

Television Tips for Parents of Young Children

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Understanding Your Child:

Seeing is Believing: Young children are often frightened by things that parents would not expect to be scary. Here are some of the most common media sources of young children's fears:

- *grotesque visual images*: scary-looking characters (whether they are real or make-believe; and whether they are kindly or villainous), vicious animals, monsters, mutilated or deformed characters
- *natural disasters, accidents, and violence* shown vividly
- stories involving the *death of a parent* or *harm to children*
- *transformations* of characters from one form to another (especially when a nice-looking character becomes grotesque)

What To Do When Your Young Child is Frightened:

- Get them out of the scary situation
- Accept their fear as a normal reaction - don't belittle them
- Don't expect logical explanations to work
- *Be there* for them, both physically and emotionally
- Do something fun together
- Draw pictures or build a castle together
- Read a calming, soothing book together
- Develop reasonable bedtime rituals

Avoiding Future Fright Reactions:

- Don't place a TV or computer in your child's bedroom.
- Make sure you know what your child is watching, playing, or accessing on-line
- Be there and ready to change the channel, distract your child, or soothe the fear if something scary comes on
- Get to know the programs, movies, and video games your child is likely to use
- Take special care when watching the news
- Read reviews, plot summaries, and alternative rating systems:
 - www.screenit.com
 - www.moviereports.com
 - www.moviemom.com
 - www.kidsinmind.com
- Get to know filtering systems that allow you to block TV programs, parts of movies, the Internet

Communicating:

- Talk to your kids in a tactful way about the consequences of watching the wrong things
- Complain to the media about inappropriate content aimed at children
- Write letters to newspapers, legislators, etc.