



PARENT TIP SHEET

As parents, it's important to understand that you aren't the only influence in your children's life. In today's modern culture, they will be exposed to certain images and programming even if they don't see them at home. In knowing that, it's important that you adjust to that reality and figure out ways in which you can help protect your children from the harmful impact of reality TV programs, or at best, minimize the negative effects.

Using the parent tip sheet designed by the Girl Scout Research Institute as a guideline, we suggest the following:

Tip #1: The average Black American Youth spends 13 hours per day viewing media, and Black girls are the #1 consumers of reality TV shows. But there are other activities that can take up that time by creating alternatives for your entire family.

According to a recent study conducted by the Girls Scout Research Institute, 90% of girls would rather spend their time hanging out with friends than watching their favorite TV show, and 84% would rather spend it doing a fun activity. As an alternative to negative reality shows, think about some of the activities your daughter likes and make the effort engage in those activities with her.

You can even use what you see on TV to get the family interested in other things. For instance:

- Try out a recipe seen on a cooking program.
- Explore a place (through books or the computer, or in person) inhabited or visited by characters in a program you like.
- Engage in a fun, family activity seen on a favorite show.

By putting effort into demonstrating that face-to-face communication and enjoyable activities are important in your family, you'll create a healthier balance between TV and other things family members like to do.

Tip #2: Try and restrict television time to one or two hours per day, however, keep in mind that quantity is not as much an issue as quality. In other words, what is watched is more important than how much is watched.

Reality TV shows are here to stay and chances are, your daughter will watch them at some point. Restricting how many hours of reality TV she consumes is key, and

be mindful of the type of reality TV she watches as not all shows are created equal.

Tip #3: Consider watching her favorite show with her and using it as a conversation starter.

It is important to keep open lines of communication with your daughter. It's not enough to just restrict her from watching her favorite show for as long as she wants. Make sure to communicate why you are monitoring what she watches in order to help her understand your perspectives. By communicating these issues, eventually, she will see the harmful effects of reality TV for herself, rather than you forcing her to.

Tip #4: Frankly discuss any violent content with your children.

Research has found that one of the best ways of avoiding the negative effects of TV violence on children is to involve them in discussions about how children can be fooled or hurt by what they see on television. Be sure they have a firm grasp on the difference between fantasy and reality. Focus on the suffering caused by violence as opposed to messages that portray violence as acceptable.

Tip #5: Don't use television as a babysitter.

This can be difficult, especially for working parents. It's quite tempting to sit kids in front of the TV so you can get dinner on the table, or attend to chores that need to be done, or even have a few moments to yourself. Be sure that the TV viewing is going to be a positive experience for your child no matter what the circumstances

Tip #6: Encourage viewing of pro-social and educational TV programming.

Some research suggests that viewing television programs that enhance learning, teach moral lessons, and model caring behavior can be a positive influence.



Tip #7: Be open and honest about reality. In a nationally representative survey conducted 1996, 29% of African American women reported at least one instance of violence from an intimate partner, and in 2010, Black women were incarcerated at nearly 3 times the rate of White women.

Young women should be aware of what is going on around them, even if they might not witness it first hand. As a parent, help your daughter understand the ways in which violence plays out in her favorite reality TV shows and how that normalizes violence against black women, as well as how statistics like this are connected to the images she sees on TV.

Tip #8: Be sure to have a close relationship with your child that is nurturing and caring.

Make an effort to spend adequate positive time together. Also, find time to teach the values you want them to internalize. Help them learn to solve problems and conflicts through nonviolent means and effective communication. Children who have strong attachments to their parents, and feel loved and secure in those relationships, are much less likely to be negatively effected by television than those who feel isolated and neglected. Be sure that you are the primary influence in your child's development rather than the TV.

Tip#9: Preview ahead programs that your kids want to watch and make an informed decision as to whether they are appropriate or not.

Tip#10: Make it known to your daughter that television is entertainment, and the scenarios that occur in her favorite reality TV show are not accurate depictions of reality.

This will help her cognitively separate “reality TV” from reality, so while she can enjoy the entertainment of her favorite show, she is well informed enough to know the difference between it and real life.

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About Truth in Reality

The mission of **Truth in Reality** is to change the way women of color and violence are portrayed in the media, especially on reality television. Through digital advocacy, public awareness campaigns and educational programs we aim to change society’s acceptance of gender-based violence and ultimately reduce its incidence in the Black community.

Sources:

<http://www.girlscouts.org/>

<http://www.thesuccessfulparent.com/children-and-media/the-impact-of-tv-violence-on-children-and-adolescents>

<http://www.truthinreality.org>