



Unexpected News Media: Child-Based Election Discussions

Least expected information is disarming. Children feel it too.

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Least expected information in any situation is disarming. Today, many Americans are waking up to unexpected news (link is external). Information from various media outlets disseminated for some time a particular candidate would carry the majority of support over the course of the November 8 evening. Many families may have spoken at length, in a matter of fact manner about the predicted inevitable unfolding as both legitimate and logical, often without question. Surprise.

Processing information from news media can be both surface and complication. "Surface" in that messages carry information for the most part in a simple manner, efficiently understood by the bulk of consumers. "Complicated" in that results of major events may not meet the expectation of predictability or household feelings. Screen time processing with young children in the mix can be confusing for them as well as parents who are at a loss at where to begin the conversation. Keep in mind there are ramifications on background television as it relates to parent-child interactions, executive function processing, or language acquisition (Lavigne, Hanson & Anderson, 2015; Nathanson et al., 2014; Pempek, Kirkorian, & Anderson, 2014; Tomopoulos, et al., 2014; Krenn, 2015). Even if your kids are not directly in front of the television this morning, you may be for as it is hard to turn off as the searching for answers of explanation begins.

Encourage children to talk about what they have viewed/heard either in the foreground or the background. The term "scary" may come up today. Pearce & Field (2015) completed a meta-analysis of the effect of "scary TV" on young children. "Scary TV" is defined "as anything that has evoked a fear response (Pearce & Field, 2015; Krenn, 2015). Researchers predicted that "scary TV" would have a greater impact on younger children because they are less able to regulate their emotional responses and found support to uphold that children under age ten might be more likely to be particularly vulnerable to scary TV. The authors also note that scary TV may effect "internalized emotions." However, more

needs to be known about what and why this happens along with giving the best advice to a parent's or parents' particular child. Advice dispensing remains difficult as all children come to the world with an infinite set of variables growing and developing in various environments (Pearce & Field, 2015; Krenn, 2015). However, perhaps we can look to news media processing for some support.

For assistance, we can look to Lang, Potter & Grabe (2003) who developed a set of rules that could be applied to local news stories to make them easier to process and remember. By taking some of their themes in how news is processed, some commentary on each step may assist educators and caregiver's begin to interpret recent events that stand out this morning

- 1. Emotions Will Speak on Screen.** Let Your Children's Emotions Speak. Feelings are high on the screen and maybe in your household. Reporters capture how the nation is feeling. Rightly so. Help explain why the country may be feeling what they are feeling.
- 2. Slow it down.** News stories are meant to be a digestible pace for viewers. Networks reach more people this way. Adults can also benefit from slowing down their thinking and speak to process events for young minds.
- 3. Dare to be quiet.** Just listen to televised stories and children. We all just need a moment to take it all in on both sides.
- 5. Deal with negative images.** Negative talk encompassed the campaign trail for many months and results contrary to negative press yielded an unanticipated result. Often we do have the answers to why things happened, and it is totally normal to be honestly in your approach.
- 6. Take a literal approach.** Be natural with how you approach the subject. You do not have to be a political analyst nor a news commentator, or run to Google scholar or finds methodological ways to approach the issue (but if you the latter would help, go for it).
- 7. Use strong chronological narratives.** Talk about the timeline of events. Why are people shocked? Why is everyone talking about it? It may help young children better process why the nation was surprised by the results.

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