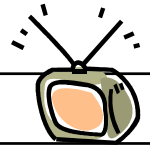




District I Parenting News

Extension Nutrition Program

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Media Violence & Children

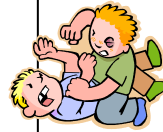
Children are impressionable, especially those younger than 7. They are influenced by what they see in the media. They are not able to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Adults-parents, teachers and broadcasters-must assume responsibility for protecting them from the potentially harmful effects of exposure to violence.

Media Hazards

When children watch TV they are absorbing information, ideas and values. And when they have toys etc. that are marketed with what they see, the messages are even stronger. Adults must pay attention to the lessons children learn.

Six problems associated with media violence:

1. Children are more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others. They begin to see violence as a normal response to stress and an acceptable means of resolving conflict. Children who repeatedly observe aggressive problem-solving behavior tend to replay what they have seen in real-life situations.
2. Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others and see violent behavior as normal. Viewing violence stimulates children to view other people as "enemies" and to be unconcerned about their



welfare. They show less remorse about their own aggressive behavior and less concern about the aggressive actions of other children.

3. Children may become more fearful of the world around them. Exposure to media violence may compound some children's natural anxieties.
4. Violent programs present limited models of language development. The repetitive scripts of violent programs narrow the range and originality of children's verbal expression at a time when the development of language is critically important.
5. Viewing media violence limits children's imaginations. Programs that regularly depict violence often promote toys that encourage children to imitate the behaviors seen on TV or in the movies. Young children have a natural tendency and need to explore many make-believe roles and to play imaginatively to learn about themselves and their world. Heavy screen time not only limits children's playtime but also leads to imitation of fighting, gun play, and other stereotypical actions.
6. When children are glued to a screen, they are not interacting actively and positively with the environment or getting the foundation they need for learning in school.

How Can Parents Help

1. **Plan your family viewing.** Give children choices within certain guidelines by using a program listing and the TV ratings. Let them choose from shows that you know are nonviolent, informative or entertaining



2. **Monitor your child's viewing.** Move the TV room that is not at the center of family life. Choose only one show to watch at a time. Limit children's screen time to 1 to 2 hours daily.

3. **Offer alternatives.** Substitute open-ended activities such as playing games, reading books, or helping with household chores that offer opportunities to be active and creative. Use good children's videotapes as alternatives to network or cable television.



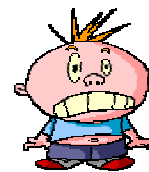
4. **Watch television with your child and talk about the shows you view together.** Children do not interpret programs in the same ways adults do. Give-and-take conversations reveal how your child is interpreting what she sees and hears and they clarify misunderstandings. Point out when you disapprove of a character's violent behavior

and when you think there are better ways to solve a problem. Talk about what is real and pretend.



5. **Help children resist commercials.** Advertising is one of the most sophisticated forms of communication and young children cannot distinguish it from programming. Discuss commercials with your children. Point out when advertisers make false or exaggerated claims.

6. **Work to reduce media violence in children's lives and in the wider society.** Support regulation of children's TV. Encourage legislation that promotes educational, nonviolent TV programming and restricts advertising on children's shows. Call/ write TV stations (network & cable) and advertising sponsors to express your opinions—both pro and con—about programming.



Children in the US watch an average of 3-5 hrs of television daily

- ☀ Prime-time TV depicts an average of 5-6 violent acts per hr, and Sat. a.m. children's programs
- ☀ show an average of 20-25 violent acts

Only 10% of children's viewing time is spent watching children's TV. The other 90% is spent watching programs designed for adults

Source: National Assoc. for the Education of Young Children

television to a

Children growing up today spend an enormous amount of time glued to the TV screen. They average 35 hours per week of screen time, either watching TV or playing video games.