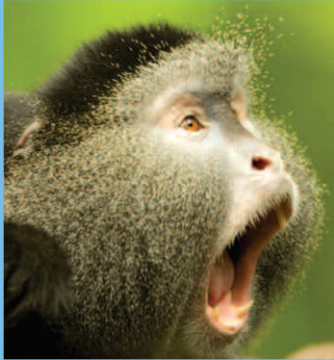
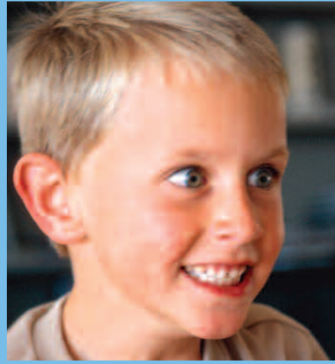


Monkey See,



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How Media Screen Time Affects Children's Behavior



Illinois
State
Medical
Society



Illinois Chapter

Our children's well-being is one of the most difficult, yet greatest accomplishments we can achieve as parents. It is our responsibility to protect their delicate psyches and expand their imaginations in positive ways. On behalf of the physicians of the Illinois State Medical Society and the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, please accept this complimentary guide to help you cultivate a healthy media environment for your child.



**Illinois
State
Medical
Society**

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Illinois Chapter



OBSERVE. . . IMITATE. . . CONSEQUENCES

Monkey see, monkey do, an expression dating back to the 1920s, refers to a child's learning process. A child observes another's behavior and then *imitates* it, sometimes resulting in negative *consequences*.



The Power of Observation:

A teacher made a special video to show her class of third graders. She filmed one little boy in a playroom having fun with a Bobo doll, an inflatable plastic toy. She specifically instructed the boy to pick up the large plastic bat and knock the doll silly. The boy whacked Mr. Bobo as if it were two outs in the bottom of the ninth with the home team trailing by one. Whack, wham, and bash.

The teacher took this video to a first grade class one day. Just before the children went to their playroom, the teacher played the video for them.

What happened when this audience of first grade kids went to the playroom after watching the video? They went hunting for Mr. Bobo and the plastic bat. And when they found them, well, it wasn't a pretty sight for Mr. Bobo.

The Power of “Monkey See, Monkey Do”

In a matter of seconds, most children can mimic a movie or TV character, sing an advertising jingle or give other examples of what they have learned from watching media. These examples may include naming a popular brand of beer, striking a “sexy” pose or play fighting. Children only have to put a movie into the DVD player, open a magazine, click on a web site, pop a video game into an X-Box or watch television to experience all kinds of messages.

The impact of these messages can build slowly when children see and hear them over and over again, such as:



Cigarettes and alcohol shown as cool and attractive, *not unhealthy and deadly*

Fighting and other violence used as a way to “handle” conflict



Sexual action with no negative results, such as disease or unintended pregnancy

THE MEDIA'S FANTASY WORLD AND HOW IT IMPACTS THE REAL WORLD

Monkey See

Monkey Do

Cigarettes and alcohol



- Advertising and movies send a message that cigarettes are cool.
- Teens admit that seeing a lot of ads for beer, wine, liquor, and cigarettes can influence them in wanting to drink and smoke.
- The average American child sees 40,000 commercials per year on broadcast television.

Fatty foods and thin bodies



- 83 percent of foods advertised on TV to kids are snacks, fast foods, or sweets.
- Media promotes unhealthy foods while encouraging thin bodies.
- Girls are more concerned with how they look than what they do.
- Often the thin and perfect-looking person on screen or in print is not even one whole person but parts of several people.

Screen time violence

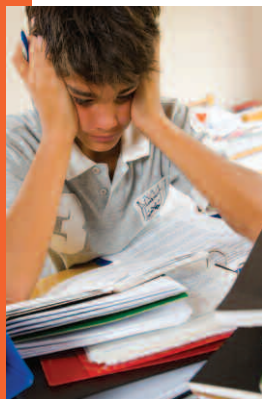


- Spans all formats – computer and video games, movies, the internet, and TV.
- Today the average child will see over 200,000 violent acts on TV alone by the time high school graduation rolls around.
- Violent media can result in a culture of disrespect, aggressive behavior toward others, and more acceptance of violence in the real world and toward themselves.

Screen time sexuality



- 77 percent of primetime TV shows include sexual content, averaging 5.9 sexual scenes per hour.

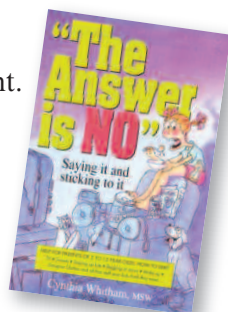


Negative media screen time side effects parents can look for:

- Poor school performance.
- Reading difficulties.
- Hitting or pushing other kids often.
- Aggressively talking back to adults.
- Frequent nightmares.
- Increased eating of unhealthy foods.
- Smoking, drinking or drug use.

It's up to parents like you to do the following:

- **Get educated** – Visit media family-friendly web sites such as www.mediafamily.org; www.common sense media.org; www.safekids.com.
- Follow the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines. Children under two years of age should not have any screen time (TV, video games, computer). Children over two years of age should limit screen time to one-to-two hours per day.
- Participate in TV Turnoff Week, organized by the Center for Screen-Time Awareness, www.screen time.org.
- Encourage your child to play with friends away from the video game set.
- Limit and supervise media screen time.
- Set family guidelines.
- Place computers, TVs and video games in a central location in the home, and post the guidelines in the media center.
- Talk to your child about what he or she is watching.
- Play video games with your child and talk about the content.
- Monitor web sites your child visits.
- Read the chapter on TV from *“The Answer is NO”*: *Saying it and sticking to it* by Cynthia Whitham, MSW.
- Talk to your pediatrician.



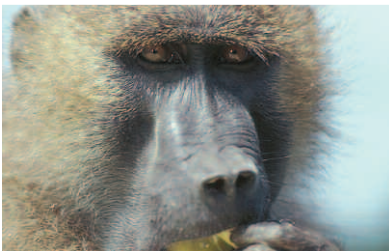
ways to stimulate conversation with your children to highlight media screen time's harmful effects

- Talk to your child about how reading and active play such as sports can benefit the mind and body, and how these activities are different from screen time.
- When you see a movie or play a video game with your child, talk about whether they feel this could happen in real life.
- If your child can name even one beer or cigarette brand, the door is open for discussion on the power of advertising.

Voice your opinion

- Let advertisers know your opinions through letters, phone calls or e-mails.
- Avoid their products and tell them why.
- Ask your school administrators if they have a media literacy education program for parents and teachers to develop skills to become critical media viewers.

Communication with your child is key to minimizing media screen time's influence on them so he or she does not follow *"Monkey See, Monkey Do."*



Weaning your child off TV

Television is a great educator and entertainer, but too much exposure to violence, adult themes, offensive language and often times, silliness, can be of concern to many.



Suggestions for a family TV plan:

- Limit commercial TV and watch educational programs.
- Do not allow violent cartoons or police programs.
- Adult-themed programs often air after 8:30 p.m., so restrict viewing to hours beforehand.
- Teach your child the difference between news and sensationalism.
- Don't keep TV on as background noise.
- Introduce non-TV activities such as family reading time, jigsaw puzzles, word search games.
- Discover family-friendly radio programs.
- Pursue family-oriented outdoor activities.

Guidelines for educating your children on their use of the “information highway”

- Since 71 percent of 13-17 year olds have received an online message from someone they do not know, check to see if your service provider includes a filter. If not, purchase software such as *Netmop* that attempts to limit mail that gets through.
- Use a service provider that offers age-appropriate parental controls.
- Visit www.kids.getnetwise.org/tools/ to help you guide your child to a safe and rewarding online experience.

Instruct your children:

- To *never* give out identifying information – home address, school name, telephone number – in chat rooms or on bulletin boards.
- To *never* arrange a face-to-face meeting with a stranger.
- To *never* respond to messages or bulletin board items that make them feel uncomfortable.



How do I make intelligent video game purchase or rental decisions?

Check the rating from the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) on every game box you buy or rent to see that it is appropriate for your child's age.



Early Childhood

Suitable for persons ages three and older.



Everyone

Suitable for persons ages six and older. Titles in this category may contain minimal violence and some comic mischief and/or mild language.



Everyone 10+

Suitable for ages 10 and older. Contains more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language, and/or minimal suggestive themes.



Teen

Content that may be suitable for persons ages 13 and older. Violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.



Mature

Suitable for persons ages 17 and older. Contains mature sexual themes, more intense violence and/or strong language.



Adults Only

Content suitable only for adults. Includes graphic depictions of sex and/or violence. Not intended for persons under the age of 18.



Rating Pending

Have been submitted to the ESRB and are awaiting final rating. They have not been rated regarding mature, violent or sexual content and therefore may not be suitable for children.

Where do I find a television program's rating?

Rating labels appear in the upper left-hand corner of your television screen during the first 15 seconds of each television program.



All Children

Designed to be appropriate for all children.



Directed to Older Children

For children age seven and above. Includes mild fantasy violence or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of seven.



Directed to Older Children - Fantasy Violence

For those programs where fantasy violence may be more intense or more combative than other programs in this category, such programs will be designated TV-Y7-FV.



General Audience

Suitable for all ages. Contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.



Parental Guidance Suggested

Contains material unsuitable for younger children. Many parents may want to watch it with their younger children. The theme itself may call for parental guidance and/or the program contains one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L) or some suggestive dialogue (D).



Parents Strongly Cautioned

Contains some material unsuitable for children under 14 years of age. Parents are strongly urged to exercise greater care in monitoring this program and are cautioned against letting children under the age of 14 watch unattended. This program contains one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L) or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).



Mature Audience Only

Designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S) or crude indecent language (L).



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Illinois State Medical Society
20 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 700
Chicago, IL 60602

1- 800-782-4767

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**Illinois
State
Medical
Society**

**Twenty North Michigan Avenue,
Suite 700 Chicago, IL 60602
Telephone: 312-782-1654
Toll Free: 800-782-4767
Fax: 312-782-2023**

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Illinois Chapter

www.isms.org

**1358 West Randolph, Suite 2E
Chicago, IL 60607**