**Time to say 'No!' to TV?**

Should your teenage son or daughter have a television in their bedroom? With many newspapers telling of the possible negative effects on your daughter or - especially - son's education of having free access to 'the box,' this is a question that is surely well worth your time researching.

Of course, every child has the right to choose (they will tell you.): 'We are free individuals in a free world.' But are they really free? Are their decisions informed? Or are they captives of an electronic box spewing out media hype and messages, some of which you would be frightened and embarrassed even to know about? When was the last time you watched the kinds of programs your teenage children watch?. Surely someone has to guide them someone that is who really cares, someone much wiser, someone who knows better?

So, should you give in? After all, at less than a hundred bucks a go, a portable TV makes for an easy Christmas present. Doesn't it? Well, the answer must still be a resounding, 'No.' Television is eating into so much of your teenage son or daughter's life already...

**When Does A Boy Become A Man?***When the time comes that you no longer feel the necessity to prove to me… or to yourself that you are a man - you will have become one.*

 Last Saturday you and I disagreed on how late you should be allowed to stay out. When I refused to extend your curfew, you complained that I was not treating you like an adult. This has become your standard answer whenever you can’t have your own way. But you really mean is that I don’t go along with your idea of what constitutes adulthood.

Let me put it this way: I do not pretend you are a grown man, because you are a 16-year-old boy. I am not, as you are, deceived by a few similarities of plumage, diet, and song into identifying you as a genuine adult. You may be as big and strong and capable as many adults (and you are probably argue better than most!), but only a child would maintain – and sincerely believe – that this manhood can be measured by lateness of the hour his father permits him to stay out at night.

Recently I attended an assembly of teen-agers that was addressed by a grown man. He seemed to believe that the way to get the audience on his was to pretend that he was one of them. He jittered and jiggled, and made odd faces, speaking disdainfully about adults, and laboured to use a great deal of what he thought was current teen-age slang.

Later, I heard the kids talk with amusement and contempt about his efforts to appear as one of them by imitating what he thought was teen-age behaviour. It was obvious from their comments that the speaker would have commanded more respect and attention if he had appeared as a grown man and not as a caricature of a boy. All he did was make more obvious the gulf of years that lay between him and his audience.

The kids could see how silly it was for an adult to pretend he was a boy, but they could not see the same thing in reverse. After the assembly I saw teen-age boys swaggering down the street with forbidden cigarettes in their mouths, manfully cursing as they swagger. Others roared away in their cars, belligerently demonstrating their “right” to the streets. I saw little teenage girls teetering along on spike heels in tight dresses, with extravagantly styled and dyed hair. All this, I am sure, because they believed that could impress the world with their maturity if they imitated behaviour that, to them, appeared to be adult.

All this reminded of me of a fable I used to read aloud when you were little, about the donkey who longed to be a lion. The donkey, if you recall, covered himself with a lion’s skin, crept in among the lions and lay down quietly among them. When the lions took no notice of him, and seemingly accepted him as one of them, the donkey was filled with joy and confidence. It seemed to him that he had actually become a lion, and he thought of donkey with contempt. All went well until evening, when the lions began their customary evening roaring. The little donkey, completely fooled by his own disguise, lifted his head and roared with them. What came out, of course, was a donkey’s bray. Whereupon the lions feel upon him and devoured him.

The moral applies equally to boys and men. Human victims of self deception are likely to be devoured by the lions of reality.
If the extremes of behaviour among teen-agers represented nothing more than a little natural daydreaming and imitation, they could be overlooked. But the danger in them -as in your attitude toward how late you stay out- is that they look like real lion skins, and are so employed.

I can understand why you and your friends are eager to become adults, and to enjoy the freedoms, privileges, and even the bad habits that are denied to you as children. What you fail to see is that these freedoms and privileges are routine, by minor by-products of being an adult. They are not, as many of you believe, the components of genuine maturity.

Look around typical American town. Ninety percent of the people who could stay up all night are in bed by ten. Ninety percent of the people who have the legal right to smoke wish they were able to give up the habit. Ninety percent of the people who have the right to buy and drink all the liquor they want are sober. Ninety percent of the grown single men and women, who have the opportunity to be as sexually casual as they wish, are looking for a mate with whom to settle down. What it all adds up to is the fact that the huge majority of men and women are mature. And yet children seem to believe that the way to prove themselves adult is to imitate the unstable, destructive, irresponsible minority.

It is possible for children to convince themselves and each other that disobedience, late hours, smoking, drinking, sexual experiments, and the rest actually transform them into adults. When this happens they often begin to despise their own contemporaries and the tasks that are appropriate to their age. They often come to resent not only parental direction and control, but to resist and resent school, and avoid normal teen-age activities and patterns. The boy who believes that a deep voice and bad habits have made him manly wants to quite school, get a job, buy a car, and “be a real man.” The girl who has talked and acted and dressed her way out of being her age believes that getting married at once will result in her being an instant woman.

Several days ago, our newspaper interviewed a group of teen-agers on what they thought it meant to be adult. Some of the boys seemed to envision maturity as a time when they would be big enough to be irresponsible without having to account to anyone for their behaviour. One girl of seventeen wanted to get married right away so she could escape her parents, be an adult, and be in a position where “nobody can tell me what to do.”

I felt sorry for these boys whose goal in life was to be failures as men. I felt sorry for the girls who didn’t seem to understand the absence or orders did not mean the absence of duties; that the reason no one seems to tell adults what to do is that they do what has to be done without being told.

It is a sad thing when children renounce their own generation and try to sneak into maturity as through it were a border to be crossed under cover of darkness. They do not become free and equal citizens of the adult world. They become half-formed semi-adults who are as out of place in the adult world as they thought they were in the child’s. They are the young, untrained, uneducated, unprepared, and inept people who have trouble finding and keeping the worst jobs, whose hasty escape-marriages fall apart at the first tremor, whose babies often become public charges. They try to flee the restraints of being adults as once they fled the restraints of being children. Only now there is nowhere to run. They are the donkeys who are so taken in by their lion costumes that they attempt to roar and are devoured when, in fact, they bray.

You complain that I do not treat you like an adult. My reply is, I would rather treat you like what you are. And at sixteen, you are a boy and you belong in a boy’s world, accepting a boy’s responsibilities, dreaming a boy’s dreams, learning a boy’s freedoms, appreciating your boyish years. Being a successful boy is the best guarantee in the world that you will be a successful man.

In a few years, time and experience will make you an adult. When it does, I will treat you like an adult. It will be impossible for me to do otherwise. I don’t know when that time will come, or when you will discover that it has. But I can give you one clue. When the time comes that you no longer feel the necessity to prove to me, to your friends, to the world, or to yourself that you are a man – you will have become one.

By: Henry G. Felsen

http://www.howardforums.com/archive/topic/195680-1.html

**Hidden Lessons by David Suzuki**

In spite of the vast expanse of wilderness in this country, most Canadian children grow up in urban settings. In other words, they live in a world conceived, shaped and dominated by people. Even the farms located around cities and towns are carefully groomed and landscaped for human convenience. There’s nothing wrong with that, of course, but in such an environment, it’s very easy to lose any sense of connection with nature.
 In city apartments and dwellings, the presence of cockroaches, fleas, ants, mosquitoes or houseflies is guaranteed to **elicit** the spraying of insecticides. Mice and rats are poisoned or trapped, while the gardener wages a never-ending struggle with ragweed, dandelions, slugs and root-rot. We have a modern **arsenal** of chemical weapons to fight off these invaders and we use them **lavishly**.
 We worry when kids roll in the mud or wade through a puddle because they’ll get “dirty.” Children learn attitudes and values very quickly and the lesson in cities is very clear – nature is an enemy, it’s dirty, dangerous or a nuisance. So youngsters learn to distance themselves from nature and to try to control it. I am astonished at the number of adults who **loathe** or are terrified by snakes, spiders, butterflies, worms, birds – the list seems endless.
 If you reflect on the history of humankind, you realize that for 99 per cent of our species’ existence on the planet, we were deeply embedded in and dependent on nature. When plants and animals were plentiful, we flourished. When famine and drought struck, our numbers fell accordingly. We remain every bit as dependent upon nature today – we need plants to fix photons of energy unto sugar molecules and to cleanse the air and replenish the oxygen. It is **folly** to forget our dependence on an intact ecosystem. But we do whenever we teach our offspring to fear or detest the natural world. The **urban** message kids get runs completely counter to what they are born with, a natural interest in other life forms. Just watch a child in a first encounter with a flower or an ant – there is instant interest and fascination. We condition them out of it.
 The result is that when my 7-year old daughter brings home new friends, they **invariably** recoil in fear when she tries to show them her favorite pets – three beautiful salamanders her grandfather got for her in Vancouver. And when my 3-year old comes wandering in with her treasures – millipedes, spiders, slugs and sow bugs that she catches under rocks lining the front lawn – children and adults alike usually respond by saying “yuk.”
 I can’t overemphasize the tragedy of that attitude. For, **inherent** in this view is the assumption that human beings are special and different and that we lie outside nature. Yet it is belief that is creating many of our environmental problems today.
 Does it matter whether we sense our place in nature so long as we have cities and technology? Yes, for many reasons, not the least of which is that virtually all scientists were fascinated with nature as children and retained that curiosity throughout their lives. But a far more important reason is that if we retain a spiritual sense of connection with all other life forms, it can’t help but profoundly affect the way we act. Whenever my daughter sees a picture of an animal dead or dying, she asks me fearfully, “Daddy are there any more?” At 7 years, she already knows about extinction and it frightens her.
 The yodel of a loon at sunset, the vast flocks of migrating waterfowl in the fall, the **indomitable** salmon returning thousands of kilometers – these images of nature have inspired us to create music, poetry and art. And when we struggle to retain a handful of California condors or whooping cranes, it’s clearly not from a fear of ecological collapse, it’s because there is something obscene and frightening about the disappearance of another species at our hands.
 If children grow up understanding that we are animals they will look at other species with a sense of fellowship and community. If they understand their ecological place – the biosphere – then when children see the great virgin forests of the Queen Charlotte Islands being clear cut, they will feel physical pain, because they will understand that those trees are an extension of themselves.
 When children who know their place in the ecosystem see factories spewing poison into the air, water and soil, they will feel ill because someone has violated their home. This is not mystical mumbo-jumbo because we have lost a sense of ecological place. Those of us who are parents have to realize the unspoken, negative lessons we are conveying to our children. Otherwise, they will continue to desecrate this planet as we have.
 It’s not easy to avoid giving these hidden lessons. I have struggled to cover my dismay and queasiness when Severn and Sarika come running in with a large wolf spider or when we’ve emerged from a ditch covered with leeches or when they have been stung accidently by yellow jackets feeding on our leftovers. But that’s nature. I believe efforts to teach our children to love and respect other life forms are priceless.

*Act of Writing 6 - http://www.jiskha.com/display.cgi?id=1205629782*