



## **Violence in the Media—Effects on Child Behavior and Parenting**

**By Kelly Nault**

It's no secret that we're living in a violent world. Between news reports on terrorism, bullying at school, and violence in the media, our children are exposed to all kinds of aggression. It's also no secret that such violence can have negative effects on child behavior and development.

While you probably can't quash violence in the media, bring a halt to terrorism, or even stop the school bully from picking fights on the playground, you can control your child's exposure to violence. And when your son or daughter is exposed to violence (sadly, it's bound to happen), you can reduce the negative effects on child behavior by discussing that act of violence with your son or daughter.

### **Violent World + Busy World = Parenting Trouble**

Not only do we live in a violent world, but we also live in a busy world, a world that often leaves moms little time to supervise what they're children watch on TV. The unfortunate result is exposure to violence in the media.

If there wasn't so much violence in the media, effects on child behavior may be minimal—even. Everything in moderation, right? But sadly, television and movie violence is certainly not delivered "in moderation." Some experts estimate that by the time most kids reach age 13, they have already seen more than 100,000 incidents of violence!

The National Television Violence Study, the largest ongoing scientific study of television violence, concluded that television violence tends to be sanitized, sensationalized and glamorized. This manipulation of the truth nature of violence has negative effects on child behavior. Dr. Barbara Wilson, senior researcher, states that, "Younger children have difficulty distinguishing televised fantasy from reality, and are therefore at increased risk of imitating cartoon violence."

According to this same study, witnessing television violence causes children to:

1. Become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others;
2. Have heightened fear in the world; and
3. Demonstrate increased aggression and violent behavior toward others.

It's easy to see that violence in the media has unfortunate effects on child behavior, which is why it's so important for moms to monitor what their kids are watching.

## Parenting Must: Limiting the Exposure of Violence in the Media and Reducing its Effects

Getting ready to throw out the TV? Before you trash your tube, consider these practical ways to lessen the effects of televised violence while still letting your children enjoy educational programs and entertaining shows:

1. Watch a minimum of one whole episode of every program your children would like to watch so you understand the type of content they're being exposed to.
2. Discuss the violence they see on TV with them, and then brainstorm, as a family, nonviolent ways to resolve conflict.
3. Help your children differentiate between reality and unreality, and make sure they can clearly identify the fake and the fiction.
4. Reduce your children's exposure to media violence by introducing fun alternatives to TV.
5. Encourage your child to watch videos you have already pre-screened and approved whenever you're not around.
6. Foster communication with your child. Find out what is going on at school, and take time to talk about it.
7. Set time limits on the amount of TV. It is important to note that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours of quality TV and videos a day for older children and no screen time for children under the age of 2.

[\\*To view the American Academy of Pediatrics Recommend Media Guidelines for Children and Parents click here.](#)

## Parenting with a Realistic Approach to Violence in the Media: Effects on Child Behavior The Power of Giving a Teen Choice

Parents can't ensure world peace, but you can create a peaceful environment in your home—an environment that lessens the impact of violence in the media, teaches positive problem-solving techniques, and reduces negative effects on child behavior.

So don't throw out your television quite yet! Just make sure you're screening everything that comes through it though. And when the bad stuff does sneak in, counteract it by talking with your children. With moves like this, you're well on your way to being a truly ultimate mom.

Kelly Nault, MA corporate spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You* inspires moms to put themselves first—for the sake of their children. She shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! Sign up for her free online parenting course at [www.UltimateParenting.com](http://www.UltimateParenting.com).

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