

# Television

## Some of the Effects of TV on Children

### (a) General Development

“TV has its good side. It can be entertaining and educational, and can open up new worlds for children, giving them a chance to travel the globe and learn about different cultures ... programs with positive role models can influence viewers to make positive lifestyle changes. However, the reverse can also be true: Children are likely to learn things from TV that parents don’t want them to learn. TV can affect their health, behaviour, and family life in negative ways. ... Excessive TV/video/DVD viewing can contribute to poor grades, sleep problems, behaviour problems, obesity, and risky behaviour. Most children’s programming does not teach what parents say they want their children to learn; many shows are filled with stereotypes, violent solutions to problems, and mean behaviour. ... TV can scare or traumatize children: symptoms of being frightened or upset by TV stories can include bad dreams, anxious feelings, being afraid of being alone, withdrawing from friends, and missing school” (<http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/tv.htm>).

“If your little one seems inattentive, demanding, anxious and down-right bratty, the TV may be somewhat to blame. ... Time spent in front of the TV stimulates the areas of the brain related to the stress response, creating a more reactive, impulsive and inattentive child” (<http://thedelicioustruth.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/superb-advice-for-limiting-tv-time-from.html>).

#### (i) Emotional Development:

“Watching too much television has been shown to slow down, if not completely halt, a child’s emotional development, according to David Shaffer, a child psychologist ... This is due to learning how to think, feel, and react from television as opposed to through real-life experiences. Though television is not reality, children’s minds are not fully able to differentiate fact from fiction. ... Problems with emotional development because of excessive television can lead to an increased chance of addiction, sexual promiscuity, depression, and violence” ([http://www.ehow.com/list\\_5804444\\_bad-tv-shows-children\\_s-development.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_5804444_bad-tv-shows-children_s-development.html)).

#### (ii) Intellectual Development:

“Too much television can slow down a child’s intellectual development if educational television shows are not watched. This is because children will often choose to watch entertaining television shows, as opposed to stimulating their minds with educational activities. ... neglecting intellectually stimulating activities can lead to trouble in school and reduced IQ” ([http://www.ehow.com/list\\_5804444\\_bad-tv-shows-children\\_s-development.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_5804444_bad-tv-shows-children_s-development.html)).

“Children sit passively while the television dances, ... their ability to become deeply involved ... with other less frenetic sources of wisdom – their ability to think – atrophies. ... they abandon books, manifest lower intelligence quotients, fail to achieve academically, and have depressed professional aspirations. ... television impedes imagination ... [and] corrodes creativity” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

### **(iii) Social and Maturity Development:**

“Children that watch too much television tend to have fewer real interpersonal relationships and interactions. ... Lack of this interaction can lead to trouble in school truancy, poor decision making, increased chance of addiction, and violence” ([http://www.ehow.com/list\\_5804444\\_bad-tv-shows-children\\_s-development.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_5804444_bad-tv-shows-children_s-development.html)).

“Psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim suggests that television retards social skills not just by depriving children of playtime, but also by accustoming them to unrealistically stimulating characters. Children who have been taught, or conditioned, to listen passively most of the days to the warm verbal communications coming from the TV screen, to the deep emotional appeal of the so-called TV personality, are often unable to respond to real persons because they arouse so much less feeling than the skilled actors. ... Anything portrayed on television can be made more exciting than almost anything in real life” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

“Watching television appears to be especially harmful for children as their brain has not yet fully developed. Increased television viewing in children tends to impair frontal lobe development. This region of the brain is responsible for impulse control and one’s ability to concentrate. Thus damage to or retardation of the frontal lobe can result in a child who acts socially inappropriately (i.e. exhibits anti-social behavior), and finds it difficult to concentrate and learn at school” (<http://www.eruptingmind.com/effects-of-tv-on-brain>).

### **(b) Infants and Toddlers**

“The ill effects of too much [TV] ... can lead to obesity, depression, and poor school performance. ... The American Academy Pediatrics guidelines strongly advise parents to ban television for children under two, who have a critical need for direct interactions for healthy brain growth and the development of appropriate social, emotional and cognitive skills” (<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2008/01/02/television-unhealthy-for-young-minds.aspx>).

“Before the age of 3, children’s brains go through rapid development and are being physically shaped in response to whatever they are exposed to. Exposing children to fast-moving images like television for sustained periods at this time can inhibit their ability to sustain attention, and hinder their development of social skills. Allowing children under 3 to watch television has been found to impair their linguistic and social development, and also put them at risk of health problems including attention-deficit disorder, autism and obesity. Research suggests that television can also cause irregular sleep patterns for infants and toddlers, and decrease their resting metabolic rate” (<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2008/03/22/a-one-eyed-invader-in-the-bedroom.aspx>).

“The first three years of life are the most significant period of a child’s development, especially for the brain, which is growing faster than any other part of the body. During this time a child’s brain is more receptive to positive influences – and more vulnerable to negative ones – than it will be in later years. ... TV in the first three years of life can have a negative impact on healthy development:

- Infant exposure to television has been linked to delayed language development and kindergarten readiness skills;
- Early exposure to TV has also been connected to attention disorders and sleep problems;
- TV use at age three has been linked to behaviour problems and to long-term effects on social development, classroom engagement, and academic achievement. ...

Half of children’s TV exposure consists of background television – television that a child can see or hear even though he is not actively watching. ... background TV can threaten cognitive and language development and may be linked to attention problems later in childhood” (<http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/print/691>).

“The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 2 years old not watch *any* TV and that those older than 2 watch no more than 1 to 2 hours a day of quality programming” ([http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat\\_id=168&article\\_set=21720](http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat_id=168&article_set=21720)).

“The American Academy of Pediatrics’ decision to recommend no television for children two years of age and under was strongly influenced by the results of studies published in their publication, *Pediatrics*, in 2004. Researchers found significant evidence that *‘early television exposure is associated with attentional problems at age 7.’* The fast scene cuts, quick action, pulsing lights and commercial interruptions are some of the factors that contribute to low attention spans, as they train the brain to function in short bursts of focus, rather than the sort of longer periods of concentration necessary for more complex learning” ([http://www.ehow.com/info\\_12297924\\_television-affect-brains-young-children.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_12297924_television-affect-brains-young-children.html)).

“Harvard University Professor T. Berry Brazelton hooked newborn babies up to electroencephalographs and then exposed them to a flickering light source similar to a television but with no images. Fifteen minutes into their exposure, the babies stopped crying and produced sleep patterns on the EEG, even though their eyes were still open and observing the light. Brazelton’s experiment revealed that the medium itself, with no content, acts directly on the brain to suppress mental activity” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

“The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry confirmed Brazelton’s findings in 1982. They reported that the brain waves generated while watching even the most exciting shows were those of low attention states. ... *‘output of alpha rhythms increased, indicating they were in a passive state, as if they were just sitting in the dark.’*” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

### **(c) Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorders**

“A new study appearing in the April issue of *Pediatrics* concludes that children who watch television:

- (a) experience shortened attention spans,
- (b) are considerably more at risk - based on the number of hours of TV watched - of developing Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD / ADHD)” (NewsWithViews.com at: [http://www.inplainsite.org/html/dangers\\_of\\_television.html#Children](http://www.inplainsite.org/html/dangers_of_television.html#Children)).

“Sally Ward, one of Britain’s leading authorities on children’s speech development, completed a ten year study which ... found that:

- (a) Children of two years or older should not be exposed to more than two hours of TV a day,
- (b) Children of one year old or younger should not be exposed to television at all.

She is currently preparing to focus on the way television affects our attention. In particular she will be looking at Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): *‘A lot of people think it’s chemical, ... it’s very peculiar that at the onset of children’s television it got a lot more prevalent, and at the onset of children’s videos it got a lot more prevalent.’* Her concern is being reiterated in America where child psychologist John Rosemond has suggested that ADHD is environmentally created; a suggestion that is completely at odds with the pharmaceutical industry, which maintains that the disorder is genetically inherited and makes considerable profit as a result: *‘Pharmaceutical intervention won’t change behavioural and motivational problems. The endlessly changing images of television, flickering like the attention spans of ADHD children.’* Rosemond began questioning the role of TV after his own son began displaying symptoms of ADHD. In response he got rid of the television and within six weeks the boy’s behaviour was transformed” (<http://www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/print.asp?ID=67>).

“Excessive television viewing can cause a person to develop a short attention span and increase the risk of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children and adults. This is thought to be due to the frequent scene changes that occur with modern-day video edits” (<http://www.eruptingmind.com/effects-of-tv-on-brain>).

### **(i) Educational TV Programs – eg Sesame Street:**

“Dr. Dorothy Cohen, a professor at the Bank Street College of Education, ... reported that although [e.g.] Sesame Street does teach letter recognition, it also is responsible for ‘a decrease in imaginative play and an increase in aimless running around, non-involvement in play materials, low frustration tolerance, poor persistence, and confusion about reality and fantasy.’” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

“Dr. Werner Halpern, director of the Children and Youth Division of the Rochester Mental Health Center, revealed the results of his own research: The program’s pulsating, insistent visual and auditory stimulation can act as an assault on the nervous system of young children with immature neurological and perceptual development. In some two year olds sensory overkill produced by the show’s overheated teaching techniques triggered pressured speech, constant movement, [and] frantic reactions” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

“The report from the Yale University Family Television Research and Consultation Center: ‘Sesame Street creates a psychological orientation in children that leads to a shortened attention span, a lack of reflectiveness, and an expectation of rapid change in the broader environment’” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

### **(d) Violence and Aggression**

“Some now feel that the negative effects of TV violence are being passed on to young children who often imitate what they see on-screen” (<http://www.eruptingmind.com/effects-of-tv-on-brain>).

“Children who view as little as 3 hours of television per day could be at risk of behavioural problems, depression and increased aggression. And children at highest risk for these three factors tend to be classified as heavy television viewers” (<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2008/01/02/heavy-tv.aspx>).

“It is reported that children watch an average of 43 hours of TV per week. ... While watching, they rapidly become almost hypnotized. It has been shown scientifically that within minutes of beginning to watch TV, the brain changes from the alert brain waves (beta waves) to the hypnotic waves (alpha waves) where the judgment centre of the brain is bypassed. So any violence the child sees, ... is implanted in the child’s brain without any ability on the child’s part to decide whether what they are seeing is right or wrong. Everything is accepted by the brain without any moral judgment being applied to it. It then becomes part of the child’s permanent subconscious” ([http://www.inplainsite.org/html/dangers\\_of\\_television.html#Children](http://www.inplainsite.org/html/dangers_of_television.html#Children)).

“TV violence sometimes begs for imitation because violence is often promoted as a fun and effective way to get what you want. Many violent acts are perpetrated by the ‘good guys’, whom children have been taught to admire. Even though taught by their parents that it’s not right to hit, television says it’s OK to bite, hit, or kick if you’re the good guy. This can lead to confusion when children try to understand the difference between right and wrong. And the ‘bad guys’ on TV aren’t always held responsible or punished for their actions. ... Behaviour problems, nightmares, and difficulty sleeping may follow exposure to media violence” ([http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat\\_id=168&article\\_set=21720](http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat_id=168&article_set=21720)).

“Literally thousands of studies since the 1950s have asked whether there is a link between exposure to media violence and violent behaviour. All but 18 have answered ‘yes’. The evidence from the research is overwhelming. According to the AAP, ‘Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behaviour, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed.’ Watching violent shows is also linked with having less empathy toward others:

- Two-thirds of all programming contains violence;
- Programs designed for children more often contain violence than adult TV;
- Most violent acts go unpunished on TV and are often accompanied by humor.
- The consequences of human suffering and loss are rarely depicted;
- Many shows glamorize violence. TV often promotes violent acts as a fun and effective way to get what you want, without consequences;
- Even in G-rated, animated movies and DVDs, violence is common – often as a way for the good characters to solve their problems. ... The amount of violence with intent to injure as increased over the years;
- Children under 8 cannot tell the difference between reality and fantasy, making them more vulnerable to learning from and adopting as reality the violence they see on TV;
- Repeated exposure to TV violence makes children less sensitive toward its effects on victims and the human suffering it causes, ... and can affect willingness to help others in need;
- Viewing TV violence reduces inhibitions and leads to more aggressive behaviour, and can have long-term effects:
  - A 15-year-long study by University of Michigan researchers found that the link between childhood TV-violence viewing and aggressive and violent behaviour persists into adulthood,
  - A 17-year-long study found that teenaged boys who grew up watching more TV each day are more likely to commit acts of violence than those who watched less.
- Even having the TV on in the home is linked to more aggressive behaviour in 3-year-olds. This was regardless of the type of programming and regardless of whether the child was actually watching the TV” (<http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/tv.htm>).

“In May 1982 the National Institute of Mental Health issued a report summarizing the results of over 2500 studies on TV’s influence on behavior. According to NIMH, the evidence is *‘overwhelming that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior.’* ... Another study, conducted by Stanford University psychologist Albert Bandura, found that *‘action’* cartoons for children are considerably damaging. Bandura: *‘found cartoon violence as potent as real-life models ion increasing violence among children’* ... In yet another study, a University of Kansas researcher reported that: *‘Saturday-morning cartoons markedly decreased imaginative play and hiked aggression among 66 preschoolers.’* Playground aggression was found to be far greater among steady cartoon viewers, according a study conducted by Yale University Drs Jerome L. and Dorothy Singer” (Albert James Dager, *Children’s Television: Misshaping Our Future*).

“According to Dr. John P. Murray, 30 years of brain mapping research has indicated that watching violent television can have substantial effects not only on the actual brain of a child but on his outward behaviour as well. ... Behavioral changes include an increased level of aggressive behaviour and/or favourable attitudes toward aggression as an acceptable outlet. Also there is marked desensitisation to violence that occurs after prolonged exposure, which apparently makes the person’s tolerance toward societal violence in general much higher” ([http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5339457\\_tv-violence-brain-mapping-children.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5339457_tv-violence-brain-mapping-children.html)).

## (e) Obesity

“Health experts have long linked excessive TV-watching to obesity. ... While watching TV, children are inactive and tend to snack. ... Studies have shown that decreasing the amount of TV children watched led to less weight gain and lower body mass index (BMI)” ([http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat\\_id=168&article\\_set=21720](http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat_id=168&article_set=21720)).

“While watching TV, the metabolic rate seems to go even lower than during rest. This means that a person would burn fewer calories while watching TV than when just sitting quietly, doing nothing. ... Results from recent studies have reported success in reducing excess weight gain in preadolescents by restricting TV viewing” (<http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/tv.htm>).

“Harvard University researchers discovered that the odds of a child becoming obese rise 12 to 20% for each daily hour of television he watches. ... Television displaces more active play. ... children snack while watching television. ... the snacks are overwhelmingly high in fat, cholesterol, sugar, and salt, while only 3% are for fruits and vegetables. ... the most insidious link between television and obesity was discovered in 1993. Psychologists ... monitored metabolic rates in eight- to twelve-year-old children under two conditions: lying down in a dark room and sitting up watching television. In every case, the child’s metabolic rate while sitting and watching television was far lower than his metabolic rate while lying down in the dark. ... persisted after the session for at least the length of time the child had watched television. ... a child who watches television gains more weight from food eaten even while he is not watching television, and will have more difficulty burning off excess fat, than children who do not watch TV” (<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/dangers-of-television/>).

## **(f) Reading**

“TV can discourage and replace reading. Reading requires much more thinking than television, and we know that reading fosters young people’s healthy brain development. Children from families that have the TV on a lot spend less time reading and being read to, and are less likely to be able to read” (<http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/tv.htm>).

## **(g) Disconnect From Reality / Indoctrination and Thought Control**

“The youth of today are convinced that the experts and personalities in television are the authority of credible information while parents and older generations are foolish with dated ideas. Children are conditioned to disconnect from what is truly important to their well-being, and instead focus on mindless trivia, ... They invest their psychological worth in fantasy characters on television while ignoring or even scorning individuals contributing to the betterment of humanity. ... They ... often lack the ability to think independently or to resist corruption. [The] children’s minds are molded by television” ([http://pupaganda.com/originals/Unplug\\_the\\_signal.html](http://pupaganda.com/originals/Unplug_the_signal.html)).

“There is no doubt that [television] technology is used to mould and shape opinions by feeding subjective information to any group of people such as school children that are indoctrinated into a certain point of view rather than taught to exercise their minds through critical thinking” (<http://apocalypse2010.blogspot.com/2010/02/dont-touch-that-dial.html>).