When young children are exposed to violence either through entertainment, the news, within their community or family, they need an outlet for expressing their feelings. Children often do not understand the violence they see and through their play they struggle to work it out and understand it.

Usually, children who have been around the most violence have a strong need to work it out and tend to have more violent play. The types of toys children play with are influential to the type of play they engage in. Toys that allow children to be creative, such as blocks, stuffed animals, or clay, can be used in many ways. Toys that are more structured such as action figures that talk or Lego kits direct children how to play. Popular toys today are mainly the type that are highly structured and often linked to violent media, even if targeted towards children. These toys are frequently liked because of the excitement and the power that children feel when using them. These toys direct children to repeat the violence they see in the media. For some children, this may cause a lack of more creative play and therefore a lack of skills acquired through such creative play.

If you are a parent, or work with children, here are some tips to help children in this area:

A main priority is to try and reduce the amount of violence children see. If you are a parent at home and you’d like to watch the evening news,

Be sure that your children are engaged elsewhere in a safe activity. Children need productive ways to work out and understand the violence they see. Having children draw or paint pictures can be helpful when they can be discussed with an adult during and/or afterwards. Adults need to think critically about the lessons children are directly and indirectly learning from the influences all around them. If any lessons need to be counteracted, such as a child learning that violence is the answer to solving problems, then adults need to be strong in order to approach difficult subjects with children.

Encourage children to talk to parents or teachers about the violence they see especially when they do not understand. Encourage children to transition from play that imitates, especially violence, to play that is more creative and allows children to use their minds to think something through. Help children turn violence into positive behavior by talking with them (“I see Batman did a lot of fighting today. What was the problem?”)

What the Average Person Can Do while America is at War

It is important to be informed enough of what is going on around the world through reliable news sources. However, too much reality of war and hardships are numbing. Turn off the TV, close the papers, and close your news websites after you have updated yourself. It is unhealthy to become overly absorbed because it may lead you to hopelessness and depression, and apathy towards the positive actions that you might be able to take.

Find a worthwhile cause to be a part of. You can write your Congressperson to express approval or disproval for their political platform. Have a collection for the needy in your community or in a lesser-developed country. Volunteer. There are a number of ways to volunteer in your community, from sorting donations to tutoring children to helping to serve food or build a house. You also could offer babysitting services to a parent whose spouse is away serving in the military.

Spend time together as a family. Think about all that you have to be thankful for and remember good times spent together as a family. Laugh and play together as well as work on a family project together. You could decide to paint a room or have a garage sale together as a family.

Take care of yourself. Eat healthy foods, exercise, and get enough sleep each night. Help your family to do these things as well.

If you are spiritually-minded, do not underestimate the research proven effect of prayer and meditation on your own well-being and that of your community in helping to promote peace in our world.

Appreciate your loved ones and appreciate the positive things in life, like a beautiful sunset or smiling or sitting with a good book.

Celebrate Diversity

In America today, there may be added stress between people of different cultures, nationalities, and religions. It is helpful to remember the following:

✓ Examine your beliefs about those who are different from you. Be willing to change ill feelings or hostility towards people different in ethnicity or religion.
✓ Do not stereotype. Remind yourself and your family/friends that just because a certain people from a certain cultural or religious group acted in a certain way, does not mean all people of that group will act that way.
✓ Look for the best in everyone you encounter. Immerse yourself in a book or music or a performance of a culture different from your own. You do not have to agree with everything they believe but you can learn to appreciate different cultures and thereby learn to accept them.


Children’s Week is March 25, 2007 to April 1, 2007

“Celebrating Children and Parents”

“The purpose of Children’s Week is to create a shared vision of the State of Florida’s commitment to its children and families and to engage a long-term process to develop and implement strategies for moving the shared vision forward.”

To find out more visit: http://www.childrensweek.org
This is a very important time for families. One or more people in military families will be sent to serve our country or were already sent. For the ones remaining at home, life can be challenging, but there is hope.

Having a strong support network is vital to the resilience of a family. The support network can include everything from children’s schools to church to immediate and extended family and of course your friends. Not baring the difficulties alone is essential for the spouse and/or parent at home. If you are in that situation, try not to be afraid to ask for help. If possible, try to have regularly scheduled times to gather with your family and/or friends. For example, you could join another family every Sunday evening for a meal and board games or a movie. If you have children, include them in activities and trips, and at the same time remember to have some alone time too. Your children need you to take care of yourself so that you can take care of them. Getting enough rest, healthy eating, and staying active are all necessary for you to maintain health.

Put in place a communication routine between you and your deployed loved one. Writing is a good idea whether hand-written letters or e-mails. Phone calls are also good, but be careful not to create a phone bill more expensive than you can afford. Take advantage of assistance programs for military families like Operation Uplink (http://www.operationuplink.org/), which provides free phone cards.

Children are definitely vulnerable at time like this. Talking with them is helpful. Answer questions as best as you can and depending on their age, share with them as much information as appropriate. The dinner table can be a comforting ritual to share thoughts and feelings and any fears that any of the family members may be having. It can also be a time of remembering and sharing favorite memories with the family.

Tips for parents:

- Hug your children.
- Limit your children’s viewing of graphic news and images on television and the Internet.
- Be a good listener and help keep communication open.
- Talk about feelings and provide ways for expressing them (drawing, coloring, painting, etc.)
- Share your own fears with other adults.
- When your children ask questions you do not know the answer to, it is ok to admit that.
- Try to keep up with regular routines as much as possible.


What’s New at Orange County Extension?

Meet the New Extension Agent!

Jonnali Mayberry began with Orange County Extension in November 2006. She is a graduate of the University of Florida with degrees in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences. She is currently working in the area of Human Development, which ranges in subjects from parenting education to marriage education to caring for the elderly. Her main focus for her first year will be reestablishing the safety programming to schools in the Union Park area of Orlando in conjunction with the Union Park Neighborhood Center for Families.

She also will be implementing for the first time in Orange County, the “Before You Tie the Knot” premarital education program. In the summer, she will be continuing the Teen Force Academy for high school students. If you would like more information, please contact Jonnali Mayberry at jonnali@ufl.edu or call (407) 836-7572.

Save $32.50!

Did You Know you could save $32.50 on your marriage license by participating in an approved marriage education program?

Stay tuned for opportunities in the near future with Extension to participate in an Orange County approved marriage education program called “Before You Tie the Knot,” to save money on your marriage license!

NEW LOCATION... Great Educational Opportunities!

Our new facility is located conveniently off South Conway Road between Hoffman Rd. and Judge Rd. Visit us at our new location!

Solutions for Your Life!
Real Answers to Real Questions.

Check out www.solutionsforyourlife.com to learn current, science based answers to your questions on a variety of topics including family life!

Jonnali Mayberry
Family & Consumer Science Agent I

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