A Powerful Presence in Your Home

Pre-reading

Questions:
- What do you think this reading is about?
- What does the title mean?

Definitions:
- Undesirable – not good or helpful
- Recommend – to suggest or advise something
- Aggressive – ready to start fights, forceful

Reading

There may be an unwanted guest in your home. This someone, or something, is influencing you and others living with you, especially children. Most Americans, 99% to be exact, have willingly invited this guest into their living rooms. Some have even welcomed it into their bedrooms! Have you guessed what this invited, but often times undesirable guest is? It’s your television.

At least one TV can be found in nearly every home in the U.S. Most homes have two or three TV sets. According to recent research: 65% of children ages 8 – 18 have a TV in their bedroom, 43% of 4 – 6 year olds have a TV in their bedroom, and 30% of infants ages birth – 2 have a TV in their bedroom. This last statistic is especially alarming because the American Academy of Pediatricians recommends no TV viewing for children under 2 years of age.

TV has a profound effect on the children and youth of our country. It is a powerful teacher of many things. When used in moderation, some good things can be learned from watching TV. Preschool children can get help learning numbers and letters. Grade-school children and teens can learn about nature, wildlife, and history. Adults can stay current with the events of the day by watching the nightly news.

Too much TV, however, can have very negative effects. Research shows that TV contributes to sleep problems, health problems, behavior problems, and struggles in reading and academics. TV viewing, especially when done at night, reduces the quality and quantity of a child’s sleep. Children ages 3 and under who watch TV are at a higher risk of having both irregular nap and bedtime schedules.

The number of overweight and obese children is growing at an alarming rate. The sedentary nature of TV (and other screen) viewing is partly to blame. We now know that children who consistently spend more than four hours a day watching TV are more likely to be overweight.

A recent study by the National Institute on Media and the Family links children’s viewing of violent programming with aggressive, violent behavior towards other children. Research compiled by the Public Broadcasting Service shows that by the age of 18, the average U.S. child’s TV viewing has included 16,000 murders, not to mention the over 200,000 other acts of violence they view.

Too much TV harms the reading and academic skills of children and youth. Researchers have found that our youngest learners, ages five and under, who watch small amounts of TV score better in reading and math tests than those that watch a lot of TV. This also holds true as children age.

Research tells us that children who watch a lot of TV are much less likely to earn a college degree by their mid-20s. In fact, the more children watch TV, the more likely they are to leave school before earning a degree.
Understanding

1. What are some positive aspects of TV? _________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

2. What are some negative impacts of TV? ______________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

3. Which negative effect surprised you the most? Why? _________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

4. Who should not be watching any TV? ________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

5. Do children mimic what they see on TV? How do you know? ____________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

6. What does the phrase “used in moderation” mean?____________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

7. How or why is TV linked to obese kids? ______________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

8. Why is the TV described as an “invited, but often times undesirable guest”?____________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

Writing

Option A: Write about the TV viewing habits in your home. When is it on and for how long? Who is watching it? What is your TV teaching you and others who live with you? What affect does it have on your household?

Option B: Summarize the reading in your own words.