

# Video Violence

The impact of television and video on

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## Introduction

Why do students commit violent acts? In our Masonic Student Assistance Program training, we focus on the effects of alcohol, drugs, and family problems. Research in the past 30 years has clearly indicated that environmental (heat and humidity), sports, pornography and obscenities also contribute to youth violence. The growing impact of media violence is the greatest concern.

Today's youth are surrounded by significant acts of violence on TV, in movies, and in video games. Many experts in education and psychology believe children are acting out what they see. For many children, TV and video games have become their primary teacher.

Unless parents and teachers take the time and responsibility to teach children respectful values, they will learn problem solving, coping skills and conflict resolution from video role models.

## Video Game Violence

The two most preferred categories in video games are fantasy violence and sports games that contain violent sub themes. 36% of male students play video games one to two hours per week, 29% play three to six hours per week. Currently 40 of the 47 top rated Nintendo games have violence as a theme. One study (Provenzo, 1992) found the world of video games has little sense of community and few team players. Most video games do not allow play by more than one person at a time. Autonomous, individuals play alone. This is contrary to the skills of teamwork, interdependence, and problem solving that business and industry reports they need for a successful work force.

In many video games women are victims of violence. In the 47 most popular Nintendo games, there were 115 male characters and only 9 female characters. With 40 of these games thematically violent, it appears these few female characters are included for the sole purpose of being victimized. It is no surprise violence against women, including rape, is one of the fastest growing crimes in America!

## Steps That Appear To Be Significant For Children Taking Violent Action

- Strong identification with the TV, movie, or video hero
- Persistent and elaborate fantasy about the program
- The capacity to commit the physical act

## Media Violence Data

- 99% of homes have a television. More families own a TV than a phone
- 54% of U.S. Children have a TV in their bedroom
- The average American child will witness 20,000 acts of violence on TV, including 16,000 murders before the age of 18
- Longitudinal studies found that 8 year old boys who viewed the most violence media growing up were most likely to engage in aggressive and delinquent behavior by age 18

## Ways Teachers Can Positively Influence Students

- ▶ Establish healthy communication patterns. Put the emphasis on listening. Remember we have two ears and only one mouth. We need to listen at least 50% of the time. Often listening is the only assistance a child needs to help them solve a problem.
- ▶ Foster family and community support. Suggest students learn the names of their neighbors; wave, smile, help out with chores; sit in the front yard not in the back; establish block parties or community gardens.
- ▶ Teach respect by showing and modeling respect to students.
- ▶ Teach trustworthiness as a core human value and an essential ingredient in character development.
- ▶ Promote the behavior of responsibility. Remind students that they are 100% responsible for what they think, feel, say, and do. No one can make you think, feel, say, or do anything.
- ▶ Demonstrate moral character. Establish ground rules in the classroom. Teach a true sense of right and wrong.
- ▶ Promote helping others and a service mentality. Assign yourself, don't wait. Encourage cross age tutoring. If something needs to be done, do it! Democracy is not a spectator sport. Get and stay involved.
- ▶ Most importantly teach students to acknowledge the existence of problems. Encourage them to seek help from parents, other teachers and counselors when they have concerns.

## Giving Advice To Parents

Giving advice to parents on any subject must be carefully addressed. If the subject of video violence is an appropriate topic, teachers may wish to consider any or all aspects of MSAP they believe parents can use to address this.

Most important, parents need to communicate early and often with children. Make time to talk to children about what is appropriate and inappropriate. Make it clear what is real and what is fantasy. Spend time in healthy pursuits (athletics, outdoor adventures, reading, family games, and discussions). Move away from the TV. Limit TV and video time. Help children understand and talk about feelings.

Our children are desperate for connectedness. If we don't come through for them as adults, they will connect to something else (TV, video, movie, etc.).

Make sure children have at least 1 hour of free play per day. Many aspects of play strengthen life skills:

1. Spontaneous planning
2. Creative, imaginative use of natural materials
3. Deeply absorbing
4. Highly sensory

TV, movies and video games are passive. These rob creativity, problem solving and interdependence.

All children need what money can't buy and media can't sell. They need strong families who take time to listen and appreciate. They need the shelter of our love, our homes, our faith and nature. They need the core values of respect and responsibility.