

Young Children View TV Differently

ACT AGAINST VIOLENCE TRAINING PROGRAM

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MEDIA VIOLENCE—HANDOUT 2

Children are not adults and thus go through their life experiences differently and interact with their world according to their age and developmental stage. This is true for their experience with media and especially TV.

INFANTS (0—18 MONTHS)

- From birth to 18 months, infants are interested in TV only for brief periods of time because they are attracted to the light and sound. There is some evidence they will imitate behavior although they don't make sense of what they see.

TODDLERS (18—36 MONTHS)

- They pay much more attention to what is on TV and are able to get meaning from programs they watch. They react equally to animated violence and real violence because their link between fantasy and reality is not strong.
- They are able to identify a favorite TV show.

PRESCHOOLERS (3—5 YEARS)

- Children look forward to shows. They understand what they are viewing, but cannot give it a context. They cannot judge reality versus fantasy or commercials versus regular programs. They are attracted to highly vivid scenes, rapid movement, sound, and color. In other words, most children pay the most attention to the most violent scenes on the screen.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE (6—11 YEARS)

- Children believe that TV reflects real life and will become more active and show more aggressive behavior after viewing violent scenes. High viewing levels have been shown to interfere with reading development.

IN GENERAL, AS TV CONSUMERS:

- Young children focus on the dramatic, concrete aspects of the situation. They are drawn to the fighting and weapons, not the underlying concepts of war.
- Young children do not make logical connections between cause and effect; they don't think about the consequences of the action on the screen.
- Young children can focus only on one aspect of the situation at a time. They see things much like a slide show, one frame at a time, rather than a whole movie.
- Young children think in terms of dichotomous, all-or-none categories: there are bad guys and good guys.

ATTENTION!

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 2 years of age not watch TV at all.

Sources: Levin, D.C. (1998). Remote control childhood (p. 24). Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

National Institute on Media and the Family. Children and Media Violence Fact Sheet.