

Parent's Toolkit

Violent Movies/Video Games and Aggression in Children

Fulton County Schools is committed to providing safe and secure learning environments for our students. Our Board of Education makes annual, ongoing investments that provide safety and security to our physical buildings as well as programs that focus on the social and emotional well-being of our students and staff. This commitment continues with educational updates to parents and the community about student safety issues.

Does exposure to violent movies or video games make kids more aggressive?

Although experts agree that no single factor can cause a nonviolent person to act aggressively, some studies (though not all) suggest that heavy exposure to violent media can be a risk factor for violent behavior. Children who are exposed to multiple risk factors -- including substance abuse, aggression, and conflict at home -- and consume violent media are more likely to behave aggressively.

While exposure to violent media is only one of several risk factors, it is one that parents have control over. As parents, we can make a choice to consistently expose kids to media that reflects your own personal values and say "no" to the stuff that doesn't. There are so many great benefits to media and technology, including the potential to teach valuable skills. Doing research about TV shows, movies, or games before your kids watch, play, and interact with them will go a long way in helping them avoid the bad stuff.

How do I talk to my kids about violence on TV and in movies or games?

Violence is everywhere: in video games, movies, books, music videos, and cartoons, on the nightly news and the Web, and even in commercials, and kids are being exposed at younger and younger ages. Talking about media violence helps to manage its impact on your kid. Here are some ideas for those conversations.

- **Help your kids express their feelings.** Urge them to identify the feelings that are triggered by seeing violent

media: anger, sadness, or even excitement. Creating a safe and nonjudgmental space for exploring those feelings helps their emotional maturity.

- **Help your kids tap into feelings of empathy.** The more media violence kids are exposed to, the more "normal" it appears. Repeated viewings can desensitize your kids to others' pain and suffering. Ask them how they'd feel in real life if someone they knew was badly hurt.
- **Remind them that real violence isn't a joke.** A lot of violence is played for laughs. But when people get hurt, that's not entertainment. With older kids, you can talk about how certain situations (in slapstick comedy, for example) inspire conflicting emotional reactions.
- **Teach positive conflict resolution.** Explain your values regarding violent behavior and the importance of handling clashes nonviolently. Tell kids what the consequences in society -- and in your own house -- will be for any aggressive behavior.
- **Explain consequences.** Discuss the true consequences of violence and point out how unrealistic it is for people to get away with violent behavior.