

Teaching Children to Recognize Propaganda

When the pandemic hit, school went online and learning seemed to be thrown to the wind. As the pandemic stretched on, many teachers were loath to return to the classroom because of apparent COVID fears. Parents began to question whether teachers were really concerned about or eager to foster their children's learning, especially as they could see the learning loss that was happening ... or rather, the learning that often wasn't happening at all.

Such fears were groundless, according to Cecily Myart-Cruz, head of the powerful United Teachers Los Angeles union. Myart-Cruz scoffed at the idea of learning loss in a recent [interview with Los Angeles Magazine](#), claiming:

It's OK that our babies may not have learned all their times tables. They learned resilience. They learned survival. They learned critical-thinking skills. They know the difference between a riot and a protest. They know the words insurrection and coup.

To the discerning reader, it's apparent that Myart-Cruz could have stated the above much more succinctly by saying, "Our babies learned propaganda."

And in fact, they have been learning that propaganda for many years. Unfortunately, we looked away, convincing ourselves that such propaganda was only in big districts such as Los Angeles, or New York, or Chicago, not in our own local, Middle American neighborhoods. For years we kept our children in those schools, convincing ourselves they were safe, that their teachers and the curriculum they were studying were teaching them good things. That those good things would prepare them for living in the free world, able to embrace truth and

recognize error immediately.

Given the accelerated rate of deception in society, it now seems clear that schools indeed didn't prepare children to recognize propaganda; instead, they were the ones that fed propaganda to children hook, line, and sinker.

The late author and historian Richard Weaver [observed this phenomenon in a 1955 essay](#) entitled "[Propaganda](#)." "It's tempting to say that the only final protection against propaganda is education," Weaver said. "But the remark must be severely qualified because there is a kind of education which makes people more rather than less gullible.

Most modern education induces people to accept too many assumptions. On these the propagandist can play even more readily than on the supposed prejudices of the uneducated. It is the independent, reflective intelligence which critically rejects and accepts the ideas competing in the market place. Education to think rather than mere literacy should be the prime object of those seeking to combat propaganda.

Regardless of whether our children go to public, private, or homeschool, they will inevitably be exposed to propaganda. So how do we educate our children—and our own selves in the process—to think and wield the sword against this enemy? A few ideas come to mind.

First, train yourself and your children to explore both sides of an argument. For example, if you think the election was stolen, examine the arguments of those who agree with you, but also look at sources claiming to debunk such alleged conspiracy theories. Likewise, if you think the COVID vaccine is perfectly safe and can't understand why people won't take it, dig into some of the scientific studies and testimonies of those who have a wary view of it. Knowing what the opposition is saying will strengthen your own arguments and make it more difficult for people to accuse you or your children of being

narrow-minded.

Second, look for logical fallacies in the information coming out of the television, the classroom, and the internet. [The Fallacy Detective](#) by Nathaniel and Hans Bluedorn is a fun way to introduce children to this subject. Once these fallacies are learned and digested, create a game by seeing how many fallacies your family can spot in a news report or a politician's speech.

Finally, expose children to the wisdom of the past. Just as those trained to detect counterfeit never accept fake money, but only the real thing, so we must only give our children good, high-quality reading material. Many of the books written today are filled with fluffy, politically correct drivel, but often books written in past decades are filled with messages promoting traditional values and solid character. Place these latter books in the hands of your children, and they'll soon sniff out and reject "woke" material.

"Most modern education induces people to accept too many assumptions," Weaver said. Buck the trend and actively ensure your children reject the propagandistic assumptions they are taught at school and in society.

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