

by Ramma S Cheema

Can we survive without watching television for a few days? I think not.

The importance of media in our lives is something that we may not even be aware of. We turn on the TV when we are bored, when we want some information, entertainment etc. I wonder if life was simpler when it did not exist. We make sure that we are home before our favorite show or if by some chance we have missed it, we hope to catch it again sometime.

Perhaps as adults we are in a better position to handle the media but its effect on children is alarming.

Media maybe useful for us but a lot of media content is not appropriate for children. Parents today don't hesitate to provide an incentive to their children through TV; it's a reward for either doing their homework or being good. Parents buy their children video games not knowing what is in them. What worries me the most is that they simply ignore the consequences of TV viewing. For instance cable maybe the answer to our prayers but when kids are left unattended with the remote they are subject to all kinds of information, some of which may be harmful. It maybe shocking to know that most children watch an average of 3 to 4 hours of TV per day, approximately 28 hours each week. The child during these hours will see violent acts, murders, foul language and various disturbing images.

Children who watch a lot of Television are inclined to be more aggressive, spending less time doing homework and having poorer reading skills. Any child today knows Harry Potter and The Rock and love to mimic them. Later whenever children are playing they incorporate what they saw on TV in their games.

The world today is going through disasters, wars, famines, epidemics etc. Children can find out about all of these through radio, TV, newspapers. However it may



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Children and the media

cause stress and anxiety in some of the children. For kids who are very young it is even harder to understand why all of this is happening and where their security and safety stands.

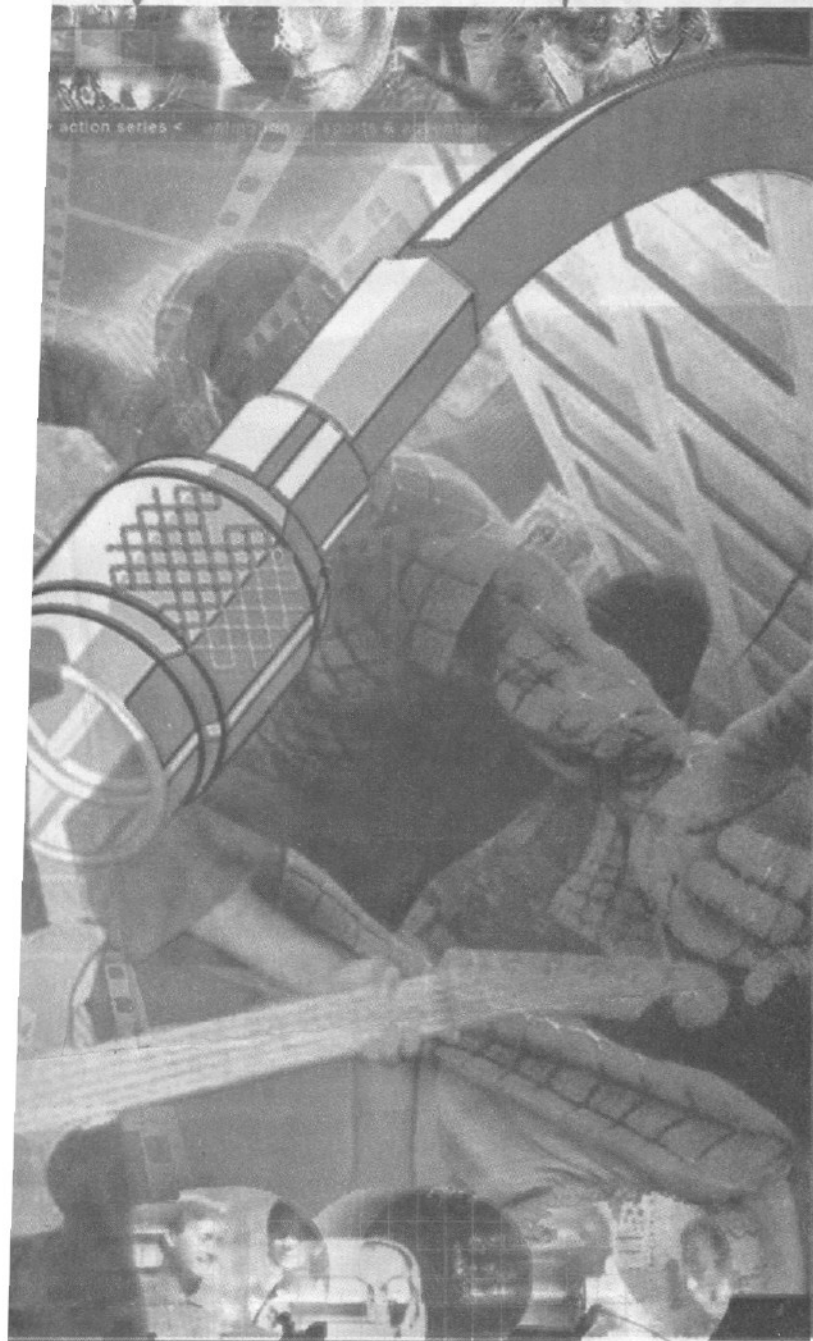
Children under the age of two should not watch television at all because they require proper brain development through their natural surroundings for instance people living around them. The learning experiences during that age should only be natural.

It is believed today that

violence on TV and in films give ideas to the young ones. They love to imitate what they saw in a specific scene. Children develop an attitude towards violence through the media, which can have a very lasting effect. A lot of action based movies, which are very popular among children, especially boys, show that violence is the only way to win or it is the only answer to a problem.

Besides TV programs, advertising can also cause a lot of problems for the young ones. They know all the jingles and

are attracted to a lot of junk food after seeing a specific ad. In addition to that the advertisements featuring tobacco and alcohol are giving the wrong message. All of them say that its "cool" to be smoking or drinking and it can make an individual more popular or strong. Children often make cigarettes out of paper during their games. Of course they don't know how dangerous that can be to the health. The media today has also introduced the image of a perfect body. This can give children



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look for anything. Parents don't bother to check what their children have been up to. They only want their children to explore on the net and become more informative. Of course one of the main problems is that computer seems alien to a lot of adults. There are almost no restrictions on what can be placed on the world wide web there is no system of classification or age restrictions for accessing the Internet as there are for TV and films. In chat rooms the people are strangers who may not know about the presence of a child which is why the discussions maybe appropriate. In addition to that there are sites about drugs, bombs and so much more. Children can accidentally log on to these. Sitting in front of the computer and TV can be a cause of eye strain and back problems as well.

Setting a limit for kids to view TV maybe helpful but its not the answer. They should be chaperoned while they are watching TV. Or pre recorded shows that have no disturbing imagery or language can be shown in the absence of an adult.

Parents should be very careful while selecting a video for their kids. They should pay special attention to the content ratings. Another thing that can help is communication with the kids about the media. They should be told that what ever that appears on TV or films may not be good just because it says so. Also if the kids find something disturbing they should be able to talk to an adult about it.

Children interpret things quite differently than adults. For instance watching a scary movie or a science fiction movie maybe a reason for loss of sleep, or an increased degree of fear. Sometimes kids are not able to go to the bathroom on their own or sleep on their own.

Unfortunately the media today is doing nothing to help. this growing problem. There are only a small number of programs that can be positive role models for children. So the responsibility lies on the parents only. They have to care enough to be interested in what goes on in the minds of their children because of the media. ■

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inferiority complexes about themselves. In addition to that it can further be a bigger threat when kids try to be like them and result in getting an eating disorder. They are given the message that they will only be more popular and sought after if they are fashionable and beautiful.

In this age of technology Internet is another need, no longer seen as a luxury. However the free flow of information on the net is dangerous for children. They are free to visit any site and