

# TAMING THE TV MONSTER



## OPENING ACTIVITY:

*Ask participants to fill in the TV Preference Chart (appendix 1), then select a partner to compare responses.*

## INFORMATION:

**By the time children in the United States enter school, they have watched an average of 4,000 hours of television. As you know, they do not stop watching TV when they enter school. Just about everyone thinks that too much time is spent watching TV. However, TV is not all bad. Let us compare answers on the charts and see what television can offer.**

## DISCUSSION:

**Someone start us off. What program did you write down as your child's favorite? OK!** *Write program name on the left side of a flip chart. Did anyone else list that program as a favorite? Count hands and write down the total vote beside program name. Add other programs and counts below the first as participants name them.*

*Point to a program's name with more than one vote. Why do you think this show is a favorite? Search for a variety of reasons. Think of a couple yourself if responses are slow – perhaps the star is a current favorite, or “lots of action” or “it's very funny.” Write short responses of the reasons to the right of the program's name.*

**People like programs for many reasons. Are there any reasons that you are glad your child watches a particular program?** *On a new flip chart page begin listing the good things about television - “educational,” “see a place in the world that they would not otherwise see,” “nature programs,” “see important events,” etc. Ask if the programs listed as ones they wish their children to see offer any other answers. These are the good things about television watching. These are reasons we are glad that our children have TV to watch.*

**What programs did you write down on your sheet as ones you would prefer are not watched? Why?** *You are now beginning a list of weaknesses of TV. You will want “violence,” “sex,” “racial, age, and sexual stereotypes” to be listed. As kids get older, too much TV time can get in the way of activities such as being physically active, reading, doing homework, playing with friends, and spending time with family.*

**TV in moderation can be a good thing. Young children can get help learning the alphabet, grade schoolers can learn about wildlife, and parents can keep up with current events. No doubt about it — TV can be a good educator and entertainer.**

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**Are there other reasons that watching television is bad? Children who spend more than 4 hours per day watching TV are more likely to be overweight. Children who view violent acts are more likely to show aggressive behavior. How about commercials? What are your children learning from commercials?** *Be sure that ideas such as these are listed:*

- *buying makes you happy*
- *you need to have things with the right labels*
- *processed food is better than that from the garden*

**What else is there about television that might be harmful to children? What about the time it consumes that children cannot then use for games, reading, individual play?**

**Educational experts cannot agree about how much TV time is good or bad. Some say no TV is best. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that kids under 2 years old not watch any TV. Children older than 2 should watch no more than 1 to 2 hours a day. No matter how much a child watches, parents should control the use of TV.**

## **SMALL GROUP:**

**Let us divide into smaller groups to consider ways that your family can make good use of what television offers.** *Ask each small group to select a reporter so that they can give their findings to the whole group after ten minutes. Groups should work together on compiling ideas that would help a family control use of the TV, working from ideas that had been useful for their own family or that they had heard other people had tried. The following ideas might be added if they are not forthcoming:*

- *Sit down with the TV schedule and plan age-appropriate TV shows that each child can watch. When two children want different shows at the same hour, they will need to take turns.*
- *Limit the hours of TV watching. Note that the set has an 'on/off' button. Use it.*
- *Watch the program to be sure it is appropriate for your child.*
- *Sometimes watch the program with your child. Ask the child what he/she thinks might happen next in the story, whether what has happened is realistic or not, or why a character has acted the way he/she did.*

*Bring group back together for reports. Use fresh flip chart page for ideas on controlling the TV. Give some ideas like reading books, coloring, or painting. After the reports are complete, summarize ideas. Hand out the TV Log (appendix 2). Ask participants to complete the logs for a week so that they can consider how much TV their children are watching.*

## **FINAL ACTIVITY:**

**Name an idea that impressed you during the workshop.** *It is OK to have repeats.*

My favorite TV program

My child's/children's favorite program(s)

A program I wish they would not show

A program I believe is good for  
my children

# TV LOG



TIME	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
------	-----	-----	-----	-----	------	-----	-----

7:00 am							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
12 noon							
1:00 pm							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							

Too much TV? What are your children watching? Find out. Keep track for a week. Write down the names of the programs your children watched. Total the hours your children watched TV in a week.

TOTAL  
Hours for  
Week