

# Emotions in Children's TV

A FEW REMINDERS FOR  
CHILDREN'S TV PRODUCERS  
ON FEELINGS



# EMOTIONS AS RESOURCES

Every emotion has its purpose. There are more pleasant and less pleasant feelings – they all are vital for a healthy sense of self-esteem, appropriate action, and successful relationships. Perceiving emotions in oneself as well as in others, communicating them purposefully, and employing them towards changing a situation all make us succeed as individuals and as a society.

This reminder summarises fundamental information on emotions and television.

## WHY DO WE FEEL?

Emotions form the basis for a person’s connection to his/her environment, they maintain this connection, shape or disrupt it.

Placing taboos on emotions reduces the quality of life, eventually leading to psychological disorders, because each emotion signalises something, e.g.:



## EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

“Emotional intelligence” comprises various competences: the ability to be aware of one’s own and others’ emotions, to understand them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.<sup>2</sup>

Children benefit from dealing competently with their emotions in terms of physical health, mental well-being, relationships with others and success in life. Already at school-age emotional competence is linked to popularity and acceptance in the peer group.

Children and adolescents draw what certain emotions mean to them:



Joseph Yeropa, 17 years, Benin, drawing “joy”



Anna, 12 years, Kazakhstan, drawing “joy”



Joana, 14 years, Bulgaria, drawing “fear”



Adrian, 14 years, Poland, drawing “anger”



Lin Wenfan, 16 years, China, drawing “sorrow”



Jasmine, 15 years, Benin, drawing “love”

<sup>1</sup> Glasenapp, J. (2013). Emotionen als Ressourcen. Manual für Psychotherapie, Coaching und Beratung. With online materials. Weinheim: Beltz.

<sup>2</sup> Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1989). Emotional intelligence. Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9(3), 185-211.

# RECOGNISE THE POWER OF TV

## TELEVISION IS AN EMOTIONALLY INTENSIVE EXPERIENCE

Children immerse themselves in the stories, feel with or for the characters, imagine themselves in scenes, and experience the atmosphere of the situation intensively. In this aspect children experience feelings much more strongly than adults.

### TELEVISION ...

#### ... PROVOKES FEELINGS

TV and dramaturgic tools can trigger strong emotions like fear, pride, joy and shame. Depending on the disposition of the characters, they invite identification and empathy, or distanced observation. Sound and music can prime the meaning.

#### ... CAN BE EMOTIONALLY OVERWHELMING

While it is not easy to overstrain children and adolescents cognitively – if they don't understand something, they simply switch off – the emotional involvement stays even in case of overwhelming TV events. Thus TV can lead to traumatic experiences.

#### ... CAN BE EMOTIONALLY ENRICHING

Through TV, it is possible to come to terms with one's own experiences and smaller psychological wounds. This can promote the process of self-healing.

#### ... SETS EMOTIONAL LINKS

By means of design, characters, music, dramaturgy, etc. content (e.g. about other countries, people and things) can be linked with emotions. Here, special attention is required.

#### ... CREATES IMAGES OF HOW EMOTIONS ARE EXPERIENCED AND EXPRESSED

The way of narrating emotions like love, envy or grief creates images of typical experiences. Children and adolescents acquire them as scripts.

#### ... CAN IMPROVE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Through the way stories are told, TV can improve children's and adolescents' understanding of their own and other people's emotions and promote prosocial ways of dealing with feelings.

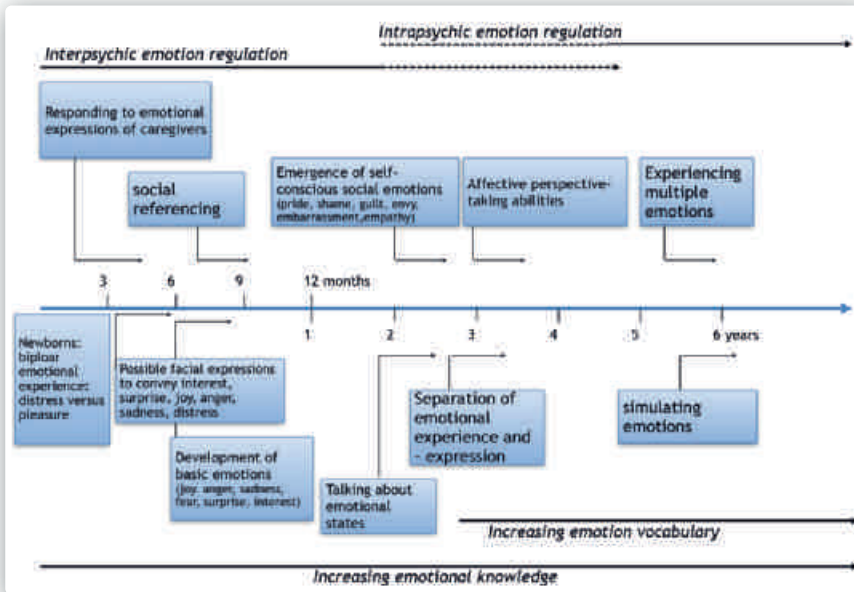
### Experienced emotions are what stays in memory

The thing spontaneously remembered first are the emotions the viewer experienced during the reception of a show. Only if a show was an emotionally pleasant experience the children and adolescents will choose it again.



# EMOTIONS IN CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

From early on, children experience and understand emotions. At the age of 3, their emotional life is almost fully developed. They are able to feel and perceive all 8 basic emotions. They still have to learn to master complex emotions, ambivalent feelings, and irony (cf. Ill. 1).



Ill. 1: Children's emotional life develops rapidly in the first years<sup>3</sup>

A representative IZI survey of 1,458 children and adolescents in Germany between the ages of 6 and 19 clearly indicates that the intensity with which emotions are felt and shown declines sharply with age, especially as regards pleasant emotions.

One emotionally difficult age is the beginning of puberty (i.e. age 12 to 13). Laughter, pride and joy reach their relative low points, envy appears, and anger and sadness achieve their highpoints. Puberty is not funny.

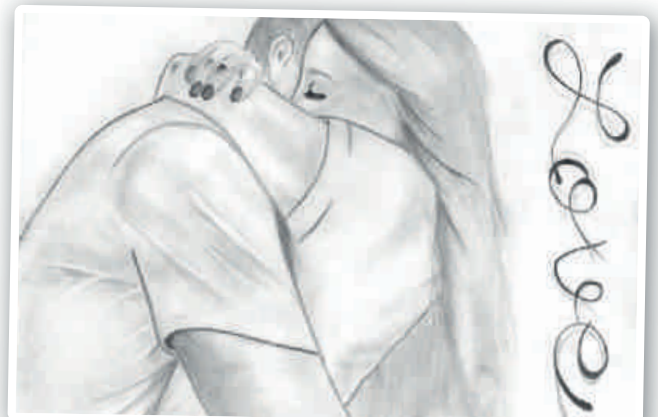
Girls in Germany feel and show their emotions more than boys in most dimensions. Girls also have the impression that this is more accepted by their parents.

As regards television, children and adolescents desire a markedly more honest expression of feelings than they accept for themselves or believe their parents would accept. A clear indication: They look for models and for acceptance of the acting out of emotions. This would help their parents as well in dealing with the emotional world of children in a more honest and sympathetic way. In particular with the disliked emotions of anger and envy.

Ill. 2-3: Age differences in experiencing love



Jaskaran, 8 years, Poland



Andela, 16 years, Montenegro

<sup>3</sup> adapted from Petermann, F. & Wiedebusch S. (2008). Emotionale Kompetenz bei Kindern (p. 32). Göttingen: Hogrefe



# CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Many emotions and the accompanying facial expressions are considered universal (e.g. anger, sadness or happiness), i.e. everyone experiences them since childhood. The same facial expressions can be understood in different cultures and also occur in people who are blind since birth and have never seen others perform these expressions.<sup>4</sup>

Love, guilt, shame, envy, and jealousy are more variable in expression than the fundamental emotions and often have culturally specific characteristics.

Children grow up in different cultures. These include family cultures, the cultures prevalent in the nursery, kindergarten,

and school, and peer group cultures; children also belong to specific regional or social cultures, and ultimately to typical national cultures. In each of these cultures certain forms of dealing with emotions are practised. The media usually play a significant role in all of these cultures and represent certain implicit forms of how the issue of emotions is handled.

An IZI study among 5,190 children in 17 countries on having and showing emotions revealed a number of country-specific particularities, for example:

### III. 1-3: Children from different countries draw pictures about joy



Emma Ni, 14 years, Ireland



Marija, 11 years, Kazakhstan



Shuwei Huang, 13 years, China



#### **Cuba: plenty of laughter – many tears**

Children and adolescents in Cuba experience and show their feelings of pride, grief, fear and anger more openly and laugh and cry more often than others. They are scarcely envious and seldom experience fear.



#### **Bosnia: anger that is not supposed to be shown**

In Bosnia girls and boys experience anger comparatively more often (over four times more often than in Germany), yet they know that their parents would not approve of it.



#### **Germany: emotionally overregulated**

Apart from joy, children and adolescents in Germany experience markedly fewer emotions. When they experience emotions, they demonstrate them clearly and state that their parents approve of this (in girls more than in boys), except for envy and anger.



#### **Malaysia: “Show your happy face!”**

Children’s notion of whether their parents approve of them showing their emotions: Only joy and pride are welcome. Their parents do not approve of open displays of emotional expanses that point to problems like fear, sadness and anger.

The integration of children in emotional cultures is done with typical regulators: norms, values, practices, instructions, rituals, taboos and myths that circulate in a culture.

Quality in children’s TV means recognising and understanding the typical regulators of one’s own culture and evaluating to what extent they serve the well-being of children and are really suitable for future situations.



<sup>4</sup> Matsumoto, D. & Hwang H. (2011). Reading facial expressions of emotion Psychological Science Agenda, Science Brief, May 2011, retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2011/05/facial-expressions.aspx> [19.5.2014]

# FUN

Laughing is not only physically healthy, but it also raises your spirits, helps to deal with problems, and is simply enjoyable.

Children's laughing in front of the television is similar in international comparison.

The Guessing Games, in which up to now more than 1,300 children from all over the world have been observed while watching television, have demonstrated the similarities in responses. Children from around the world laugh about the same scenes, become excited when the sound suggests excitement, are bored, or watch television with curiosity. Above all, age differences, as well as sometimes gender tendencies are constant.

## WHAT CHILDREN WORLDWIDE FIND PARTICULARLY FUNNY IN TELEVISION

... when something looks funny and is bigger than life,  
... when expectations are breached,  
... when language and meaning are played with,

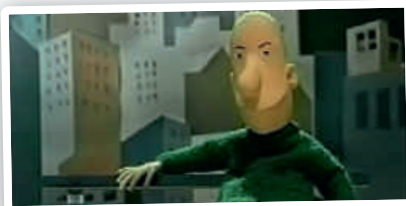
... when tricks are played on someone,  
... when little hero(in)es prevail,  
... when justice is done.

## TYPICAL AGE DIFFERENCES

Preschool and school children laugh about different things!

When scenes are too complex, when the laughter is based on laughing about oneself, on irony, or on the suffering of individuals, then preschool children typically do not laugh. School children, in contrast, are often very amused.

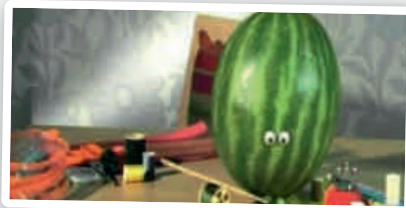
Screenshot from *Mr. Simple* © IRIB, Iran



*Mr. Simple* (IRIB, Iran)

Mr. Simple sits in front of a landscape. Suddenly the landscape is carried off. It was only an image. Older children and preteens laugh, preschool children do not.

Screenshot from *The Ooglies* © BBC, Scotland



*Ooglies* (BBC, Scotland)

Nice little grapes with eyes are playing in a playground. A melon falls from above and smashes them. The scene is great fun for older children, but not for preschoolers.

## PACKAGING EXISTENTIAL ISSUES COMICALLY

Besides slapstick humour and silly actions in his everyday underwater world, SpongeBob sometimes touches profound existential themes of children. The humour allows an emotional distance to the serious topics. For example, an episode of *SpongeBob SquarePants* in which he has lost his house and has to move out enables a 5-year-old boy to reflect on a painful loss – his best friend has left the kindergarten – and to express it.<sup>5</sup>



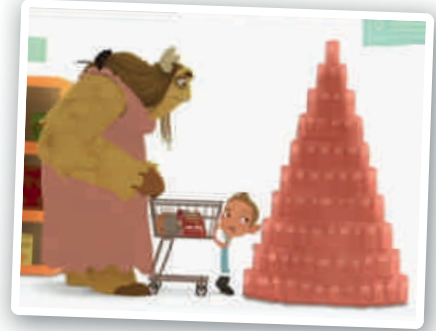
Screenshot from *SpongeBob SquarePants* © Nickelodeon

<sup>5</sup> Götz, M. (2014). "Because He Is the Funniest" – The Fascination with *SpongeBob SquarePants*. In Maya Götz (Ed.), *TV-Hero(in)es of Boys and Girls – Reception Studies of Favorite Characters* (pp. 241-268). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

## BEING MOVED

When are we moved in front of the television and when do tears flow among children too? When we empathise with the hero(ine), when we are clearly and gently led through the story, and when the hero(ine) acts according to our ideals. Then we too feel valued; our own small wounds of non-appreciation can heal. We weep for joy. An example that works very well, especially for adults: *The Little Boy and the Beast* (ZDF, Germany).

The boy's strength, his idealistic actions, and the sensitive yet powerful dramatic direction of the text cause adults to cry with emotion when the mother is healed and the boy accepts that the father will remain a beast a bit longer.



Screenshot from *The Little Boy and the Beast*  
© ZDF, Germany



Zuzanna, 17 years, Poland, drawing "love"

## LOVE

Love is an intensive emotion of belonging and attachment. We expand our limits. Love, especially when it is returned, when forming close bonds is allowed, is a markedly pleasant emotion. When love is disappointed, when the boundaries that we open and expand are rejected, then this is painful.

Children initially experience love with their first attachment persons, which are often their parents. When this relationship is marked by instability, tied to certain demands ("I will only love you when you behave"), or even abused, then emotional scars remain for the rest of one's life.

The first experiences of being in love among persons of the same age appear during the nursery school age. The first desire for a relationship with another (usually) heterosexual child appears among girls from the age of 8 on and one or two years later among boys, on account of their developmental delay.



Loic, 13 years, Benin, drawing "love"

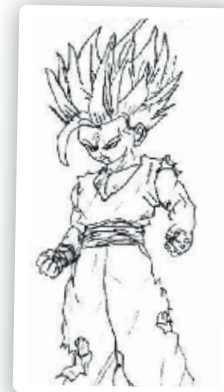
Heterosexual relationships between children are characterised until the age of about 12 principally by spending time together. Instead of intimacy, being together and showing oneself to others are primary. The desire for an intimacy acceptable to the age and culture usually appears from the age of 13 to 14 on. Children and adolescents initially develop their notions of love and relationship from the direct experience of how their parents, or other persons close to them, behave with each other. As they grow older, images from the media expand these notions. For this reason it is vital to deal carefully with the representation of love and relationships.

Quality television recognises the emotions of children as they are, offering stories and images that provide them with worthwhile goals.



## AGGRESSION

The word aggression is derived from the Latin “aggređi,” which means to walk toward to, to approach, and thus to attack. Aggressions are a key part of our being, they serve to protect one’s own identity and to assert one’s interests. This has a positive side in the state of excitement and in the liberating of energy, as well as in the assertion of what is important to oneself. Aggression becomes a problem when it turns into violence and destruction.



Ill. 1: Behind the enthusiasm for strong fighters such as Son Gohan (*Dragon Ball Z*) or superhero(in)es there is often the desire to protect oneself

Even if it contradicts commonly-held theories: television does not itself cause aggression. Studies have detected a connection between media violence and aggression (correlation), but only to a small degree.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, children and adolescents pick up patterns of interpretation and action from TV.

## ANGER

Anger indicates inwardly that something here really disturbs you. In contrast to fear, the impulse is not used for flight, but for separating oneself from the threat. Anger is a part of the development of the ego and thus a motor for development and autonomy, but can also lead to social problems.

Unfortunately, anger as a part of the everyday life is seldom reflected in children’s television. Usually these are merely brief forms of expression of “getting angry” or freaking out angrily. A positive exception: *Stikk!* (NRK, Norway).

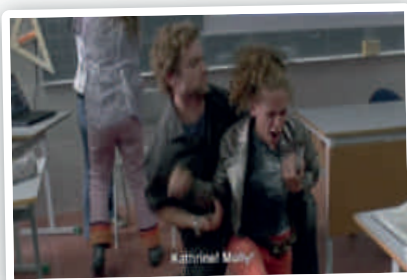


Olga, 13 years, Poland, draws how she experiences “anger”

Ill. 2-4: Handling aggression, frustration and violence in the Norwegian series *Stikk!*: Kicking legs, a fit of anger and doing Karate



Screenshots from *Stikk!* © NRK, Norway



Children’s television can promote prosocial ways of dealing with aggression and anger by telling positive examples of how boys and girls are able to prevent turning their internal outbursts into violence.

<sup>6</sup> vom Orde, H. (2014). Does television cause aggressive behaviour? *TeleviZion*, 27(E), 54–57.



# SHAME

Feelings of shame are perceived as very unpleasant. They usually occur in connection with the reactions of the environment (laughter, comments, punishments, warnings).

Shame as an “injury to one’s self” makes one sensitive for the opinions and perceptions of others. This results in social adjustment and can be an impulse for further personal development, but can also lead to the repression of emotions.

During puberty there are many sources of shame, such as clumsiness, appearance, the emergence of sexual feelings, and perhaps the first intimate experiences. Television can reduce feelings of shame by dealing openly with issues linked with shame such as physical development (cf. Ill. 1).



Screenshot from *You're not a Werewolf* © WDR, Germany  
Ill. 1: Openly addressing what has shameful connotations: *You're Not a Werewolf* (WDR, Germany). Here: How to clean a penis

## PUBLIC EMBARRASSING IN TALENT SHOWS

Talent shows are among the most successful television formats of the last decade, for example *Pop Idol*, *The X-Factor*, and *Topmodel*. Sometimes the evaluation and correction of candidates turns into a public humiliation and to exposure embarrassment. This certainly amuses the viewers in front of the television. Yet they watch the show not principally to see losers, but because they want to accompany young people on their path to success. A study among former talent show participants has shown that the candidates often suffer from this experience for many years afterwards, even to the extreme of psychological disorder.

A former female participant in *Our Star for ...*: **“I have depressions since then and cannot get a grip on my life anymore.”**

What is particularly painful is that excerpts from the programmes are available on the Internet, even many years afterwards.

A former *Pop Idol* candidate, who in the programme and in the four subsequent seasons was presented as one of the “dumbest candidates”: **“And then it starts all over again, everyone starts asking me about it again.”<sup>7</sup>**

Show how shame can be overcome.

Avoid embarrassing children and young people when they work on the set and above all in public appearances, specific challenges, and help them to get over it – rather than making it worse.



Blanka, 16 years, Poland, drawing “shame”

<sup>7</sup> Götz, M., Bulla, C. & Mendel, C. (2013). Sprungbrett oder Krise? Das Erlebnis Castingshow-Teilnahme. Düsseldorf: LfM.

# FEAR

Fear has an important warning function, and therefore arises immediately in a situation that is judged to be dangerous. It prompts us to activate physical functions as protective mechanisms, in order to defend our boundaries (i.e. ourselves, our goals and our basic needs).<sup>8</sup>

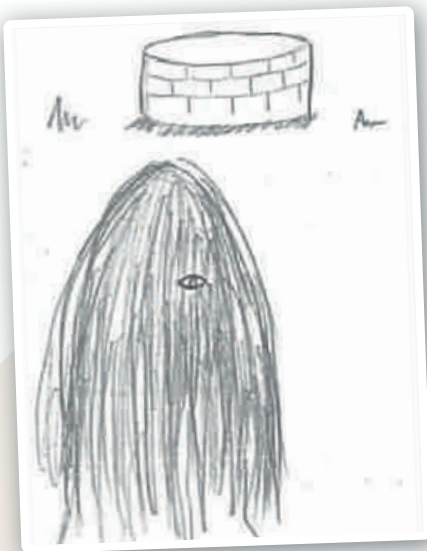
Our brain (here: the amygdala) never forgets moments of fear. Once it got activated by a certain stimulus, every further activation leads to neural priming: our future response to a dangerous situation is faster and better.

## FEAR AND TV: WHAT FRIGHTENS CHILDREN?

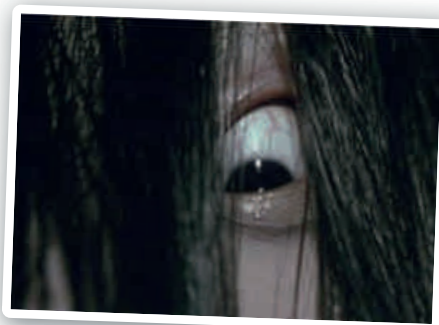
- » **Creatures** that harm or seek to harm others and that look scary, meaning their appearance differs from what children are used to as "normal."  
Note: Characters which give children security (parents, nannies, cuddly toys) should not be associated with fear. Children can come to feel that they are not safe anywhere.
- » **Dangerous situations** where characters face a threat like fight scenes, chases, or scenes where someone is trapped. The more desperate a situation or the characters seem to be, the greater the fear.
- » **Real dangers** cause fear, because children get aware of possible risks for their own lives.
- » **Serious physical injuries** show the cruelty that can be done to living beings. Scenes showing how the injury is inflicted have a particularly shocking effect. Those images can have a long-lasting impact on children and should not be shown to children.<sup>9</sup>

## A QUESTION OF COMBINATION AND PRESENTATION

The individual elements of fear cover a huge spectrum. Each fear-inspiring element can be taken to its extreme, and it is possible to combine various qualities. A cruel creature torturing its victim in a hopeless situation is more frightening than the appearance of the creature in a neutral situation. Fear can be intensified even further by various possibilities of staging, for instance, by music and sound design, camera work and lighting.



III. 1-2: 21-year-old Jin from Hong Kong draws a scene from *Ringu* which she watched at age 9 and really frightened her



Screenshot from *Ringu* © Toho Company.

<sup>8</sup> Glasenapp, J. (2013). Emotionen als Ressourcen. Manual für Psychotherapie, Coaching und Beratung. With online materials. Weinheim: Beltz.

<sup>9</sup> Unterstell, S. & Müller, A. (2014). "I was very creeped out and my heart was racing". *TelevIZion*, 27(E), 34–37.

# NIGHTMARES

If children witness events on TV which far exceed their ability to process them, this can become a traumatic experience: they often experience feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, horror, and intense fear. Nightmares are an attempt to cope with this emotional state of emergency.

Nearly every second child between the ages of 6 and 10 has nightmares from TV at least occasionally. Media content can influence the events in dreams considerably more than the things experienced during the day.<sup>10</sup>

## WHAT CAUSES NIGHTMARES?

There are some typical recurring patterns in which children's imaginations are shaken by TV experiences and then reflected in their nightmares:

- » **What humans or creatures can do to each other**
- » **How horrible humans and creatures can look like**
- » **Situations I could end up in**



Screenshot from *LEGO Ninjago: Masters of Spinjitzu* © Cartoon Network, USA

Ill. 1-2: Eight-year-old Aidan from Canada draws a threatening dragon-like creature from *The LEGO Ninjago* series which caused him nightmares: „The Great devourer is going to eat me.“

## THRILL

Thrill or pleasant suspense is a feeling of excitement that occurs in a situation that is judged to be dangerous, but nevertheless we are confident that our boundaries will not be violated. Being aware that the situation will end well gives us the possibility to enjoy thrilling moments.

For children, a feeling of pleasure when watching exciting scenes is closely linked with the hope that the film plot will end well. Particular elements within the design of the programme support this confidence in a happy ending:

### » **Confident heroes and heroines**

Children connect to the characters on the screen. Therefore they need confident hero(in)es who seem capable of coping with the dangers they are facing.



*Burka Avenger* © Aaron Haroon Rashid/Unicorn Black, Pakistan




*Dinobusters* © Sinking Ship, Canada

### » **Depictions that allow distance**

Adding pleasant feelings to moments of fear allows relaxation to relieve the tension. Humour, e.g. when villains become ridiculous, and graphic elements in "comic book style" interrupt the tension.

Ill. 3-4: Confident hero(in)es that children can connect to in *Burka Avenger* and *Dinobusters*

Children do not need a matter of life and death to gain an exciting television experience. A good story enables children to feel with their connecting characters. Excitement then arises from the hope that the character will attain what they want, regardless of what is actually at stake. 

<sup>10</sup> Stephan, J., Schredl, M., Henley-Einion, J. & Blagrove, M. (2012). TV viewing and dreaming in children: The UK library study. *International Journal of Dream Research*, 5, 130–133.

## GRIEF

When something or someone important to us is lost by separation or death, a part of our self is lost. We need to adapt to the changed situation. Grief helps to heal the wounds and find ways to be whole again. Even though loss and grief are subjectively unpleasant feelings, they are the appropriate response to the situation and important for dealing with it.

Death – like birth – is often a part of children’s everyday worlds at an early age and children will have to face these experiences. It is therefore important for children’s television to engage with and reflect on this topic, it should give comfort and help working through these emotions. In this respect, it might be advisable to avoid phrases like “Don’t be sad.” Showing ways of dealing with loss and grief, like in *Adriaan* (Ill. 1) is better.



Screenshot from *Adriaan – a coffin for Spottie*  
© KRO, Netherlands

### Ill. 1: *Adriaan*

Without any superfluous words but through affectionately told actions, the series *Adriaan* (KRO, Netherlands) tells the story of Adriaan and his dog Spottie who had died



Ill. 2: A frequent reason for grief is love-sickness: TV can show ways of dealing with it.  
Dajana, 16 years, Montenegro, draws what “grief” means to her: “The departure of the beloved one”

## SUICIDE – A SPECIAL CASE

Worldwide, suicide is one of the most common causes of death among adolescents. Suicides happen, and it is therefore a subject for children’s and youth television. Like every death, suicide is associated with pain and grief for the ones left behind, and should thus be referred to with appropriate honesty. At the same time, it is a special case. There are clear indications that the number of acts or thoughts of suicide increases after news coverage or fictional accounts of suicide (the “Werther effect”), especially among adolescents. Quality programmes for children and adolescents should always be life-affirming, and this means, amongst other things:

- » **No representation of suicide as a solution to problems**, or of simplified reasons for suicide.
- » **No models for how to carry out suicide**, e.g. by depicting details of suicide in particular places.
- » **No romanticisation of suicide.**
- » **No blaming of survivors**, or expressions of regret from relatives. There is a danger here that individuals who feel unappreciated will inflict harm on themselves so that others will suffer in a similar way and will talk about them.<sup>11</sup>

Trying to keep children away from the topic means not preparing them for unavoidable experiences and leaving them alone with painful experiences.



<sup>11</sup> Götz, M. (2014). Death, grief and suicide in children’s television. *TeleviZion*, 27(E), 58–60.



## EMOTIONS IN DAILY EDITING WORK

Editing work and television production are complex processes, in various parts of which emotions belong to the core of daily work-life. The atmosphere in the team, the emotional competence of all those involved, but also the careful handling of emotions in the content to be produced and in its staging, all demand a high degree of emotional intelligence and knowledge of the emotional worlds of the target groups.

Ill. 1: Yueyang Zheng, 14 years, China, draws what "pride" means to her: "We are a strong team, we are proud of us"



### TIPS FOR DAILY EDITING WORK

- » **Awareness of one's own emotions.** Take five minutes every day for your own awareness. Close your eyes and perceive your own emotional world without judging it.
- » **Awareness of the emotional situation in the team.** Through "managing by wandering around your team" you can often find out how everybody is doing.
- » **Connect and disconnect.** It is necessary to frequently create distance from an issue for a short period.
- » **Inspiration from new experiences.** Getting in contact with interesting programmes and people, who look at their own affairs from a completely different perspective, will sharpen your perception.

### PERCEIVING AND CIRCUMNAVIGATING CRISES

Television production normally means employing a lot of money and resources in a very brief span of time. This entails a high degree of risk, for as soon as one or two wheels in the overall big machine get stuck or even turn in the wrong direction, then the entire creative enterprise grinds to a halt.

#### Responsible action here means:

- » Clear assignment of tasks and joint setting of objectives.
- » Awareness for indications of problem situations.
- » Biographical experiences that are not worked through and emotional crises lead to a higher vulnerability in people. If they are repressed, they (can) surface in stressful situations and we react inappropriately forcibly.



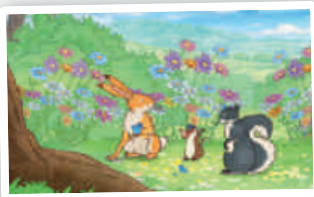
## EMOTIONS: A BASIC ISSUE FOR QUALITY

Emotions are at the core of quality in children's TV. It is a balancing act for which three things are utterly important: plenty of knowledge about the issue and about the specifics of the target audience – and the courage to create the best for kids. TV professionals should be aware of how influential these issues are. Quality TV uses this power constructively not for cheap effects but offers children spaces to experience and reflect on a variety of emotions.

### Quality in dealing with emotions depends on contents and genre. A few examples:

- » In news programmes it is necessary to adopt a presentational style that is as much as possible emotionally neutral, especially when dealing with difficult themes. Sometimes, placing an emotionally lighter theme helps to handle a more problematic one.
- » It is perfectly fine for infotainment programmes to be thrilling or highly amusing. Information that is emotionally charged is remembered more easily.
- » Not every child is able to handle difficult themes depicted in dramatic genres like soap operas. Sometimes, a humorous approach to highly emotionally charged themes helps.

A few examples for a successful utilisation of emotions in children's TV:



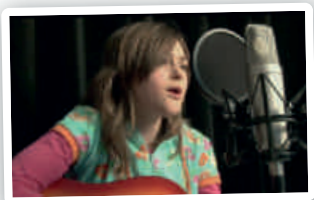
*Guess How Much I Love You* (KiKA, Germany)



*Chili Girl* (Señal, Colombia)



*Kamaishi Miracle* (NHK, Japan)



*Bente's Voice* (VPRO, Netherlands)



*Mille* (DR, Denmark)



*Invisible Wounds* (UR, Sweden)



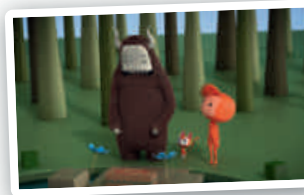
*Good Night, Carola* (WDR, Germany)



*Moritz* (ZDF, Germany)



*True School* (PTS, Taiwan)



*What's the Big Idea?* (CBeebies, UK)



*Genji* (KRO, Netherlands)

# QUALITY IN CHILDREN'S TV

## WHAT IS QUALITY IN TERMS OF HANDLING EMOTIONS IN CHILDREN'S TV?

### **Dealing with feelings openly and honestly**

For children, an honest approach to what they feel is important. The basic principle: Everything that is there is permitted to exist. This applies to pleasant emotions (e.g., joy) as well as to unpleasant ones (e.g., sadness, anger).

### **Promoting prosocial attitudes**

Children and adolescents adopt images and patterns of actions from TV. This is also the case with respect to dealing with their own and other people's feelings. Promote prosocial attitudes and an attentive dealing with one another's emotions.

### **Responsibility towards the viewers' emotions**

TV can trigger strong emotional reactions and lead to traumatic experiences. Be aware of this power and use it for the good of the children. Give the viewers a chance to experience feelings without overwhelming them. Open up spaces for their own positioning. An overload of sound design and emotional elements narrow this space.

### **Promoting emotional competence**

Tell stories that foster one's own and others' perception and awareness of emotions. Present the processes of their emergence and ways of communicating about and dealing with the emotions.

### **Be aware:**

As a creative professional, your work will always be influenced by your own personal and emotional experiences. They are biographically rooted which means that they might refer to your experience from 20, 30 or even 40 years ago and are based in a certain (emotional) culture. The task of your professional work is to offer today's children characters and stories that help them to develop (emotional) competences and perspectives for their future.

**It is about their future – not your past.**

## Quality in children's TV means to offer spaces

- » to enrich children's emotional and social lives;
- » to help understand oneself and the everyday world the children live in;
- » to enjoy oneself, life and the richness the world offers;
- » to inspire and encourage children to get active in their social environments.

Quality programmes can support children in their task to develop a rich emotional life and learn to deal with feelings.

In order to use television to support children and adolescents, a nuanced debate about the programmes on offer and their reception is necessary.

This reminder gives a few basic suggestions on how this can be done.

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Drawings © IZI, taken from the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2nd International Art Contest on the topic "Emotions - What do they mean to me?"