

Helping parents understand teenagers and their world

TOO MUCH, TOO WRONG,  
TOO SOON

WALT MUELLER, CPYU President



YOUTH CULTURE  
HOT QUOTE

“Bro. Bro! Tonight we here to have fun. I’m standing in front of my idol, Puff Daddy, I’m standing in front of my wife, Kim Kardashian West. I’m standing in front of the future: Chance the Rapper, 2 Chainz, Jaden Smith. Bro, we are undeniably the influence, the thought leaders.”

Kanye West speaking at the MTV VMAs on August 28, 2016



Last year, an article in the *Washington Post* used a bold-faced headline to pose this question: “Are parents ruining youth sports?” But the article’s headline didn’t end there. It continued by answering its own question: “Fewer kids play amid pressure.”

Let’s be honest with ourselves. We live in a parenting world that’s shifted from creating a home where kids can find sanctuary and solace from the pressures of growing up in the world, to a parenting world where all-too-often the greatest source of pressure is coming from the parents who set the climate in the home. Sadly, it’s not until we step back out of the fast-moving stream of our own parenting peer culture that our eyes may be opened to the fact that yes, we’ve gotten caught up in the rat race ourselves. In an effort to keep up with everyone else, we too put way too much pressure on our kids.

Over our years of listening to kids and tracking the research, it appears that there are three “hot-points” where we are expected and encouraged by our culture to put way too much pressure on our kids.

**First, there’s the academic pressure.**

Nobody wants to have an average kid anymore. Consequently, the home, the school, and even kids themselves put tremendous pressure on kids to achieve high grades, climb the class-rank ladder, and get into “the right college.” Resume-building begins at the moment a child emerges from the womb, with parents pushing kids not to do *their* best, but to achieve above-and-beyond what’s reasonable based on their gifts and abilities. Sadly, we hear kids lamenting an “A” or a 97% as less than perfect, and disappointing to dad and mom.

**Second, there’s the appearance pressure.**

We spend inordinate amounts of time, money,

and anxiety in an effort to measure up to the unreasonable and not-even-remotely-realistic digitally-altered standards of beauty we’re being fed 24/7. There’s the clothing, the make-up, the hair care, the diet and exercise, and the plastic surgery. Yes, we’re called to care for and steward our God-given bodies. But we worship and idolize our physical selves. And when mom and dad fall prey to these temptations in their own lives, kids will learn what’s most important. Sadly, many parents send verbal messages that combine with society’s pressure to reach standards that will never be attained.

**Finally, there’s the athletic pressure.**

Have you ever stepped back from the sidelines to watch what’s happening *outside* the white lines?!? Do your kids play on fields bordered by sidelines made up of screaming and yelling parents? Are those parents spewing pressures onto the field that push away the fun element that should be central to play? Are we teaching our kids that winning trumps character development? Are we, in fact, undermining the healthy growth and development of our kids on the altar of skills, scholarships, and victory? Are we living vicariously through our kids?

Thirty years ago developmental expert Dr. David Elkind sounded a warning that what kids need is a time to grow. They need to be kids who are buffered from pressure. Instead, what we give them is way too much pressure. Then, Elkind says, what results is stress and its aftermath. In the thirty years since, Elkind’s words have played out way too many times.

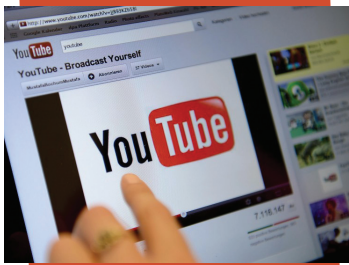
Are you setting the table for your child to face pressures that could cause them to buckle under, fall apart, and even pursue idolatrous ends? Or are you nurturing them with love, mercy, and grace into a lifetime of pursuing God, His will, and His way? ✨

## Sources Used to Watch TV Content + Videos

Devices, sources and content choice for kids 4-11 years-old.

Source:

Viacom International Insights



1. Traditional TV
2. YouTube
3. DVD/Blu-Ray/VHS
4. Official TV Channel Website
5. Video On Demand (from Cable provider)
6. Netflix
7. DVR
8. iTunes/Amazon
9. Torrent Sites

### QUICK STATS

More than three-quarters of rear-end collisions involving a teenage driver happened when the teen was paying attention to their cellphone, to a passenger, to self-grooming, or to something else other than the road.

*(Journal of Safety Research)*

When given the choice between only being able to text or call on their mobile phones, a surprising 75 percent of millennials would rather lose the ability to talk versus text.

*(OpenMarket Survey)*

### FROM THE NEWS:

## VIOLENCE AND MEDIA EXPOSURE

It seems that every day we encounter numerous news reports of violent outbursts by children and teens. While fallen and sinful humanity has always struggled to deal with violence, we find ourselves living in a culture that depicts and even glorifies violence through the entertainment media. The folks at Common Sense Media remind us that although no one single factor can cause a nonviolent person to act aggressively, heavy exposure to media violence is in fact a risk factor for violent behavior. And children who are exposed to media violence along with seeing aggression and violence in their homes, are even more prone to violent and aggressive behavior themselves. Parents, we must point our kids to Christ-like behavior, including non-violence and love for neighbor. Expose your kids to positive media. Say no to violent media. Wean your kids off of violent video games and replace that time with family fun. Nurture your kids into loving and pursuing the peace of Christ.

TRENDS:  
LABIAPLASTY

For some time now we've been reporting on the rise among elective cosmetic plastic surgery procedures among teenagers. This is not at all surprising in a world that instructs us to wrap our entire identity and value up in our outward physical appearance. But there's a new and unnecessary plastic surgery trend that is drawing concern from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. It's a procedure known as labiaplasty which alters the female genitals. It seems that more and more teenage girls are asking for cosmetic genital surgery for no other reason than dissatisfaction with appearance. Sadly, many of them are coming in with parents who are in full support of this request. While the procedure is necessary at times for medical reasons, the cosmetic option is just one more sign of a self-obsessed culture gone mad. This story reminds us of our need to emphasize identity in Christ and the importance of inward character over outward appearance.

LATEST RESEARCH:  
TEEN ABORTIONS

Recently, pro-life advocates celebrated some good news which should spur us on to continue our efforts to teach kids proper

borders and boundaries for God's good gift of sexuality. The proportion of teenagers having abortions dropped significantly between 2008 and 2014. Overall, the proportion of abortions among teenagers dropped 32% during this six-year period. The most significant drop occurred in the 15-17 year old population, where there was a 44% decline. Among teens ages 18 and 19 the drop was 25%. Data from the National Center for Health Statistics also found that fewer teens say they are having sex. Still, we should be concerned about the fact that the drop in abortions could be partially attributed to more teens using emergency contraception, like the morning after pill, which many believe causes an abortion. Let's keep talking to our kids about God's design for sex and sexuality.



**SEXUAL INTEGRITY  
INITIATIVE**  
A resource of CPYU and Project Six19

[www.SexualIntegrityInitiative.com](http://www.SexualIntegrityInitiative.com)

**Teen Sex:  
Prevention and  
Intervention**

by Jason Soucinek



When it comes to issues of sex, we have to give equal emphasis to intervention (the actions after) as we do with prevention (the actions before). Sometimes the way we talk about Christian sex is more about waiting and holding onto our virginity than it is about our relationship with Christ. Because we make it all about waiting we can make those that have already had sex feel less than human. One teenage girl said, "I've tarnished my virginity so why start over?" She represents the voice that many youth share.

The reality is that we are all tarnished. That is why Jesus died for the sins of all human beings. That includes you and me, not just that teenager that made a mistake. Yes, we have to be unapologetic about the sin our teens are engaging. However, if we are going to be successful in seeing teens engage in fewer risky behaviors then we have to start thinking about how we discuss them with teens. If we are not pointing them towards the restoring and redeeming work of Christ then they will never be able to experience the rebranding that takes place when we are in His presence.

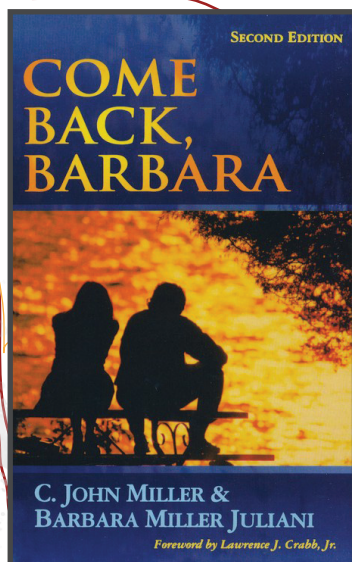
## New Podcast

Youth Culture Matters is a new long-format podcast from CPYU. Co-hosted by Walt Mueller and Jason Soucinek, each episode features an interview with an expert in a youth culture related field.



Listen at  
[www.cpyu.org/podcast](http://www.cpyu.org/podcast).

Available in the  
CPYU Resource Center at  
[www.cpyuresourcecenter.org](http://www.cpyuresourcecenter.org).



## FROM THE WORD

Many well-intentioned parents work hard to give their kids the “good life.” Believing love means giving them all the things they never had themselves, parents shower their kids with cars, money, special classes, trips, and activities. The negative results of being handed the good life can be seen in the values, attitudes, and behaviors of today’s teenagers and young adults. Their values become very shallow and self-serving. *What’s in it for me?* they wonder. They grow up with no clue as to what the real world is like, nor how to live in that world in a God-honoring way.

What are the options for those of us who realize that it is dangerous to give our kids the good life? The good news is that there is something better. In fact, it’s the “best life.” Our lives and actions should communicate to our kids that the best life is found in living in relationship with God by God’s will and way, according to his standards of success.

Jesus defined the “best life” during a conversation with a teacher of the law that’s recorded in Mark 12, starting in verse 28. Jesus said that the best life consists of directing all that we have, do, and are towards loving God in every nook, cranny, and minute of our lives. And then, because of our love for him, we should love those around us rather than treating them as competition or the means to material ends.

John Wesley had these priorities in mind when he gave this timely and timeless advice: “Work as hard as you can, to make all the money you can, to save as much as you can in order to give away all that you can.”

**“LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD  
WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND  
WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH  
ALL YOUR MIND AND WITH ALL  
YOUR STRENGTH. . . LOVE YOUR  
NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”**

**MARK 12:30&31**

## HELPFUL RESOURCE ←

“Mom, Dad, I don’t want your rules and morals. I don’t want to act like a Christian anymore! And I’m not going to,” Barbara declared at age 18. As her father desperately attempted to reason with her, Barbara grew more resentful, choosing a path of immorality that only deepened her parents’ pain.

“I am not ignorant of human depravity,” writes C. John Miller, “but I had long denied that it could exist in our family.” That reality, however, forced him to confront his own sin, seek forgiveness, admit his inability to change his wayward daughter, and begin loving Barbara on God’s terms.

Here “Jack” Miller and Barbara Miller Juliani chronicle their journey from grief and conflict to joyful reconciliation. *Come Back, Barbara* is thus an irresistible portrayal of God’s grace to the Millers and us all. This book offers invaluable lessons about facing our own struggles with humility, courage, and hope.

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