

How to Evaluate Appropriate Media

Values:

What are the values that children learn from watching this media? (i.e., cooperation, kindness to others)

Advertising:

Is advertising for a product woven into the content of the program? How much time is spent on advertising during the program or video? What items are advertised? (i.e., healthy food, toys, books)

Gender/Ethnicity:

What are the messages about gender and/or ethnic roles in this media? (i.e., stereotyped roles, negative images)

Fantasy/Reality:

Could these events happen to a real child? What would a child do in this situation? Is the story content appropriate for 3-8 year olds? Are the story lines and characters real or pretend? (i.e., young children cannot distinguish real from pretend)

Duration:

What is the length of the media? How is the material length appropriate for a 3-8 year old? (i.e., 15 minutes for a 3 year old)

Recommendation:

Do you think you would recommend this program or DVD to someone with a 3-8 year old? Why would you recommend it?

RESOURCES

CEASE (Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment):

www.peaceeducators.org

Download the CEASE Newsletter and other resources.

TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment):

www.truceteachers.org

Contact to download toy lists and action guides.

CCFC (The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood):

www.commercialfreechildhood.org/

Contact to receive political and corporate action alerts.

Children Now!

www.childrennow.org

Contact for updates on children and media, as well as broader issues.

AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics):

www.aap.org

In-depth guidelines for media use. (Note: The AAP recommends no more than an hour a day of screen time (television, videos, dvd's, computers) for 3 – 8 year olds.)

Action Alliance for Children

<http://www.4children.org/>

Articles on violence in the media, located on the Violence Prevention page. Also available, an on-line bilingual newsletter.

Selecting APPROPRIATE MEDIA For Young Children

Resources Gathered by CEASE

More and more parents are using videos and DVDs with their children, thinking that somehow if they control the content, then it's okay to use media with their children at any age. However, it's also the process children both do and do not engage in while watching media that is a concern.

- Do you wish you knew more about selecting media for young children?
- Would you like some specific media ideas?
- Would you like some ideas for how to talk to your children about media?

This pamphlet identifies guidelines for selecting and processing media materials, outlines questions and topics you and your children can discuss while watching media, suggests age-appropriate videos, DVDs, and television programs and offers resources for concerned parents and care providers.

Topics And Questions To Discuss With Your Child

VALUES:

Discuss reactions, both positive and negative, to what you saw.

- What did you think about the show/game?
- Did you like it when _____ happened?
- Why do you think it happened?

Talk about the violence and other meanspirited behavior that children see on the screen.

- What do you think about how _____ solved their problem?
- If you had a problem like that what could you do or say?
- Can you think of a way to solve that problem where no one gets hurt?

Advertising:

Help children develop an understanding of advertisements and advertising.

- How can we tell the difference between these commercials and the show?
- I wonder why they made the commercial like that?

It's not just what children watch but also how much they watch and what they are doing when they're not watching. Danger Signs: Do children nag to watch more? Do they use a lot of structured toys linked to the show and imitate the scripts? Do they seem "hooked"?

Gender/Ethnicity:

Ask questions that focus on stereotyped images and behaviors.

- I wonder why it's always men with big muscles that go to the rescue.
- The women always seem to need to get rescued by men. Have you noticed?
- I wonder why the "bad guys" have foreign accents? Wear dark clothes? Have darker skin?

Fantasy/Reality:

Help children sort out fantasy from reality.

- What was pretend and what was real? How could you tell?
- Help clarify confusion by saying things such as, "In real life things don't work that way." Compare what they saw to children's own experience.
- Could anything like _____ happen to you? When? How could it be the same or different?
- What would you do if you were in that situation?

Remember:

Watch media with your child and process the content together!

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children under two years of age spend NO time with screen media.

IDEAS FOR MEDIA

The media selections listed below have been suggested by parents and educators. Not all listed media may be appropriate for you or your child. Please remember to watch and process media content with your child.

Audio Books & Music:

Toddler Favorites

(compilation of classic children's songs)
www.MusicforLittlePeople.com

The Cricket in Times Square

(audio book, ages 6 and up)
www.chinaberry.com

The Children's Music Network has music activities available on-line.

www.cmnonline.org

Videos & DVDs:

The Velveteen Rabbit

(classic children's book on DVD)

Bob the Builder: Can We Fix It?

(collection of short animated stories)
www.bobthebuilder.com

Abel's Island

(animated DVD of the book)
www.amazon.com

Television Programs:

PBS children's programming offers many age-appropriate shows, including: Sesame Street; Caillou; Mr. Roger's Neighborhood.