

The Idiot Box

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In the essay “TV Can Be a Good Parent” Ariel Gore argues that TV is not all bad for kids today and that some parents might actually need the TV to help them raise their children. Throughout the essay she quotes and contends with the A.A.P.’s recommendation on rules for governing children watching TV. While Gore agrees with some statements made by the A.A.P., she fights more against the so called “extremes” put out by the organization. One recommendation that is particularly sour for her is pediatricians’ involvement with how much TV children are watching. She believes that for her the TV has been a helpful “co-parent” and that just because her daughter watched TV it doesn’t mean that she is living in a “virtual world” with no human interactions. Gore defends that the number of shows directed to toddlers is increasing and improving creating interactive learning environments; however, in the closing of her article, she states that if it were as easy for her as it was for her mother raising children she would have no problem smashing the “electronic babysitter.” As I read Gore’s article I found myself strongly disagreeing that some TV is fine for children and that parents sometimes need it to occupy their children while they get a much needed break.

As the oldest sibling of eight children, I have seen both a time without TV in our home and a time with TV; I am convinced that the more productive and happier time was when the “idiot box” was not in our home. From the time I was very little until I was about 16 years old the TV was absent from our home, and I feel like brothers and I had more fun when I was growing up with a TV. We were constantly outside in our massive backyard, at the far back corner of 300 acres in panhandle of Idaho. There surrounded by tall, timeless ponderosa pines and endless fresh air, we explored the world around us. We created dozens of forts using anything we could find and that nature would provide for our amusement. Our dad created trails through a dense forest just behind our home where we would ride our horses through it as if we were living in JR Token fantasy, expecting elves to come out at any moment. We learned new skills such as taking care of animals, cutting wood, team work, horseback riding, and caring for others,

actually using our brains and bodies. I know that because of this time with the TV we were closer; we worked together and played together. I also feel there was less fighting among us and more friendship and laughing. We were ok and had fun without the TV.

My parents were better parents at that time as well. We did more things as a family like fishing near a small lake near our home, where we would catch and release as many as 50 fish in one day. We would go for horseback rides for hours and enjoy seeing all the wildlife northern Idaho had to offer up close, not from a screen. We would take country drives down old logging roads and even cut wood for widows in our community so they could keep warm during the winter. I feel like my parents were easier to talk to then; if we ever had a problem or concern with friends or school we could go for a drive and get advice freely. Now it seems like they are less approachable. Thinking about this time really made me firm in my belief that children and families are better without any TV and that the TV should never be looked at as a “babysitter”.

While I understand that Gore had limited resources and may needed some help, even time alone, I still feel like one good program with interactive moments is not worth the development and wonder a child can have from creating their own world from their own imagination. Without being too harsh, from my experiences, I maintain that if parents will get down in the sand box or build a fort with their children instead of kicking back in the recliner that it's not only healthier for the both of them but there will be more unity and trust.

References

Gore, Ariel. "TV Can Be A Good Parent." *The Contemporary Reader*. Second Edition. Ed. Gary Goshgarian. New York: Pearson, 2009. 273-277. Print.