

Keep your kids entertained... ...without turning on the television set

America loves its television. According to the A.C. Nielsen Co., the average American watches more than four hours of television each day. To put that into perspective, by the time the average American reaches the age of 65, he or she has spent the equivalent of nine years watching television.

As programming becomes more specialized and more and more channels are offered, those statistics figure to increase.

That could be especially harmful to children, many of whom spend far more time parked in front of the TV than they do sitting in a classroom, conversing with their parents, or even exercising.

As Rutgers University psychologist Robert Kubey notes, millions of Americans are so dependent on television that they fit the criteria

for substance abuse.

Among the dependency symptoms heavy television viewers can exhibit include:

- feeling angry with oneself for watching too much television
- feeling miserable when kept from watching television
- feeling loss of control while watching television
- using television as a sedative

Understandably, many parents are concerned about television and how much of it their children are watching. With the aforementioned side effects a genuine possibility if kids watch too much television, finding new and healthier ways to keep kids entertained is of paramount importance to parents.

- Encourage artistic pursuits. Oftentimes, the

television tends to be used as a babysitter. After a long day at the office, parents are quick to turn on the T.V. for the kids while they unwind and prepare dinner or take care of other daily chores. However, this can prove an unhealthy crutch. Instead of turning on the television, use this time to encourage kids' artistic interests, such as painting, reading or playing a musical instrument.

After a structured day at school and/or an after school program, kids will grow to embrace this time to simply unwind doing something they love without being told how to do it.

- Exercise with your kids. It's common for parents to see their once regular exercise routines fall by the wayside once their children are born.

This not only isn't healthy for parents, but it

sets a poor example for their children as well. Rather than flipping on the tube for some relaxation time, take a nightly walk with the kids or involve children in another physical activity that both parents and children can enjoy.

- Involve kids in your hobbies. Parents often lament that they can't spend enough quality time with their children. To increase those opportunities and lessen your kids' television time, choose hobbies both you and your children can enjoy. Whether it's biking, hiking, fishing, or more geared toward arts and crafts, choose a hobby that doesn't involve plopping down on the couch and watching television.

If you find a fun way to fill the time that doesn't involve watching the tube, kids are less likely to depend on TV as their primary source of entertainment, both now and in the future.

USD 212 NORTHERN VALLEY



From left, Ann Griffin, Debbie Hogan, Cindy Wright, Barb Nelson. Not pictured: Becky Delimont



From left, Launa Hopkins, Emily Lowry and Irma Laurin

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