



**Television:** *Shaping our values through osmosis.*

How much television does your family watch? Check out a few recommendations on balancing your time and curbing its influence in your family.

A 2011 social media users study compiled by researchers at Lab42 revealed that 18 percent of Americans watch more than 20 hours of television a week.<sup>1</sup> While children watch an average of 1,680 minutes of television a week, they only speak 38.5 minutes with their parents in that same timeframe. To date, there have been over 4,000 studies of the effects of television on children. The majority of the studies continue to demonstrate that extensive viewing significantly contributes to aggression<sup>2</sup>, distortions in sexuality<sup>3</sup>, promiscuous behavior<sup>4</sup> and poor academic performance<sup>5</sup>.

Television is part of the culture and here to stay. We have compiled some tips to assist in putting the television in its proper place within the home. Here are some quick tips:

- **Schedule viewing:** Sit down with the family and decide what you are going to watch. This helps facilitate good choices and keeps the parents informed on what everyone is viewing.
- **Set limits:** Just because the television is there does not mean it needs to be turned on. Establish limits on how much viewing and what. This teaches the value of time and learning to make critical choices on what we watch and how we use our time.
- **View as a family:** Watching a show together allows open discussion on troubling issues and facilitates a “team mentality” in the decision-making process.
- **Interact with the television:** Encourage a verbal response when a show presents an objectionable situation. This helps young people understand that you do not find this “situation” okay.
- **View trusted content:** Most families own a VCR (Do they still exist?), DVR, and/or DVDF player. Better to watch something you trust and know than risk stumbling across risky material.

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<sup>1</sup> Charlie White, “Americans,” Mashables Social Media, <http://mashable.com/2011/01/26/americans-tv-how-social-media-users-watch-video-infographic/> (accessed February 10, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> “Watching Sex on Television Predicts Adolescent Initiation of Sexual Behavior,” *Pediatrics*, Vol. 114, No. 3, September 2004.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Anna Gosline, “Watching Tv Harms Kids’ Academic Success,” *NewScientist*, July 4, 2005, page nr. <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn7626-watching-tv-harms-kids-academic-success.html> (accessed February 22, 2012).

- **Introduce other “media”:** Young people need to know that life existed before television. Provide opportunities for oral family readings of a good book or even a dedicated time that the whole family reads together. Reading is a great way to encourage the imagination of our youth in areas they enjoy. Maybe plan an outing to a museum or an outdoor concert at city hall instead. The opportunities are endless.
- **Consider participating in National TV-Turnoff Week:** We know, “What to do with all this extra time.” Give it a try and let us know what you did with the extra time.
- **Life lessons are more caught than taught:** Parents should teach by example. If there is a show that young people should not watch due to material content, the likelihood is that we should not be watching it either. Actions speak louder than words.