

Insight into a Digital Age: Television and the Young Child

In this age of digital media it's not easy for parents to know what is and isn't appropriate for their little ones. From the standpoint of early childhood development, the impact of television, movies, and video games on young children is often underestimated by adults.

It is not simply a matter of young children being able to sit through a show without signs of distress. The problem is the impediment of emotional and intellectual development during and after viewing. Children can become obsessed with the visual display/characters they have seen, during a time when their cognitive and intellectual development should be allowed to soar.

Shows like Toopy and Binoo, and the Backyardigans, are made for the under six audience. While boring for adults, these shows are an example of how incredibly simple the stimulation needs to be for the under six audience. At this age children have not yet developed the filters, and emotional or intellectual maturity to be exposed to more adult content.

Although a source of entertainment for adults, when television is not carefully monitored for appropriate content and viewed in moderate doses, it actually can impede the young child's development on many levels. Early childhood is a time where tangible experiences are needed for healthy development. "Because of this, daily television exposure does not provide children with the quality and quantity of crucial emotional, social, cognitive, or physical experiences they require when they are young. The developing child requires the right combination of these experiences *at the right times* during development in order to develop optimally. This cannot happen if the child is sitting for hours passively watching television." -Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.

The following facts and guideline are from an article by Vancouver Coastal Health:

- The family has the largest effect on a child's learning and behaviour, so parents must carefully choose the TV shows that children watch.
- TV affects children's behaviour and physical growth.
- TV will not teach your child to talk, the language is too fast so they often just look at the pictures and not listen to the words.

Toddlers

- have trouble understanding what is real and what is pretend.
- will become aggressive after watching violent behaviours on TV.
- If TV is used, choose slow moving and repetitive programs for up to half an hour, two or three times/week.

Preschoolers

- are beginning to understand what they watch and will understand adult programming, so be careful what you view in front of them.
- Preschoolers who watch more than two hours per day may have trouble making friends and playing with others.
- They can be more aggressive in their play after they watch violent cartoons/programs.

The best way to shape how young children will learn for the rest of their lives is to sing with, talk to, smile at and rock your child. TV watching takes away that time you have to spend with your children helping their brains to grow.

Want more information?

Consuming Kids is a must see film for all parents. "It draws on the insights of health care professionals, children's advocates and industry insiders, the film focuses on the explosive growth of child marketing in the wake of deregulation, showing how youth marketers have used

the latest advances in psychology, anthropology, and neuroscience to transform American children into one of the most powerful and profitable consumer demographics in the world.”

“Consuming Kids pushes back against the wholesale commercialization of childhood, raising urgent questions about the ethics of marketing and its impact on the health and well-being of kids.” <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/consuming-kids/>

Other Information Sources:

Television and the Young Child: <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>

From Waldorf Today: <http://www.waldorftoday.com/page/2/>

From the New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/technology/at-waldorf-school-in-silicon-valley-technology-can-wait.html?_r=3&pagewanted=1&hp