

TV Turnoff Week

During TV Turnoff Week, people throughout North America will voluntarily turn off their televisions. All families and schools are encouraged to participate and discover more constructive, rewarding and healthy leisure activities.

Now more than ever, children spend their leisure time watching TV and playing video games. As the popularity of these pastimes increases, it seems children have fewer opportunities for social interaction and spend less time in self-directed imaginative play.

Research suggests children under the age of eight are especially vulnerable to the violent imagery common to TV programming. They have difficulty articulating a rationale for the violence and distinguishing reality from fantasy. Children tend to imitate the language, behaviours and attitudes of characters seen on TV.*

Research also suggests that extensive exposure to more violent TV shows and video games may lead to the emotional desensitization of young children.

**DeGaetano, Gloria (1999, Winter). Television's Toll on Our Children. Committee for Children; Prevention Update.*

Did you know...

- On average, children witness at least 20,000 graphic murders and 80,000 injurious assaults on television by the age of 12.
- Approximately 40 per cent of violent incidents on TV are initiated by characters who have qualities that make them attractive role models for children.
- More than half of all violent incidents involve aggression that would be lethal and/or incapacitating if it occurred in real-life. (This violence is commonly used with humour).
- The amount of TV watched by children at age eight may be related to the levels of violence they use as adults by age 30.
- A lack of active play or social interaction is related to a decrease in serotonin (a chemical transmitter in the brain). A lower level of this transmitter can be related to depression, irritability, loss of temper and explosive rage.

What to do...

- Limit and monitor the TV programming watched by children.
- Participate in the upcoming TV Turnoff Week.
- Listen to what children say about violence. How are they interpreting it?
- Ensure your children know the consequences of violence; they will be less likely to imitate violent and aggressive behaviours.
- Redirect your children's interests by encouraging them to read and helping them to develop other creative hobbies and become more physically active.

