

EXCERPT FROM THE ARTICLE
OUR UNHEALTHY LOVE OF REALITY TV BULLYING
SOME WORRY CAN HAVE NEGATIVE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES
BY JEN CRISTENSEN

(CNN) – A red-faced Gordon Ramsay gets nose-to-nose with an older man and shouts, “Wake up!” He calls another chef’s food “rotten.” He reduces a middle-aged woman to hysterical tears. And all that’s just in the opening credits of “Kitchen Nightmares.”

5 For the next hour of British culinary icon’s popular reality TV series, there is little in the way of praise or pats on the back for the chefs he’s coaching. Instead, he swears. He throws food. He calls people “stupid” and “disgusting pigs”. His entire performance is based on sharp criticism and what some may argue is bullying-type behavior. Viewers eat it up.

10 Nightmarish behavior is the stuff reality TV shows are made of. [...] Some psychologists worry that watching reality TV which can glorify bullying will have negative long-term consequences.

“Research shows in the short term our own concepts of aggression are activated in the brain when we watch these shows, and we are primed to behave aggressively,” said psychologist Sarah Coyne.

The Brigham Young University assistant professor has authored dozens of studies that examine the impact aggressive behavior in the media has on its viewers. Reality TV, she found, depicts nearly twice the number of aggressive acts as dramas or comedies.

20 What motivates aggressive behavior like bullying is complicated, but Coyne says studies have shown consistently that viewers may start to imitate what they watch. [...]

“We are taking a pounding daily from bullies, but for the most part it is still an invisible problem,” said psychologist Gary Namie, who runs the [Workplace Bullying I]nstitute. “And it has huge consequences and costs businesses a fortune.” [...]

If so many people are victims of bullying, why do they come home and watch it on television?

30 Studies show watching other suffer in part “satiates a feeling of vengeance,” Coyne says. So if a victim can’t get revenge at work, at least they can watch someone else suffer. Namie believes watching someone humiliated on TV also makes people feel safer and more comfortable because, in this case, at least it is not happening to them.

35 “We bemoan the loss of compassion in society, but we revere this severe level of aggression in these programs, and I think it is a real problem,” Namie said.

Yet reality TV remains popular and is likely to continue to dominate our airwaves because people keep watching.

“In the end, being nice makes for dull entertainment,” Namie said.

Source:

<<http://www.wgal.com/health/Our-unhealthy-love-of-reality-TV-bullying/-/9360276/19121360/-/ii5770z/-/index.html>>. [25 Aug. 2013]

Annotations:

- l. 5 culinary – having to do with the preparation/cooking of food
- l. 5 icon - star
- l. 14 to be primed – to be prepared
- l. 23 to take a pounding – to be hurt
- l. 29 to satiate – to gratify, to satisfy to excess
- l. 34 to revere – to regard with awe, adore