolled until they turned six."

I came across a little quote the other day that I want to share with you that is SO right on the mark. It is from the novel *Zorba the Greek* (1946) written by Nikos Kasantzakis.

"I remembered one morning when I discovered a cocoon in the bark of a tree, just as a butterfly was making a hole in its case and preparing to come out. I waited a while, but it was too long appearing, and I was impatient. I bent over it and breathed on it to warm it. I warmed it as quickly as I could and the miracle began to happen before my eyes, faster than life. The case opened, the butterfly started slowly crawling out and I shall never forget my horror when I saw how its wings were folded back and crumpled; the wretched butterfly tried with its whole trembling body to unfold them. Bending over it, I tried to help it with my breath. In vain.



It needed to be hatched out patiently, and the unfolding of the wings should be a gradual process in the sun. Now it was too late. My breath had forced the butterfly to appear, all crumpled, before its time. It struggled desperately and, a few seconds later, died in the palm of my hand.

That little body is, I do believe, the greatest weight I have on my conscience. For I realize today that it is a mortal sin to violate the great laws of nature. We should not hurry, we should not be impatient, but we should confidently obey the eternal rhythm."

