

TV Violence -- a Cause of Child Anxiety and Aggressive Behavior?

<https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/tv-violence-cause-child-anxiety-aggressive-behavior#1>

These days, just about every time you turn on the TV you're met with a barrage of violent images including explosions, [suicide](#) bombings, and war casualties. And that's just the news! Many popular television shows -- even those in the so-called "family" time slot of 7-8:30 p.m. -- also feature much more violence than shows aired in this time slot just a few years ago.

American children watch an average of between three and four hours of television daily. As a result, TV violence and children has become a hot topic. Studies show extensive viewing of television violence may cause children to become more aggressive and anxious. Children who watch many hours a week of violent TV may become inured to violence and begin to see the world as a scary and unsafe place.

As a parent, you are your child's first line of defense. It's your job to protect your child from the negative effects of excessive TV violence and protect him from the problems resulting from such exposure.

Monitoring your child's viewing habits as well as engaging in frank conversations about what he might have seen can help stave off any lasting emotional effects. Here are some suggestions from the experts:

- Pay attention to what your children are watching.
- Watch TV with your kids.
- Put kids on a "TV diet" and limit their TV time just as you limit their junk food intake.
- Don't let your child have a TV in his bedroom.
- Don't let your child watch shows you know are violent.
- Change the channel or turn off the TV when violent or offensive material comes on and tell your child why you are doing so.
- Consider the v-chip or other tools that allow parents to block inappropriate programming.

- Use the ratings system, which offers information about the violent content of a TV program.
- Make sure other parents and caregivers with whom your child spends time are on the same page.

The news can be particularly troublesome these days. As a result, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent [Psychiatry](#) suggests parents:

- Monitor the amount of time children watch news shows
- Make sure there is adequate time and a quiet place to talk following an upsetting broadcast
- Watch the news with children
- Ask your child what he has heard and what questions he may have
- Provide reassurance regarding his own safety
- Look for signs the news may have triggered fears or anxieties, including sleeplessness, [night terrors](#), [bedwetting](#), crying, or talking about being afraid.

When discussing TV violence with your children:

Make sure you are age-appropriate. For example, children under 8 may have trouble differentiating between fantasy and reality. Help them understand the difference when discussing what they have seen.

Acknowledge older children's fears and reassure them of their safety.

Children over the age of 8 who have seen violent acts on TV or in the movies may become fearful that such things might happen to them. Don't belittle their fears; instead acknowledge them and reassure children you will protect them from harm. Try saying something like this: "I know that you are afraid. I will do my very best to make sure you are safe."