

Thinking Hi-Def?



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Northwest Life: Saturday, January 24, 2004

Tip for parents on handling concerns about the media

Some tips for **parents** on dealing with children and mature **media**.

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- **Even if a situation is clearly unbelievable**, don't assume a child perceives it the same way. "Young children are extremely responsive to how things look," said Joanne Cantor, author of the upcoming children's book "Teddy's TV Troubles." "Just telling a child that something isn't real won't make the fear go away."
- **Give kids a good idea** of what might be frightening or disturbing. "If it's clear something will freak them out, generally kids don't want to look at it," said Gerard Jones, author of "Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make-Believe Violence." "Kids can help decide where the threshold is."
- **If a movie is at all questionable**, wait until it comes out on video. A dark theater with the huge screen and loud music is likely to contribute to a child's fright. At home, **parents** can fast forward through scary or intense scenes, keep the lights on or turn the movie off.
- **By age 7 or 8**, most children distinguish between fantasy and reality. "But that's not to say they can't still be extremely frightened," Cantor said. Likewise, 13-year-olds can think abstractly, with more experience and perspective. "But well into teens and adulthood, people report seeing things that bothered them and they wished they didn't remember."
- **Don't rule out all fantasy violence**. "Kids need certain kinds of stories, including stories of combat, conflict and action," Gerard said. "There's a real place for fantasy and vicarious experience."
- **Remember children can likely access** mature-rated **media** without your permission. A 2003 nationwide survey by the Federal Trade Commission found nearly 7 in 10 undercover teen shoppers could buy an M-rated video game; 8 in 10 were able to purchase an R-rated DVD. Just over a third got an R-rated movie ticket without an adult.
- **Only 1 in 5 students** report their **parents** prevented them from purchasing a game because of its rating. Nearly 9 in 10 boys play mature-rated (recommended for age 17 and above) video games and more than three-quarters say a M-rated game is among their top five favorites, according to a 2003 survey of 778 students in fourth to 12th grade by the National Institute on **Media** and the Family. Students' average age was 13.
- **Be wary of video games that use human** or living targets or award

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points for killing, as this can encourage children to "associate pleasure and success with their ability to cause pain and suffering to others," warns the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- **Children can get a very distorted** and unhealthy view of sex through the **media**. "Having your first exposure to sex from a rape scene is a really sorry way to learn about it," Cantor noted. "Images of casual or violent sex can be very powerful because kids don't have any way to judge this against reality."

- **Explain to children** what you consider inappropriate so they learn to apply those standards themselves.

- **If your child is exposed to media you feel** is inappropriate at a friend's house, politely explain your preferences, advises Corinne Gregory, president of Woodinville's The PoliteChild. For example: "In our home we really try to limit exposure to teen-rated games. We'd prefer he not play that game in the future."

- **Parents can also teach children** how to politely extract themselves from awkward situations at friends' homes.

- **Local theaters don't prevent parents** from bringing young children to PG-13 or R-rated movies (some theaters in other parts of the country prohibit children under age 6 at R-rated films), but patrons can complain if children are noisy or disruptive because they are bored or scared.

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