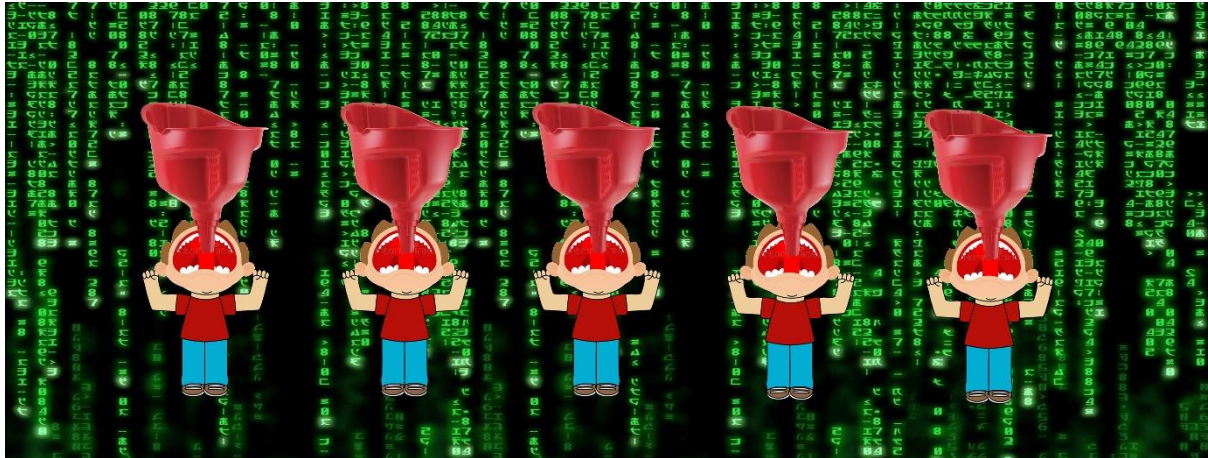


Our Kids Are Drowning in Nonstop Low-Grade Stimulation

Shôn Ellerton, January 28, 2023

Our entertainment and social media industries want nothing better than to force feed our hyper children with vast amounts of low grade material.



I thought I had it cracked but I fear I'm losing my young son to the world of simple, mindless, overly paced, uninformative, infantile and puerile sources of entertainment.

He seems to come across an endless supply of it and begs me if he can watch it or for me to download it if it's a game. As for screen time restrictions, enforcing them is a continuous chore often met with a lot of pleading and whining about how his other friends get to do that or do this. And it's getting seemingly worse as time goes by. The more that he has access to, the more there seems to be able to get.

Last year, I caved in by purchasing one of those Nintendo Switch devices. Sometimes, I regret that I did, although, we do enforce time restrictions on using it. Little did I know that, on top of a yearly subscription, there are additional fees for most of the games, many of which don't get used any longer when the next best thing comes around, spread by word from his classmates at school. Perhaps I should have taken a similar approach taken by those who own social media sites who disallow their kids to partake in social media. I don't know.

What I find troubling with most of these games is the ultra-high intensity of continual movement. It's *always* moving. Always! There is no pause. Everything is on the go. Go! Go! Go! Forget strategy. Forget mystery. Forget adventure. Take games like Rocket League, in which racing cars play a form of hi-tech soccer complete with explosions and online tournaments. Or Fortnite, a game that looks

like it was based on the Japanese movie, [*Battle Royale*](#), a gruesome and twisted movie where high-school children are selected by lottery to battle each other to death on some island. Watching kids play Fortnite is an assault to the eyes. All I can take in are shitty graphics, jerky movements, and players climbing endless towers and jumping across terrain while killing things. That's what it seems to be. I will make a glowing exception to Minecraft which I equate to as the modern day version of Lego. Although it would be a lot better if it introduced an element of real life physics to prevent impossible structures from being built within its blocky environment.

The first player shooters of the early 2000s including Quake, Half Life, Castle Wolfenstein and Doom are now old-school and still very popular with middle-aged folk, including me, although seldom do I get a chance to do so these days. Once regarded in its time as a pastime for the twenty-thirty-somethings, they hardly warrant a mention with today's younger generation. Something became lost between the generations, and that something is attention span, patience, and the yearning for mystery and adventure. Wandering slowly around creepy dilapidated tiled corridors in a disused hospital. What's around the corner? Or clambering over very high bridge viaducts against a howling wind, gingerly negotiating the steel trusses while snipers are aiming at you. This sort of thing doesn't seem to interest the young video game player anymore. It's not fast enough, unless one includes the multiplayer versions which are decidedly fast-paced. Even the latest Doom series eschews the slower paced mystery, atmosphere, and adventure of its predecessors rather going for frequent all-out battle scenes and a multitude of bosses which must be defeated before going to the next stage. There are quite a few newer video games which still retain the element of mystery and atmosphere, but they seem to attract those in their late 30s and over.

There's a distinct lack of interest with both *atmosphere* and *ambience* with today's younger generation who prefer just to have continual and constant play and movement. Most of these Nintendo-type video games have *zero* atmosphere and ambience. Whether it's swallowing up little gold coins while negotiating an obstacle course or kick-boxing and throwing bolts of lightning into crude-looking adversaries within a jerky-moving two-dimensional landscape. Designed to arouse young people to shout and scream as they scurry away at their game controllers. There are tournaments, often in Asian countries, in which thousands of teenagers will pile into a stadium and watch kids play high-speed video games,

some of whom make vast quantities of money off the masses who are watching them. Very peculiar. It's just action, action and more action. No wonder kids have no attention spans anymore.

So many kids are so attuned to continual action that many are displaying real signs of attention deficit symptoms. Any pause or moment of slowness is perceived as boring. Take kids movies for example. I challenge anyone to roll off a couple of kids movies of recent times which are *not* animated. Go on. Try it. Moreover, try finding a kids movie which doesn't have non-stop dialogue. Even the fastest of action scenes, there will be some character rolling off a needless running commentary. Not a moment of silence. Seriously, one watches through these and wonders out aloud why the hell they don't shut up now and again. If one thinks at a conspiratorial level, it's an almost deliberate ploy by the entertainment industry to keep kids on some sort of audio visual form of an amphetamine drug designed to suppress patience and the ability for the child to think for themselves.

As for books, they haven't escaped the scourge of ADHD-inducing content either. I was shocked and dismayed to find out that educational establishments allow the acceptance of comic books to be classified as official books in the repertoire of a child's reading list in South Australia. *Dog Man* and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* are such examples. Yet, oddly, such classics as *Winnie the Pooh* are not worthy of being mentioned as suitable literature for children according to the South Australian schools' curriculum. There are many other timeless classics out there which have been given the pushover for more modern works to keep up with the times and being politically correct. For example, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Wizard of Oz*, and *The Secret Garden*. The works of Enid Blyton such as *The Famous Five* and the *Secret Seven* are considered outdated, racist, and inappropriate for today's children by the postmodernist left. Which is a shame, because they invoke a great sense of real-life adventure for the young and curious. However, it's okay to have *fantasy* books involving swords, dragons, ogres, sexless characters, wizards and castles. But to satisfy the reducing attention span of today's child, it's usually highly illustrated and the prose is simplistic without the aid of unnecessary adjectives to adorn the setting and the atmosphere.

With music, it is the same thing. My son, prior to being introduced to other music by his friends, was listening to quite complex pieces of music and really enjoying it. I introduced much of it to him and, subsequently, he created his own playlist from our vast selection of music on our NAS drive. Later, I subscribed to a music

Tidal account, a better version of Spotify in terms of sound quality, which integrates with my music library. At first, he was finding new material which wasn't bad but, as time went by, it had essentially regressed into ultra-simplistic songs with perhaps, four chords at best. I had had enough when he came across football and other sports-related songs, all of which, led me to pause the Internet at times. What is it with kids aversion to instrumental or more complex music? They get bored with it and no wonder. Today's electronic media, movies and TV shows made for kids are designed to get them on instant highs and being insufferably addicted to them.

The worst offenders for making our kids over-hyper, attention challenged, and less intelligent are, of course, some of those videos on YouTube featuring shouty twenty-somethings, many of which make millions of dollars, doing stupid games and tricks or worse, doing asinine things like lighting farts and exploding plastic bottles of soda with Mentos tablets. More, specifically, TikTok, a Chinese platform which mankind could do without, harbours the worst of all video content. All very short, designed never to educate or inform but to show off how stupid we've become. Unless you're in China, where this platform shows off how talented or smart you are. If China's intent is to make the rest of the Western world look stupid, they're doing a fine job!

These days, when the Internet goes down, kids seem to be at an utter loss as to what to do with themselves. Despite the plethora of software we have installed collectively on our laptops, desktops and tablets, when the Internet goes down, it's all moaning and complaining. Doesn't matter if we have drawing packages, arcade games, or music creation software. The whole world collapses around them. Even the damned Nintendo Switch requires an Internet connection for some of the games to work, and, of course, it's those networked games which the kids gravitate towards.

So what's the solution?

Well, there are many but they all work together as a plan.

Sports and other outdoor activities like going to the playground, taking part in extracurricular activities, spending time away from the house, and so on, are great distractions away from the Internet. Urban exploration was one of mine even as very young child, although it's deemed as not being the safest of activities.

Introducing high quality TV programs, movies and music can be an aid to extend the knowledge of young minds. Clearly, there's material we don't want our kids to watch. However, we, as adults, tend to underestimate the intellectual powers of a young child and assume that if they are bored with watching a movie because there's not enough action in it, they wouldn't understand a more deeply involving one. I took a gamble and introduced my son at only six with such movies like *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* (with some parts skipped over), *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, and old classics like the original *Pink Panther* movies which he really enjoys. It's an interesting age, because it's *those* movies which he tends to re-watch but getting him to watch one now which he hasn't seen before seems more challenging now. The same applies to music as well in which he was exposed to a variety of music covering rock, punk, classical, and electronica. He still enjoys The Clash, The Prodigy, Depeche Mode and The Beatles for example.

Taking a quick diversion on the subject of appropriate material for children to watch, I would like to make an observation on the subject of bad language. We, as a family, have enjoyed Netflix's *Drive to Survive*, a comprehensive series of documentaries running through the recent years of Formula One racing. It is utterly littered with bad language prompting most parents to stop their children from watching it. However, it has inspired our son with car racing and Formula One and seems to know more about the drivers than we do. But this is the interesting thing. He does not swear despite the frequent bouts of bad language in the program. However, as parents, we tend not to swear and strongly discourage doing so. We also explain to him that while many others swear, we do not. Many of his classmates swear and we take great pride when he comes home to admonish those who *do* swear. Unfortunately, there are many good movies and TV programs which contain swearing but we find very little, if any at all, in the older ones. It annoys me intensely why so many movies which could be deemed as suitable for kids contain swearing and especially frustrating that movies from yesteryear can get by without it but we seem to not be able to do so now. What's changed? Ultimately, it just proves that children are far more apt to swear if it is taken as the norm in the household rather than being exposed to it elsewhere.

On the subject of enforcing time restrictions for those activities which require Internet connections, it seems a simple enough task to do so, but is it? We *do* encourage our son to use software drawing packages, write stories, or dabble with music creation programs on our desktops, laptops, and tablets. But what tends to happen is that he quickly gets bored with them and clicks on the YouTube app or

browses on the Internet. The problem is easily solved with a good router with Access Control features. It is very easy to block any device with a MAC address to be allowed to access the Internet. No doubt, he will become old enough to realise this little trick!

To finish this off, the ultimate message is that our kids are being fed online media of extraordinarily low intellectual value at such a high speed, much like when geese are force fed corn to make Pâté de Foie. Kids do not need constant stimulation. By doing so, we are exacerbating the onset of attention deficit disorders and hyper behaviour. In essence, we should be telling those industries who prey on children that kids need time to think and absorb, to smell the roses and taste the essence of being alive, and finally, to slow the f&*k down!