



A PARENTS GUIDE: MEDIA VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

Violence from television, movies, and video games often ignore consequences of violence, such as pain of victims, the victim's family, and the family of the perpetrator. As a result viewers, especially children and adolescents can become desensitized, making them less sensitive to violent acts, fearful of becoming a victim and can begin identifying with the aggressors solution to problems in the scene.ⁱ These violent behaviors and attitudes become encoded in the brain causing aggression in real-life personal situations among children and adolescents.ⁱⁱ A recent survey by the American Medical Association found that two-thirds of adults and 75% of adults with children had walked out of a movie because of violent content. While no rating scale can substitute for parental involvement, to assist parents in making good judgment on the quality of movies and video games, the American Medical Association recommend the following tips, so parents can make better judgments in limiting their child's exposure to media violence.

Tips for Parents on Media Violence

- Never substitute videos or video games as a babysitter.
- Monitor the programs your children watch and do not allow them to watch violent programs.
- Monitor the music videos and films your children see and the music they listen to.
- Limit television use to 1 or 2 quality hours per day.
- Set situation limits (no television or video games until school or before homework is done).
- Keep television and video player machines out of children's bedrooms.
- Turn the television off during mealtimes.
- Turn television on only when there is something specific you have decided is worth watching, not "to see if there's something on."
- Don't place the television in the most prominent location in your home.
- Watch what your children are watching.
- Be an active viewer: talk and connect with your children while the program is on.
- Be careful of viewing before bedtime. Emotion-invoking images may linger and intrude into sleep.
- Learn on the violent content of movies and videos available for rental or purchase. Be clear to your children about what is an appropriate movie and review their movie choices in advance.
- Set a good example and limit your own television viewing.

Take Part With Your Child-*Be an Active Parent!*

- Teach your child that real-life violence has consequences.
- Help your children distinguish between fantasy and reality.
- Watch television with your children and discuss any violent acts and images that are shown.
- Ask children to think about what would happen in real life if the violent acts were committed in real-life. Would anyone die or go to jail? Would anyone be sad? Would the violence solve problems or create them?
- Ask children how they feel after watching a violent TV show, movie, or music video.

ⁱ Bartholow B.D., Bushman B.J., Sestir M.A. Chronic violence video game exposure and desensitization to violence: Behavioral and event-related brain potential data. *J. Exp. Social Psychology, In Press, Corrected Proof, Articles in press, December 2005*

ⁱⁱ "Media Violence" AAP Committee on Communications, in *Pediatrics, Vol.95, No.6, June 1995*