

Seven Progressive Steps to Protect Children from the Harmful Effects of Media

By Peter DeBenedittis, Ph.D.

The most important thing you can do to protect your kids from harmful media modeling is to set strong limits and enforce them consistently. Remember, each step is a little bit harder. Take only the ones you feel comfortable with.

1. For children less than two years old: No passive screens (TV, videos, computers, electronic games, etc.) Kids aged three to seven years: No more than an hour or two of electronic media. Make sure it's SLOW PACED.
2. Cut your own media usage in half. Spend the extra time talking to or playing with your kids. Reading to them is excellent! It helps develop imagination, rather than just memory skills.
3. Set up a no-media zone and media-free times in your home, such as at dinner-time, before school, etc.
4. Screen the media your children use to ensure they support your value system. DO NOT allow media that violates your values into your home. This should be non-negotiable no matter how much your child pleads he or she needs to have it.
5. Watch & Listen to media with your children. Visit web-sites with them, and Play their video / computer games together. This allows you to discuss the messages the media is sending. Try taping all TV programs you watch together and skip the commercials.
6. Remove all electronic media from your bedrooms. Place them in public areas where usage can be monitored.
7. Stop Consuming Media for long periods of time. Create opportunities to learn life skills or physical activities instead. Turn off electronics and send your kids outside to play the next time there's a snow storm, join a sports team or simply teach them to ANALYZE or CREATE media rather than just passively consume it.

Visit <http://www.medialiteracy.net> to download a **Free Book** on parenting around media.

