

Biography of Joanne Cantor

Joanne Cantor is an award-winning professor, speaker, and researcher and an internationally recognized expert on the psychology of media and communications. After 26 years as a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she stepped out of the college classroom so that she could spread the conclusions of her research more widely. She knows that television, computers, video games, Blackberries and the rest of our electronic appendages are profoundly affecting us in ways the average person can't see. Her entertaining and eye-opening presentations combine psychology, the latest in brain research, amusing anecdotes, and sound practical advice for keeping our own sanity, being more productive with our time, and raising healthy, happy children.

Growing up in the 1950s Joanne remembers fondly the evenings her whole family would sit together and watch "Father Knows Best." (*It's incredible how much things have changed since then!*) As a teenager living in Washington, DC, she spent summers working as a secretary at the Federal Communications Commission. After majoring in French literature at Cornell and not discovering her passion there, she moved to Paris, where she ended up working for the French subsidiary of a major American motion picture studio. There, she witnessed first-hand the behind-the-scenes dealings of famous actors, producers, and directors. Returning to the States and graduate school in communications (at the University of Pennsylvania and then Indiana University) she discovered the field of communications, and was especially drawn to the study of how television and movies affect us psychologically.

After receiving her Ph.D. and becoming a Professor at UW-Madison, Dr. Cantor found that her strongest interests lay in how our emotions are affected by the media. Over her career she has produced almost 100 scholarly publications. Not an ivory tower professor, however, she has translated her research for the people who can use it most, by writing a highly acclaimed parenting book, "*Mommy, I'm Scared*," and a children's book, "*Teddy's TV Troubles*. Her research has received much public attention: She has appeared on "Oprah," "Good Morning America," and many other national television programs; she has testified repeatedly before Congress and the FCC; and she is frequently called upon by the press to advise us, especially on how to cope during national tragedies and international disasters.

Dr. Cantor's research has been funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, and the H. F. Guggenheim Foundation. She has collaborated with the American Medical Association, the National PTA, and other national organizations. She also maintains an active program of evaluation research, evaluating public television programs and science outreach initiatives. In May 2000, she became Professor Emerita, and in 2006, she assumed the position of Director of the Center for Communication Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

With all her scholarly and professional achievements, Joanne feels that one of her most valued credentials is her son Alex, now a college student. Her experience as a mother greatly enriches her perspective. Joanne feels that the media have never been as dominant in people's lives as they are today, and she is passionate about sharing her insights on the effects of electronic communications technologies on our hearts, our minds, and our life satisfaction.