



Turn Off the TV...Tune into Outdoor Adventure

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF TELEVISION

We now recognize that the years from birth to age five are critically important in shaping a child's capacity and enthusiasm for learning. Although these years were always thought to be vital to human development, new technological advances in brain research further support these theories. We also know that it is not genetics alone that determines human development. Nature provides a complex system of brain circuitry, but it is external forces such as diet, surroundings, and stimulation that determine how the circuits are wired.

The early wiring of the brain is critical to young children's development. It is the stimulating and problem solving activities that children are engaged in that build this circuitry. Excessive TV viewing can rob young children new opportunities to make brain connections. During TV viewing alpha brain waves are produced, as in sleep, that create a trance like state that allows one to take in information without processing or analyzing it.

TV viewing also effects eye development. Eyes need to move to stimulate develop. When watching TV, the eye reduces its movement and therefore there are less opportunities for the eyes to be stimulated. To succeed at reading, children need to develop eye movement that is rhythmical and controlled; this doesn't always occur when viewing TV.

TV viewing can also impact children's speech and language development. Language development requires listening, interaction, and speaking. TV only addresses one of these elements - hearing. Children who watch excessive amounts of TV have been found to lack verbal language skills. Lack of stimulation will cause less of the brain wiring to occur.

Children's moral and social development can be influenced by TV viewing. Young children often lack the skills to differentiate between real life and fiction. This can create anxiety and stress in children when watching dramatic and violent shows. Over time TV can desensitize children so that they are less sensitive to others, a first step in moral development. Early brain development affects all aspects of children's development including moral and social development. Mindless viewing can idle the part of the brain that needs to make critical connections for healthy moral and social development.

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