

## **Video Games and Our Children**

In today's society, it is a reality that our children will spend time in front of a screen (TV, gaming device, computer, ipod, etc.) each day. The amount of video game playing has risen over the years and the effect on our children is a concern. This is due to the fact that "over 85% of games contain some violence, and approximately half of video games include serious violent actions" (Carnagey et. al, 2007).

The interactive nature and increased violence in video games has a negative impact on our children. As we know, learning can be improved by active participation, repetition and reward - this is exactly what many video games provide.

- Kids are rewarded for being more violent.
- The acts of violence are done repeatedly.
- The child is in control of the violence and experiences the violence in his own eyes (killings, kicking, stabbing and shooting).
- Many studies show violent video games are related to aggressive behaviour.
- Video games can be addictive for kids. This can increase depression and anxiety (study by the Minneapolis-based National Institute for Media and the Family).
- Kids spending too much time playing video games may exhibit impulsive behaviour and have attention problems (Journal of Psychology and Popular Media Culture, 2012).
- A 2007 study showed that exposure to violent video games causes desensitization to real-life violence. Individuals who play violent video "get used to" all the violence and eventually become physiologically numb to it (Carnagey et. al, 2007).

### **What can parents do?**

- Choose the games your children play carefully. Only allow them to play games rated for their age level.
- Check the games ratings – NOTE - ratings for games are different than movie ratings.
- Play them together.
- Keep TV, computers and gaming devices OUT of the bedroom.
- Pick games that involve mental engagement - strategies and decision-making without violence.

Check out this great website <http://www.netsmartz.org/Parents>

Carnagey, N.L., Anderson, C.A. & Bushman, B.J. (2007). The effect of video game violence on physiological desensitization to real-life violence, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43, 489-496. Doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2006.05.003