

THE STANFORD STUDY: LESS TV = LESS VIOLENCE

Would you like to have a 40% reduction in violent behavior in YOUR kids' school?

How many kids were killed or injured in school fires in the US in the last 5 years? Answer: Zero. Yet we do fire drills and have alarms and sprinklers for something that is only an infinitely remote possibility.

How many kids were killed or injured in school shootings in the US in the last 5 years? Answer: In 1998 alone, according to the US Secret Service, there were 35 murders, and almost a quarter-of-a-million American children "seriously injured" by school violence.

The possibility of your child being killed or injured by school violence is small, but it is thousands of times more likely than the possibility of a school fire, and we have the moral obligation to do at LEAST as much prep for a shooting as for a fire.

So what can we do to reduce school violence?

Convince kids to turn off the TV!

In July, 2000, a joint statement was made to the US Congress by the AMA, the APA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. What they said was: "Well over 1,000 studies point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children."

That's all of our doctors, psychologists, pediatricians and child psychiatrists telling the US Congress that media violence causes violence in children. Over a 1,000 studies have demonstrated that if you put media violence in a child's life, you will get an increase in violent behavior. So far, though, no one has demonstrated the reverse: If we take media violence out of a child's life, will violent behavior go down?

Now Stanford University has demonstrated exactly that. Less TV equals less violence. Earlier this year Stanford released a landmark study demonstrating a 50% decrease in verbal aggression, and a 40% decrease in physical aggression, just by encouraging kids to turn off their TVs and video games.

Thomas N. Robinson, an assistant professor of medicine at Stanford and the study's lead author, stated that: "What this says is there is something you can do in a practical way, in a real-world setting, and see the effects."

The Stanford data was gathered at two similar San Jose elementary schools. Researchers first carefully assessed the baseline level of aggressive behavior in 192 third- and fourth-graders through playground observations and interviews. Then, they introduced a curriculum at one school meant to encourage children to cut back on video games and to watch less TV.

Two-thirds of the pupils agreed to participate in an initial, 10-day effort to turn off television altogether, which was monitored by slips signed by parents.

Over half of them continued to limit their television watching to under seven hours per week during the next 20 weeks.

After 20 weeks the researchers found a 40 percent reduction in physical aggression, and a 50 percent reduction in the level of verbal aggression in the overall population at the experimental school compared with the one that did not follow the curriculum. The children who were the most aggressive at the outset of the study had the most to gain, and they showed the greatest benefit. The researchers also noted significant reduction in obesity and overeating problems in the school where the curriculum was introduced.

In personal correspondence with Dr. Robinson, the lead researcher in this project, he told me that, "One of my goals is to make the curriculum available widely. I get many requests directly from teachers and other researchers." Every parent, teacher, and leader in American should insist that this curriculum be integrated into their school as soon as possible.

I remember when my 1st grade teacher told us that cigarettes can kill people. My dad smoked! I loved my dad and didn't want him to die. So I hid his cigarettes. He convinced me that that was not a good idea, but the generation that was taught in elementary school about the health risk of tobacco is the generation that grew up and played pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey with the tobacco industry.

Now we are on the threshold of a generation that will be informed about the health impact of media violence, and the result will be a major victory for America's children and for the American people.

Get the Stanford Curriculum

Dr. Robinson, the lead researcher in this project, says that he is "hoping it is just a matter of a few more months at most," before this material will be available. As soon as it is available he has promised to contact me, and I will post the information at this location on this web site.

Col. Grossman

[Abstract of Study](#)

[Original Stanford Study](#) -- Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine (Payment is required for full text access)

Summaries/Commentaries of Stanford Study:

[Colorado Health Site: Reducing Aggressive Behavior in Children: Turn off the TV, Videotapes, and Video Games](#)

[Rage in the Media](#)

[Model Juvenile Probation Parole Order, Model Child Custody Order, Model Foster Parent Order, mandating appropriate media viewing.](#)