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## ABSTRACT

Television plays a dominant role in our society; however, television on its own is neither bad nor good. It offers children benefits such as education and entertainment, but television can impact negatively on young lives by detracting children from other activities such as physical and dramatic play. The effect of television on children's behavior is further accentuated when one considers that very young children have difficulty separating fact from fantasy. There is increasing evidence that suggests children's health is affected by television. With television intruding into the lives of preschoolers, it is essential that parents and educators teach children "television literacy" and provide them with the skills and language to think and talk about television. A number of strategies can be used by parents and early childhood educators to take control of television viewing and its effects, especially the effect of viewing violence on television. Appendices include various materials, such as a list of effects TV has on young children, child development facts, "A Developmental Framework for Assessing Television," guidelines for using TV in the home, and strategies for using videotapes. (Contains 12 references.) (Author/BGC)

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TELEVISION LITERACY: MAKING THE T.V.  
WORK FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, PARENTS  
AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

BY  
WAYNE EASTMAN, Ed. D.

A PAPER PRESENTED TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
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RYERSON POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY  
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## ABSTRACT

It is obvious that television plays a dominant role in our society. However, television on its own, is neither bad nor good. It offers children benefits such as education and entertainment but television can impact negatively on young lives also – such as detracting children from other activities like physical activity and dramatic play. The effect of television on children's behavior is further accentuated when one considers that very young children have difficulty separating fact from fantasy.

This presentation is intended to give an overview of the impact of television on young children as well as to provide strategies for parents and early childhood educators to take control of the television. With television intruding into the lives of preschoolers, it is now essential that parents and early childhood educators teach children television literacy; that is to think and talk about the TV.

TELEVISION LITERACY: MAKING THE TELEVISION WORK  
FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

BY

WAYNE EASTMAN, Ed.D.

By the time they graduate from high school, many of today's children will have spent more time in front of a TV than in a classroom. According to Statistics Canada, children aged 2 to 11 watch on average of 20 hours of TV a week (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992).

It is obvious that television plays a dominant role in our culture. However, television on its own, is neither bad nor good. It offers children benefits such as education and entertainment but television can impact negatively on children – limiting their participation in physical activity and dramatic play. The effect of television on children's behaviour is further accentuated when one considers that very young children have difficulty separating fact from fantasy.

Since this presentation will focus on the preschool years (age 2 to 5), it is useful to present several child development facts relevant to television and this age group; these include; young children have difficulty following and remembering stories, preschoolers may know that TV isn't always real, they pay a lot of attention to commercials, they don't necessarily differentiate between programs and commercials, they imitate items they view on TV, and they trust commercials (Rodgers, 1994). With the above concerns in mind, it is important that adults see television as a 'two-way street', that is, television influences the family and the early childhood setting, but the parent and the early childhood educator can also influence TV literacy.

This presentation is intended to give an overview of the impact of television on young children as well as to provide strategies for parents and early childhood educators to take

control of television viewing. We, as parents and early childhood educators, deem it important to teach young children rules and life skills, however, with television intruding into the lives of preschoolers, it is now essential that we teach children television literacy; that is to think and talk about the TV.

## EFFECTS OF TV ON VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

What effect does television have on a child's behaviour? As parents and early childhood educators, we need to be cognizant of the reality that television can have an impact upon children's behaviour, development, and even their health. Watching television in itself is not necessarily a problem. Of concern is what children are not doing when they are watching TV – for instance, not reading or playing creatively or socializing.

Possibly the more television children watch, the greater the negative influence on their lives (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992). In the context of the preceding statement, then just what is heavy viewing? Experts often define viewing not in terms of hours but in relationship to exclusion of other activities, such as playing. However, there are researchers that state four hours a day is the maximum viewing time for young children (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992). Others, recommend preschoolers be exposed to only one to two programs per day, and with a maximum of two hours at a time (Symons, 1991).

When considering the negative effects of television on young children, most parents and early childhood educators see violence and aggression as the greatest concern. The Canadian Paediatric Society (1992) states that the most frequent reasons for this are as follows; children tend to imitate behaviour they view on television, frequent exposure to TV violence can make children think that violence is normal, even in real life, children who take in large quantities of televised violence tend to see the world as a frightening place and grow leery of neighbours and strangers, and children who see, over and over again, that violence is an acceptable solution to problems, tend to work out their problems in the same way. The later statement

merits attention because young children's aggressive skills are acquired earlier than mental or social skills (Beaty, 1995). Consequently, "Children who admire aggressiveness in their heroes and heroines may see little reason for devoting time and effort to learning other ways of problem solving" (Singer, 1988).

Other factors that concern the experts germane to television watching and young children have been summed up by the American Academy of Paediatrics (1986) as follows:

Television exposes children to adult behaviours in ways that suggest that these behaviours are normal and risk-free. Social behaviour and the use of alcohol and drugs are often portrayed in realistic inviting terms...The message seems to be that everyone does it.

There is an increasing body of evidence that suggest children's health is affected by television. There are two major effects that should perturb parents and early childhood educators. First, children who are heavy TV watchers are less physically fit (Rodgers, 1994). Fitness is premised on spending time running, hopping etc. in order to develop strong hearts, lungs, and muscles. Television viewing, therefore, detracts from the time children spend participating in physical activity. This has an increased significance in our North American society where physical fitness levels begin to decrease at the age of five (Eastman, 1994). The second effect pertains to young children's nutrition. Children are so influenced by TV commercials that they often select foods advertised on television. In many instances this means that their choices are not nutritional. It has been estimated that a quarter of all commercials are for food, but nutritious foods are hardly ever displayed. "The foods that are advertised contain lots of sugar, salt, and fats. During children's shows, there are more high sugar cereals advertised than any other food" (Rodgers, 1994).

It is obvious that TV viewing reduces a child's play time. Several authors, for example Winn (1985), state that the loss of play time can be devastating because "... play is clearly a vehicle for many of the child's most important learnings and the means whereby he is able to practice and develop behaviours necessary to his success as a social being." Winn (1985) further states that "not only does TV viewing lead to a reduction in play time; there is evidence to suggest that it has affected the nature of children's play, particularly indoor play". As a corollary to Winn's findings, there are early childhood educators who feel that a preschooler's dramatic play has become much more aggressive, less creative and imaginative and dominated by violent TV characters (Beaty, 1995; Carlsson-Paige, 1995).

Early childhood educators, in assessing the impact of television on young children's behaviour, should consider TV programs in the context of developmental appropriateness. Developmental appropriateness should be the criterion used for evaluating television programs. With respect to TV appropriateness, Levin (1994) conceived a developmental framework for assessing television.

Levin's (1994) framework included three categories; developmental issues, what children see on TV, and what children should see. The developmental issues included the following; to establish a sense of trust and safety, to develop a sense of autonomy with connectedness, to develop a sense of improvement, to establish gender identity, to develop an appreciation of diversity among people, and to have opportunities for meaningful play. Within this framework, Levin (1994) contends that television negatively impacts on the healthy social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children.

Recently, investigators have concerned themselves with the positive association between television and young children. Of significance to parents and early childhood educators are findings that indicate the TV can have a positive impact on a child's behaviour. More specifically, "evidence shows that children who watch programs with positive social themes are more likely to exhibit behaviour such as thoughtfulness, helpfulness, cooperation, and sharing" (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992). Furthermore the Canadian Paediatric Society (1992) asserts that "... research indicates that programs designed to produce positive social attitudes have twice the impact on behaviour than violent ones do, not only increasing viewers' feelings for others but also lowering their antisocial tendencies."



A further positive effect of television viewing is the correlation between TV and reading readiness/emergent literacy. Researchers have suggested "...that TV enables children to become interested in a wider range of books and that it can stimulate interest in reading through dramatizations of stories" (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992). In addition to the preceding good effect, other widely recognized educational influences of 'controlled' television watching include; TV viewing increase conversational abilities; it satisfies some of the young child's thirst for knowledge; it motivates creativity; it brings an awareness of global issues, for example, environmental friendliness, into a preschooler's life; it gives children ideas for play; and television entertains children (Canadian Paediatric Society, 1992).

#### TELEVISION IS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING

There are those who advocate abstinence of television viewing in a preschool milieu. But others, for example the Canadian Paediatric Society, (1992), state that "of greater interest to caregivers, then, is the considerable body of research that claims that moderate TV viewing can be good for children". However, the Society, like most early childhood educators, does advocate caution about making television a part of a preschool centre's daily routine. With the preceding statements in mind, it is not the intent of this article to either suggest that television has no place in an early childhood centre or that under 'controlled' conditions this media can have a positive effect on a child's learning. However, we live in the 'real world', consequently, it has to be accepted that television is used in child care centres. Hence, for those using the television as a possible educational tool, guidelines should be considered to ensure that learning from TV does take place.

The Canadian Paediatric Society (1992) puts forth the following criteria for early childhood educators to follow to ensure that learning from television does occur:

1. Early childhood educators should select programs which are developmentally appropriate, and respectful of a child's age and stage of development – for example Mr. Rogers' Neighbourhood. Of particular concern to early childhood educators when selecting appropriate programs is the reality that young children do not have well developed logical thinking skills, hence, programs like Mr. Dressup, that help children become aware of cause and effect are the most appropriate.
2. Early childhood educators should share the viewing experience with young children. This enables the caregiver to verbally review the program as well as reinforce any learning possibilities.
3. Early childhood educators should encourage children to be active not passive viewers of television. For instance children should be encouraged to interface with the television program. This active process can be supplemented with suitable follow-up activities.
4. As a preamble to viewing, early childhood educators should talk about what the children might see. This prepares children for the viewing process. The communication effort should be continued during viewing with the early childhood educator posing such questions as 'What do you feel about this' or 'Could this really happen?' To ensure the interaction process is complete, early childhood educators and young children should talk about the program following viewing.
5. The positive impact of television can only be achieved if the early childhood educator reinforces and extends the learning from viewing TV. Following viewing, children need to be encouraged to engage in dramatic play, emergent literacy, role playing, and other activities which supplement the TV learning experience.
6. Videotaping can be an advantageous tool in improving learning from television. Videotaping affords the early childhood educator the opportunity to select suitable programs and use them at appropriate times at the child care centre.

Early childhood educators, because preschool children are in the preoperational stage of development, that is, they can not discriminate between reality and fantasy (Stone-Zukowski, 1994), must plan the television experience as well as make critical choices about the appropriateness and inappropriateness of programs. A rule of thumb is that when television is used in a preschool milieu it must always be interactive.

#### TV GUIDANCE: PARENTAL INITIATIVES

A 1991 report by the Ontario Medical Association indicated that watching television is a major contributor to sleeplessness, depression, and hyperactivity in young children (Rosenkrantz, 1994). If such findings disturb families, then parents must enact strategies to lessen the possible negative effects of the 'Plug-In Drug'. Parents, prior to establishing viewing guidelines should avail themselves of any simple technique to evaluate the influence of television on their child's life. Hence, the quiz on the following page is merely one suggestion to initiate this process.

## WATCHING TOO MUCH?

QUIZ FOR PARENTS	YES	NO
(1) Does my child play outside?		
(2) Does she play imaginary games?		
(3) Does he play with other children?		
(4) Does she enjoy music?		
(5) Does he have a special interest/activity?		
(6) Does she do cerebral activities?		
(7) Does he do chores?		
(8) Does she take part in outside activities?		
(9) Does he enjoy being read to?		
(10) Does she participate in physical activities?		

KEY: If you answered yes to 4 or more questions about your child, then your child's life includes a variety of activities.

If you answered yes to 6 or more, your child's life is pretty full. Television is just one part of it. Your child probably doesn't have a problem.

If you answered no to 7 or more questions about your child, then perhaps TV is taking over.

SOURCE: Adapted from Minding the Set, 1994.

There are a litany of strategies germane to television screening and young children. Listed below are some, and by no means inclusive, positive steps parents can take to facilitate television guidance:

1. When your child is watching television, watch with him or her. As was discussed previously, being proactive affords parents the opportunity to develop television literacy. If parents are sincere in managing the television they must conceptualize their goals; for example one goal may be to have their child watch less violence.
2. Parents should limit the amount of time their preschoolers watch television. Some parents develop formal rules and are selective in the programs they allow their children to view. For instance, in regards to what to watch, very young children could be given a TV allowance – for example two shows a day, or only television on the weekend.
3. Television should not be the sole source of recreational time in a household. Thus, for parents this means planning alternative activities such as a family picnic, visiting a library, taking walks, etc.
4. Parents should be careful about indiscriminate viewing of news programs. Young children who are exposed to a lot of news can become desensitized to acts of violence (Rosenkrantz, 1994).
5. Parents can plan special viewing times with their children (Rosenkrantz, 1994). Even very young children can plan their weekly television guides or select programs to be videoed and watched at a more convenient time (Rodgers, 1994).
6. Parents can get preschoolers to think about what they are viewing. One way to accomplish this goal is by turning the TV into a treasure hunt. Children should concentrate on one thing at a time, for example commercials, and then move on to other items (Rodgers, 1994).
7. Conversations are much more effective than lectures with young children. This is because young children have difficulty comprehending abstract ideas like equality and socially acceptable problem solving techniques. Thus, parents can assist their child to understand these concepts by demonstrating how they work in real life (Rodgers, 1994).

8. Parents should be cognizant of the TV being left on just for background noise and turn it off. A corollary to the idea of leaving the TV on for no particular purpose is the avoidance of television as a babysitter. Allowing the TV to be on constantly sets a pattern of TV dependence. For example, if parents are busy why not turn-off the TV and have the children listen to music or do crafts (Rosendrantz, 1994).
9. "Talk with your child about what is real and not real on television. Talk about the concept of acting - relate acting to a game of make-believe. Also, talk about cartoon characters. You might occasionally want to ask your child if the characters are real and what would happen to real people and animals if they were in similar situations" (Rosenkrantz, 1994).
10. Possibly the most important suggestion to parents is that they be aware of their child's reaction to what they view and if he or she becomes disturbed by a particular program then turn the TV off and do something else together (Rosenkrantz, 1994).

Parents need to create a setting where their children feel safe. Hence, parents must monitor television viewing so that their young child watches appropriate TV which personifies this feeling of safety. As Symons (1991) states: "When programs are chosen carefully, when TV time is limited, and when parents watch too, actively, then the 'boob tube' can, indeed, enrich our children's lives".

## RETROSPECT

As professionals working with very young children, early childhood educators can do much to assist preschoolers understand the role of television in our society. More specifically, early childhood educators can plan the curriculum "... so that it provides opportunities for children to share their views, gain knowledge, go beyond TV visions, develop critical viewing skills, make critical choices, build on resources, work together with parents, and have the freedom to play" (Stone-Zukowski, 1994).

Stone-Zukowski (1994) outlines the following activities early childhood educators can incorporate into their centre's curriculum in order to help children cope with the television:

1. Discussion: assure children that you share their concerns. When dealing with young children ensure that they know trusted adults are there to protect them.
2. Knowledge: Provide opportunities for children to learn how movies and television shows are made. You can have children visit a TV station, make or draw cartoons about TV shows, make a video, and make a commercial.
3. Critical Choices: Encourage children to make critical choices about the shows they watch on TV. Help parents recognize the importance of making choices that fit with their family standards. Learn about the rating systems established by the CRTC. Provide resources for parents and children that will help them make choices.
4. Fantasy: Encourage opportunities for children to express their feelings in ways that feel good, are non-threatening and removed from reality. This can be done by: role playing monsters, creatures from outer space, dinosaurs, and fairytale characters; singing and writing songs about the rain forest animals, etc.; and telling true or make-believe stories and using puppets to share concerns.
5. Action Groups: Children can work with adults to become aware of various lobby groups and government agencies that can have a positive impact on the issues raised on TV. For example, the children can; learn about conflict resolution practices, declare a war toy free zone at their centre, learn about environmental issues, and contact the CRTC.

For parents, possibly the greatest issue is the effect of television violence on their children's behaviour. Young children have limited cognitive abilities to process and cope with violence. Consequently, Dr. Benjamin Spock advocates that children under the age of four have limited or no exposure to media violence (Stone-Zukowski, 1994). In 1984 the American government deregulated children's media, which in turn has led to increasing amounts of TV violence marketed to children (Carlsson-Paige, 1995). Since 1984 early childhood educators have "... noticed that children seem less able to use play as a means of actively transforming important life experiences" (Carlsson-Paige, 1995). There is no reason to doubt that the preceding scenario is happening to Canadian children as well as to American children.

Parents need to be aware that they are not powerless in regards to influencing television programming. By familiarizing themselves with the following organizations, parents can influence television programming: the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council – the CBSC administers the application of the new TV violence code and handles complaints about television violence; Canadian Radio – Television Telecommunications Commission – the CRTC is a regulatory body that oversees the radio and TV industry and issues licences; Citizens Against Violence on the Screen – this is a volunteer advocacy group concerned with the amount of violence children are exposed to in all forms of entertainment; Alliance for Children and Television – this is a non-profit advocacy organization working to improve the quality of children's programming; and The Vanier Institute of the Family – this is a national organization monitoring family issues (Rosenkrantz, 1994).



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## APPENDICES

## **EFFECTS OF TV ON YOUNG CHILDREN**

1. **CHILDREN AGED 2 TO 11 WATCH AN AVERAGE OF 20 HOURS OF TV A WEEK.**
2. **HOW MUCH TELEVISION SHOULD CHILDREN WATCH? TV SHOULD NOT BE A CHILD MINDER.**
3. **EXPERTS CONSIDER FOUR HOURS A DAY IS MORE THAN ENOUGH.**
4. **HEAVY VIEWING IS ASSOCIATED WITH MOST OF THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TV.**
5. **YOUNG CHILDREN HAVE DIFFICULTY SEPARATING FACT FROM FANTASY. THIS MAKES THEM VULNERABLE TO TV'S INFLUENCES.**
6. **VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION IS THE AREA OF GREATEST CONCERN.**
7. **THE EFFECT OF TV ON SEX AND SEXUALITY.**
8. **THE EFFECTS OF TV ADVERTISING.**
9. **THE EFFECTS OF TV ADS ON EATING HABITS.**
10. **THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TV VIEWING AND OBESITY.**
11. **TV DOES SHAPE OUR CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD.**
12. **THE MORE CHILDREN TALK ABOUT TELEVISION, THE LESS TV AFFECTS THEM.**

13. **TWO THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO MANAGE TV:**
  - **THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WATCH**
  - **TALK ABOUT TV**
  
14. **HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING TOO MUCH TELEVISION? COMPLETE THE QUIZ.**
  
15. **THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO TV VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE IN SOCIETY.**
  
16. **CHILDREN LEARN NONVIOLENT WAYS TO HANDLE PROBLEMS FROM ADULTS WHO WATCH TV WITH THEM AND WHO SUGGEST OTHER WAYS OF SOLVING PROBLEMS.**
  
17. **TV CAN HAVE TWO BIG EFFECTS ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH: FITNESS AND NUTRITION.**
  
18. **POST-TELEVISION CRANKINESS/REENTRY SYNDROME.**
  
19. **VIEWING OF TV BY PRESCHOOLERS DOES NOT LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT LEARNING GAINS.**
  
20. **TV VIEWING REDUCES CHILDREN'S PLAY AND EVEN THE NATURE OF CHILDREN'S PLAY.**

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT FACTS GERMANE  
TO TV AND PRESCHOOLERS**

- 1. INTEREST IN TV IS GROWING.**
- 2. THEY HAVE TROUBLE FOLLOWING AND REMEMBERING STORIES.**
- 3. THEY MAY KNOW TV ISN'T ALWAYS REAL.**
- 4. THEY LOOK AT TV WHEN A COMMERCIAL STARTS.**
- 5. THEY DON'T KNOW THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMMERCIALS AND PROGRAMS.**
- 6. THEY PAY A LOT OF ATTENTION TO COMMERCIALS.**
- 7. THEY TRUST COMMERCIALS.**
- 8. THEY ARE LIKELY TO IMITATE THINGS ON TV.**

<b>A DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING TELEVISION</b>		
<b>Developmental issues -</b>	<b>What children see on TV -</b>	<b>What children should see -</b>
To establish a sense of trust and safety.	The world is dangerous; enemies are everywhere; weapons are needed to feel safe.	A world where people can be trusted and help each other, where safety and predictability can be achieved, where fears can be overcome.
To develop a sense of autonomy with connectedness.	Autonomy is equated with fighting and weapons. Connectedness is equated with helplessness, weakness, and altruism.	A wide range of models of independence within meaningful relationships and of autonomous people helping each other.
To develop a sense of empowerment and efficacy.	Physical strength and violence equals power and efficacy. Bad guys always return, and a range of ways to have an impact are not shown.	Many examples of people having a positive effect on their world without violence.
To establish gender identity.	Exaggerated, rigid gender divisions--boys are strong, violent, and save the world; girls are helpless, victimized and irrelevant to world events.	Complex characters with wide-ranging behaviours, interests, and skills; commonalities between the sexes overlapping in what both can do.
To develop an appreciation of diversity among people.	Racial and ethnic stereotyping. Dehumanized enemies. Diversity is dangerous. Violence against those who are different is justified.	Diverse peoples with varied talents, skills, and needs, who treat each other with respect, work out problems nonviolently, and enrich each others' lives.
To construct the foundations of morality and social responsibility.	One-dimensional characters who are all good or bad. Violence is the solution to interpersonal problems. Winning is the only acceptable outcome. Bad guys deserve to be hurt.	Complex characters who act responsibly and morally toward others--showing kindness and respect, working out moral problems. taking other people's points of view.
To have opportunities for meaningful play.	Program content is far removed from childrens experience or level of understanding. Toys are linked to programs promoting imitative, not creative play.	Meaningful content to use in play, which resonates deeply with developmental needs; shows not linked to realistic toys so that children can create their own unique play.

**SOURCE:** Levin and Carlson-Paige, Young Children, July, 1994.

## **TV GUIDANCE: POSITIVE STEPS FAMILIES CAN TAKE**

- 1. WHEN YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING TV, WATCH WITH HIM.**
- 2. LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF TIME THAT THE TELEVISION IS ON - I.E. A TV ALLOWANCE.**
- 3. PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES.**
- 4. BE CAREFUL ABOUT INDISCRIMINATE VIEWING OF NEWS PROGRAMS.**
- 5. PLAN SPECIAL VIEWING TIMES WITH YOUR CHILD.**
- 6. NOTICE WHEN THE TV IS LEFT ON JUST FOR BACKGROUND NOISE AND TURN IT OFF.**
- 7. BECOME POLITICALLY INVOLVED.**
- 8. SET THE EXAMPLE BY NOT WATCHING TOO MUCH TV YOURSELF.**
- 9. TRY NOT TO USE THE TV AS A BABYSITTER.**
- 10. DON'T WATCH ADULT PROGRAMMING IN THE COMPANY OF YOUR CHILD.**
- 11. USE YOUR VCR TO RECORD CHILDREN'S SHOWS.**
- 12. TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND NOT REAL ON TV.**
- 13. BE AWARE OF YOUR CHILD'S REACTION TO WHAT SHE IS WATCHING.**

## **GUIDELINES FOR USING TV IN THE HOME**

- 1. WHAT TO WATCH: EX. WE DON'T WATCH SHOWS WITH FIGHTING.**
- 2. HOW MUCH TO WATCH: EX. 2 HRS. OF TV PER WEEK OR 5 PROGRAMS PER WEEK.**
- 3. USE THE VIDEOTAPE RECORDER.**
- 4. HAVE THE CHILDREN MAKE THEIR OWN TV GUIDE EACH WEEK.**
- 5. FIND OUT WHAT PROGRAMS OTHER PEOPLE RECOMMEND.**
- 6. USE THE WEEKLY TV LISTINGS.**
- 7. GIVE CHILDREN OTHER THINGS TO DO.**
- 8. KEEP A FAMILY TV RECORD.**
- 9. WATCH AND TALK ABOUT TV AND ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**
  - IS IT REAL?**
  - HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?**
  - WHAT DON'T YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?**
- 10. ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMERCIALS.**
- 11. CONVERSATIONS ARE BETTER THAN LECTURES FOR GETTING ACROSS IDEAS TO CHILDREN.**



12. **GET CHILDREN THINKING ABOUT WHAT THEY WATCH, BY TURNING TV INTO A TREASURE HUNT.**
  
13. **OTHER GAMES TO GET CHILDREN THINKING ABOUT TV: WHO ADVERTISES, NAME THAT PROBLEM, HOW WILL IT END, TV WITHOUT A 'PICTURE', AND TV WITHOUT SOUND.**

## APPROACHES TO LIMITING THE TV

1. No set. Some families choose this approach, especially if parents fear their own sense of addiction, though the drawback is not knowing what children are watching down the street.
2. Location of the set. Keep it in an isolated corner where children are apt to feel lonely; in the parental bedroom, which is generally off limits; or in a closet except at prescribed times.
3. Black-and-white. Allison seems less interested in TV than her friends, and her parents attribute this fact to their less appealing black-and-white set.
4. Simultaneous activities. One family keeps the TV room supplied with blocks, paper, and crayons so less attention is directed to the set, even when it is on.
5. The off rule. As soon as the designated program is over, the set is turned off -- no sneak previews of the next enticing offering.
6. Maximum viewing time. Parent sets the amount of time, and the child decides what to watch. This allows older children an opportunity to evaluate programs for themselves and avoids their feeling overly controlled by parents.
7. Choosing programs. Some parents reinforce their youngsters' good choices by watching certain shows (for example, nature programs) with them. On the other hand, some parents sit with their youngsters and teach them to critique violent cartoons and luring advertisements. Choose programs ahead of time from the T.V. schedule, not by random viewing.

## **TELEVISION USE IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM**

- 1. THE AUTHOR IS NOT ADVOCATING USING TV IN A CHILD CARE SETTING BUT SYNTHESIZING SOME VIEWS PUT FORTH BY THE CANADIAN PAEDIATRIC SOCIETY.**
- 2. CURRENT RESEARCH INDICATE THAT THE EFFECTS OF TV ARE NOT ALL BAD.**
- 3. EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT CHILDREN WHO WATCH PROGRAMS WITH POSITIVE SOCIAL THEMES ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXHIBIT BEHAVIOUR SUCH AS COOPERATING AND SHARING.**
- 4. A POSITIVE CORRELATION HAS BEEN DISCOVERED BETWEEN TV AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS.**
- 5. TV CAN INCREASE CONVERSATIONAL ABILITIES AND MOTIVATE CREATIVITY.**
- 6. WHAT CHILDREN LEARN FROM TV DEPENDS ON WHAT THEY BRING TO THE SCREEN.**
- 7. ANY CONSIDERATION OF LEARNING FROM TV DEPENDS ON WHAT THE SCREEN BRINGS TO THE CHILD.**
- 8. WHAT CHILDREN LEARN FROM TV IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE AMOUNT OF TIME PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS GIVE TO THE VIEWING EXPERIENCE.**

## **STRATEGIES FOR USING VIDEOTAPES**

- 1. KEEP IN MIND YOUR OBJECTIVES.**
- 2. USE THE PAUSE FUNCTION TO STOP THE TAPE AT A KEY MOMENT.**
- 3. USE THE VCR'S MEMORY FUNCTION TO REVIEW THE TAPE.**
- 4. USE A VIDEOTAPE AND VCR TO SEGMENT, USING ONLY THAT PORTION OF A PROGRAM THAT FOCUSES ON YOUR LEARNING OBJECTIVES.**
- 5. TRY VIEWING A PROGRAM WITHOUT SOUND TO ALLOW CHILDREN TO INVENT STORIES TO MATCH TV STORIES.**
- 6. THE TV MUST BE SEEN NOT AS A BABYSITTER BUT A TOOL FOR EDUCATING.**

**TAKING POSITIVE ACTION:  
THE ROLE OF ECE'S IN HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH TV**

- 1. SEE THE GUIDE FOR WISE USE OF TV IN THE CHILD CARE PROGRAM.**
  
- 2. SPOCK RECOMMENDS THAT CHILDREN UNDER FOUR YEARS HAVE LITTLE OR NO EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE.**
  
- 3. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH TV:**
  - DISCUSSION**
  
  - KNOWLEDGE**
  
  - CRITICAL VIEWING**
  
  - CRITICAL CHOICES**
  
  - FANTASY**
  
  - ACTION GROUPS**
  
- 4. PLAN OUR CURRICULUM TO REFLECT CHILDREN. SHOWING VIEWS, GOING BEYOND TV VISIONS, DEVELOP CRITICAL VIEWING, ETC.**



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