

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO KILL!



David Grossman is a professional who trains medical, law enforcement, and U.S. military personnel about the realities of warfare. He trains people how to react to death and injuries. He cautions soldiers to recognize that, when they go into battle, they will be killing people, and how they should relate to this. **Before his retirement, Grossman was an Army infantry officer and killing psychologist and counselor for nearly 25 years.**

His hometown is Jonesboro, Arkansas. On March 24, he was at home when he suddenly learned about the schoolyard shooting deaths of four girls and a teacher. Ten others were injured. As a result, two boys, ages 11 and 13, were jailed and charged with murder.

Immediately, Grossman, already an expert on the subject, set to work researching more fully into the matter. He has written a book, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, which presents the causes of this increasing violence in America.

It is the purpose of this brief article to review his professional findings.

The **per capita murder rate** doubled in this country between 1957 (when the FBI began keeping track of such data) and 1992. Far worse is the increase in the **aggravated assault rate**. This is the rate at which people are attempting to kill one another. It has gone from 60 per 100,000, in 1957, to over 440 per 100,000 by 1995.

The problem is gaining epidemic proportions all over the Western world. In **Canada**, per capita assaults increased almost fivefold between 1964 and 1993; attempted murder increased nearly sevenfold, and murders doubled. In both **Australia** and **New Zealand**, the assault rate increased approximately fourfold, and the murder rate nearly doubled. The assault rate has tripled in **Sweden**, and doubled in **England, France, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Scotland, and Hungary.**

The prison population in the U.S. has nearly quadrupled between 1975 and 1992.

If it were not for two factors, the murder rate would be far higher. First, so many criminals are now behind bars. Second, is the improvement in medical technology.

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According to the U.S. Army Medical Corps, nine out of ten would have survived a wound in Vietnam, which would have killed nine out of ten soldiers in World War II. Thus the murder rate would be ten times higher today if it were not for helicopter medevacs, paramedics, CPR, trauma centers, 911 operators, special techniques, and newly developed emergency medicines

Why is such an out-of-the way, peaceful place as New Zealand plagued with assaults and murders, as are occurring in the United States? What is happening? What has gone wrong? What is causing this problem? That is the objective of this article.

You need to take action about this information, and also share these facts with your friends.

After the Jonesboro killings, the American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Juvenile Violence declared that **children do not naturally kill. It is a learned skill.**

But where did they learn it in the quiet town of Jonesboro? The present writer has been in Jonesboro, and it is as peaceful a place as you can find in the land.

Scientists have discovered that, during heated arguments and intense anger or fright, vasoconstriction tends to shut down the blood vessels to the frontal lobes—the gray matter which makes you a human being. At this point, reflex activity occurs more actively in the midbrain, and thought processes become more animal-like.

Yet it has been found that, like the frontal lobes, even the midbrain automatically draws back from killing a fellow human being.

The military has a problem because of this. They have to train soldiers to kill when they go out onto the battlefield. Without this special “behavior modification,” as it is called, the men are far less likely to pull the trigger when they sight the enemy.

Ancient military historians report that the vast majority of battle killing happened, not during the actual battle, but only after one side had fled. Then they were killed from behind.

The average firing rate was extremely low during the Civil War. At the Battle of Gettysburg, of the 27,000 muskets picked up from the dead and dying after the battle, **90 percent were loaded. Over half had multiple loads in the barrel.** These facts are all the more astounding, since it took 95 percent of their time to load muskets and only 5 percent to fire them. In battle, the soldiers were not shooting their guns. A soldier cannot even fire a multiple load!

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After loading their musket, the soldier would bring it to his shoulders, but would not fire it. He could not bring himself to kill. **After aiming it, he would lower it and load it again.** This is why many guns had several loads in them; one had 23!

Of those who did fire, only a small number fired at the enemy; the rest shot over their heads.

It was not until the Second World War that someone carried out a careful investigation into the matter. U.S. Army Brig. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall commissioned a research group to find out what was going on. **They learned that, in battle, only 15-20 percent of the soldiers fired at exposed enemy soldiers.**

Since the military is in the business of killing the enemy, the U.S. government set about to change the ratio. They developed a new technique, which was extremely successful; so successful that, by the Korean War, about 55 percent were shooting to kill. By Vietnam, over 90 percent were.

They had trained the men to kill. In order to do this they had to get them to like the idea very much.

The method used to train the soldiers consists of a combination of desensitization, psychological conditioning, role modeling, and brutalization.

Desensitization is the process of teaching someone to like what he used to detest. Army recruits are taught to *enjoy seeing brutality and murder.* Yet they are taught this without having slain anyone!

How this is done at boot camp is not pleasant to relate. They are shown war movies of men being killed, along with all the gore of seeing men, women, and children—living and dead—who are wounded, mutilated, or pretty much chopped in pieces. Along with this, the soldiers in training are given soft drinks and junk food; and the officer in charge gets them to laughing about it.

Over a matter of a few weeks, the men are morally changed. They can then go into battle and kill men with impunity. Their consciences are dead. Sounds grotesque?

Sound familiar? The basic process occurs in your own living rooms, night after night.

This is what is happening to the children of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand—and every other nation which has television sets in their living room.

The very same methods of desensitization toward violence occurs—not for 6 weeks of basic training—but for a decade or more.

The gradual changeover begins at the age of 18 months when a child is first able to discern what is happening on television. Those young children watch what is happening on television and try to mimic it.

But it is not until children are six or seven that they grasp that they are seeing something that is not really happening. Prior to that age, when the children see somebody stabbed, raped, shot, brutalized, degraded, or murdered—they believe it is actually happening. Someone they have come to know and like is being hurt, and frequently killed.

When a three, four, or five year old learns to relate to someone for 90 minutes, and then watches him violently gunned or stabbed, they are wordlessly horrified. Yet this experience happens to them hundreds, even thousands of times, in those first few years.

When they say anything to older folk about this portrayed horror, **they are told that “it’s all in fun; don’t worry about it.”** But, more often, they silently observe that the big folk and their older siblings are not the least bit bothered. So why should they be? **It is apparently an important part of daily living;** and they might as well watch such shows some more, since they are exciting.

So it becomes exciting to watch mayhem and murder. All the while, the screenwriters are desperately trying to devise new plots and methods of aggression, perversion, violence, drug-dealing, robbery, forgery, obscenity, and murder. That is what they are paid to do, and their paychecks are determined by how vivid their imaginations are.

All the while, the children are learning to enjoy such twisted activities. It is not long before they would rather watch such viciousness than view nature scenes. And, **in their changed thinking, is there not good reason to watch it? Nothing like this much excitement happens anywhere else in the world around them!**

Year after year, their value systems are changing. Eventually these young people get older, and decide that they would like to indulge in the same kind of excitement.

Exciting things that you see others do, things that you have come to like, you would like to do also.

The definitive study on the subject of the relationship of television viewing to violence was conducted by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The method used in the study and its lengthy extent produced very solid facts.

Over a period of time, their research team analyzed the amount of violence in a number of twin localities (two nations, regions, or cities) which, although separated from one

another, were alike in nearly every other detail except that one had television and the other did not.

Quite consistently, this ongoing analysis revealed that, every time an area acquired television, there was an immediate explosion of violence on the playground; and, within 15 years, a doubling of the murder rate.

It was then determined that the 15-year factor was caused by the length of time for the brutalization of a three- to five-year-old to reach the “prime crime age.”

So now you know how to destroy the mind of your children. Just turn them loose on television, and you will criminalize their little minds.

Of course, television violence is not helping adults either. Frequently men and women get into an argument, or get a little alcohol in their bodies, and they act out what they have been looking at for years.

Television trained the mind to accept violence as a quick solution; alcohol, hard drugs, or extreme anger brought the training to full fruition. A terrible crime is committed, and the bewildered offender wonders how he could have done such a terrible thing.

Literally hundreds of studies have been conducted—directly linking television viewing with violence. (And magazine, newspaper, and book violence has also been implicated.) Did you know that, at the present time, there is more data linking violence in the media to violence in society—than there is data linking cancer to tobacco!

The Journal of the American Medical Association concluded its report with this comment:

“The introduction of television in the 1950s caused a subsequent doubling of the homicide rate, *i.e.*, long-term childhood exposure to television is a causal factor behind approximately one half of the homicides committed in the United States, or approximately 10,000 homicides annually. If, hypothetically, television technology had never been developed, there would today be 10,000 fewer homicides each year in the United States, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer injurious assaults.”—*JAMA*, June 10, 1992.

We have discussed desensitization training, as used to teach new soldiers to like killing. **The military also uses classical conditioning (the kind Pavlov did with dogs). This is the use of association to train the person. It gives the person a treat when he sees something he is to learn to like.**

The Japanese trained their men to a very high rate of murder enjoyment by letting the soldiers watch as prisoners were murdered, encouraging them to cheer as it happened, and then giving them some treats to eat.

American television accomplishes the same love of violence and death, because it has years, not weeks, in which to do it. Very frequently the children dine on soft drinks and crackers as they watch the horrors on the screen before them.

At Jonesboro, when one of the high school teachers broke the news of the horrible tragedy across town to her students,—they laughed. How could such a response occur? **Classical conditioning. The students in this quiet town had learned to like killing—from the movies they watched nightly—piped in from the Hollywood sewage think tanks.**

You may recall how the ancient Romans cheered as the Christians were murdered in the Roman stadium, the coliseum. ***Your children are in the coliseum every night! They have come to like it there. What are you doing to change the situation?***

Operant conditioning is more powerful. It teaches someone to do something in an emergency, by quick, unthinking reflex action.

Such an emergency occurs when he is frightened or angry. Over the years, television instills the thought process that, when angry or afraid, get a gun and shoot the other person dead!

The military and law enforcement use operant conditioning in the targets they now present to the men to fire at. No longer are they circular bull's-eyes; they have been changed to silhouettes of men. Suddenly, a target snaps up into place. **The soldier or policeman has only a split second to respond. He is trained to instantly fires at the man. He is learning to shoot accurately—and at a human being.**

Later, those men will shoot reflexively when trouble occurs. Military experts now know that 75-80 percent of the killing on the modern battlefield is this type of response.

At Jonesboro, two boys killed a lot of people. Yet it was just young boys who did it! One had a fair amount of experience shooting guns. The other had never fired a real gun in his life. Between them, they fired 27 shots from a range of over 100 yards, and hit 15 people. That is a remarkably high score. **Police frequently run into situations where children who have never handled real guns did quite well at gunning people down. Why? Video games.**

Every time a child plays an interactive point-and-shoot video game, **he is learning the exact same operant conditioning that soldiers use when they shoot at their targets! The child is learning to shoot to kill, and he is learning how to be accurate in his firing.**

There was a young boy in a typical American city who, like many others, had spent a lot of time on video games learning to point and shoot. Yet he was unacquainted with real guns. One day his buddy showed him a snub-nosed .38, and suggested they have

some fun robbing a local grocery store. This would be more exciting than the video game!

Once inside the store, the boy pointed the gun at the clerk's head. When the clerk turned to look at the pair, the boy instinctively fired, without any of them having said a word.

Six video cameras recorded the whole thing. When the boy was later asked why he did it, he said he did not know. "This was not what we had planned for; it just seemed to come natural."

Soldiers and police know that they are not supposed to shoot at every opportunity! But when your child puts a quarter in the machine, he only does so with the intention of firing a gun to kill people—several of them—before the quarter runs out.

As your child is doing that, the excitement of the situation causes vasoconstriction which closes the frontal lobes—the thinking part of his mind—and **the midbrain comes into play. It reflexively makes the decisions, and the action is what it is been conditioned to do over a period of time.**

That is what that young South Carolina boy did. The excitement of the moment caused his heart rate to quicken, vasoconstriction to occur, and his midbrain told him to do what he always did. When he pulled the trigger, he shot with remarkable accuracy—hitting the clerk, a father of two, between the eyes.

What produced that high excitement? It was having a real gun in his hand, and someone standing before him.

As a result of such conditioning, the courts of the land are being confronted with homemade sociopaths who show little or no remorse.

Your children at home are learning to kill and learning to like it.

Then there is the role model technique. In the military, the role model is the drill sergeant. He personifies violence and aggression. It is his job to make the soldier tough like himself. At first, the young recruit recoils from such a creature, but he soon learns to admire and want to be like him.

In everyday life, the role models are very capable men and women who engage in violence before the eyes of your children.

There are also the copycat cluster murders appearing on the six o'clock television news. Everyone on TV becomes an instant celebrity. Someone, someplace will want to do what that killer did—so he also can become important and nationally famous.

The average preschooler in America watches 27 hours of television a week. What do you think they are viewing? Most of it is not educational films about birds. Whether cartoons or motion pictures, they frequently see violence more often than anything else. According to educational research, that is what they have been trained to prefer. What else is as emotionally stimulating? They get more of a kick out of it than anything else. For the conditioned child, it is more fun.

The average child has more one-to-one involvement with the television set than he has with his parents, teachers, or anyone else!

It is crucial that, right now, while the impact of what you have just read is in your mind—that you make a decision about your own television set—and act on it immediately.

There is still time to help salvage your child's mind, but you must act quickly. Throw the garbage box out of the house! Cart it off to the dump.

Unfortunately, there will still be someone down the street who did not turn off theirs—so their child will soon be out looking for someone to shoot at.

Unplugging the television and junking it will make yours a far better home. But changing the kind of programs that are shown by the television industry is also needed, in order to make your community a better place in which to live.

Without government legislation, demanded by the people, the television industry is unlikely to change.

We live in a crisis hour of human history. How much longer will it be before the end?
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