

Texas Agricultural Extension Service

People Helping People

TELEVISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES

Parents' Guide to Responsible After-School Self Care for Children

Do your family members watch a lot of television? Data indicate that many children on their own after school watch between 4 and 5 hours daily. Why is this so?

- Children may follow parental example. Research indicates that children who see parents watch a lot of television are heavy watchers.
- Television is company. Children say the house is not as lonely when the television is turned on.
- Parents may not realize the child's total viewing time. Only after adding up the time the child spends watching television do some parents see how much is involved.

Examine your family's viewing habits. Prepare a form like the example on the next page and place it on or near the television. Have family members log their viewing time by placing name or initials in the blanks.

Selective Viewing*

There are many positive aspects of television viewing. Television provides opportunities to explore foreign cultures, observe important events and learn about various topics. In addition, it may prompt discussion on important issues and sensitive topics.

However, excessive viewing can profoundly affect young family members. It can decrease parent-child communication. It can lead to passive learning which discourages active involvement. It may bring confusion over reality and fiction. There may be contradiction between family values and values presented by screen characters.

If you want members of your family, especially children, to become more selective in their viewing habits, examine the programs they generally watch. List the names of the programs

watched and ask the following questions about each program:

- Is it entertaining?
- Does it encourage worthwhile values and beliefs?
- Is it informative and interesting?
- Is it suitable for all family members? If not, for whom is it suitable?

After analyzing the amount of viewing time and types of television programs watched:

- Plan a reasonable amount of viewing time per day or week.
- Discuss and select programs to watch.
- Plan a schedule for viewing.
- Compliment or complain to local stations, cable companies and advertisers when you feel such action is appropriate.
- Provide interesting alternative activities for family members.

Activities

Working parents are often unaware of community resources available after a regular school day. In some areas, community education courses, parks and recreation department activities and even school-sponsored extracurricular programs are available.

Youth organizations, including 4-H clubs, scouts and campfire councils, may have project or interest groups established that meet close to the home or school.

Pre-adolescents are expanding their interests and becoming more involved in goal-oriented activities. Watch for indications of emerging talents and interests in your children. Help them by providing resources and opportunities to explore and expand their interests. If transportation is a problem, try to locate someone who will take your child to and from the activity for a small fee. This person might be another parent, a responsible high school or college student or a retired older adult.

*Information adapted with permission from *Parents, Children and Television*, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

FAMILY VIEWING DIARY

Directions: Keep a record of the number of hours you and your children watch television each week. You may copy this page for each child or use the form below to record the total family viewing pattern. Have family members log their time by placing name or initials in the appropriate blanks.

Week of _____

Total hours _____

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| 6-7 a.m. | | | | | | | |
| 7-8 a.m. | | | | | | | |
| 8-9 a.m. | | | | | | | |
| 9-10 a.m. | | | | | | | |
| 10-11a.m. | | | | | | | |
| 11 a.m.-Noon | | | | | | | |
| Noon-1 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 1-2 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 2-3 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 3-4 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 4-5 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 5-6 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 6-7 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 7-8 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 8-9 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 9-10 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 10-11 p.m. | | | | | | | |
| 11-Midnight | | | | | | | |
| Midnight-1 a.m. | | | | | | | |
| After 1 a.m. | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | | | | | | | |

Some community resources to call about after-school programs for school-age children are:

- Local school systems
- Community education programs
- City departments of parks and recreation
- Churches
- Sports centers and organizations
- Libraries
- Museums
- 4-H and other youth clubs
- Private learning centers
- County Extension agent

More than One at Home

When there is more than one child at home after school, communicate guidelines specifically. Consider safety and sibling conflict.

Much depends upon the personalities and maturity levels of the children involved. Children 10 and younger rarely have the maturity and skills needed to supervise other children. When children are close in age they resent one child being more in charge than the other.

Outline expectations of each child, and make each child responsible directly to the parents. If children do not get along well when the parents are home, they are not likely to get along when the parents are away.

Families Who Do Things Together Stay Together

Even busy families can find time to do things together if they plan and prepare. What you do together doesn't have to be elaborate or costly; the simplest things often become the best memories.

Here's a checklist of family activities—see how many of these you do together. Perhaps you will find some new ideas.

- Social activities - playing cards, board games and other games; picnics; reunions; attending parties or social functions as a family.
- Musical activities - sing-sessions, taking music lessons, attending band or other musical programs together.
- Rhythmic activities - dancing lessons, going to dances, dancing at home, playing rhythmic games or having a family rhythm band.
- Nature activities - going on hikes; studying the stars; learning about the weather; feeding wildlife; gardening; training and caring for pets; studying trees, wild flowers and rocks; going camping.
- Building activities - making things together of wood, sewing, painting, modeling in clay, cooking for the family and for fun—together.
- Physical activities and sports - backyard games,

horseshoes, badminton, baseball, swimming, skating, hiking, skiing, boating, fishing, hunting and tennis.

- Service activities - belonging to a service organization which does things for others such as 4-H, scouts, Lions, hospital auxiliary, church service committees; helping with campaigns and fund-raising projects; or just being neighborly.
- Dramatic activities - dramatic games; charades; pantomines; word games at the dinner table; amateur productions at church, school, community centers; or attending plays together.

Strengthening Your Child's Self-Protection Skills*

Teach him:

- His full name, address and phone number (including area code)
- How to make a long distance call both by dialing directly to you and dialing "0" for the operator
- How to call the local emergency number, often 911
- To be wary of orders of strangers
- To avoid cars with strangers in them and do not get into cars without parental permission
- To avoid admitting over the phone that he is home alone
- To avoid opening the door to strangers and how to phone for help if someone tries to break into the house
- To avoid going into other homes without parental permission
- To say "no" when he feels he should
- To tell you when adults behave strangely toward him
- To tell you when strangers offer him gifts

*Adapted from "Strengthen Your Family" Memo Pack 168, Oct. 1983, Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Service.

Because You Care—Try Using These Words*

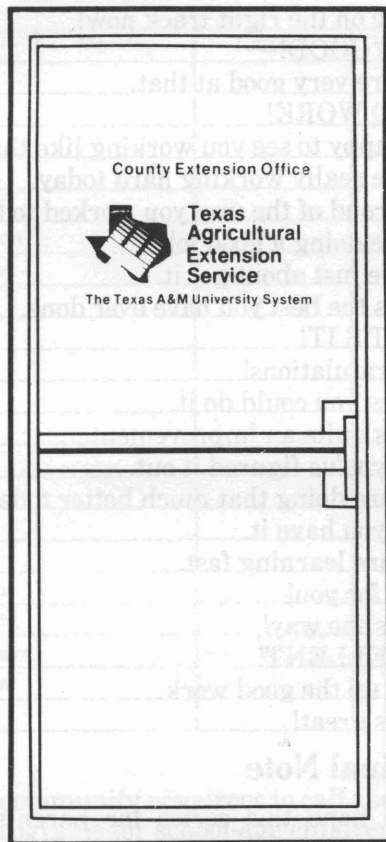
You've got it made.
That's RIGHT!
You're on the right track now!
That's GOOD!
You are very good at that.
GOOD WORK!
I'm happy to see you working like that.
You're really working hard today.
I'm proud of the way you worked today.
You're doing a good job.
You've just about got it.
That's the best you have ever done.
THAT'S IT!
Congratulations!
I knew you could do it.
That's quite an improvement.
Now you've figured it out.
You are doing that much better today.
Now you have it.
You are learning fast.
Good for you!
That's the way!
EXCELLENT!
Keep up the good work.
That's great!

A Final Note

We hope this series for parents and their children has helped you. You will probably want to continue locating resources on "responsible self care." Check in your library or local bookstore for the growing number of new books available for working parents and their children.

In addition, contact your county Extension office and ask to be placed on the list to receive information about future programs as well as newsletters. Look for the listing under County Government.

*Taken from James E. Van Horn, Ph.D., Family Sociology Extension Specialist, The Pennsylvania State University.



The place to go when you need to know . . .

. . . about agriculture, home economics, 4-H and youth or community development. Drop by or call your county Extension office. You'll find friendly, well-trained agents ready to serve you with up-to-date information, advice and publications. **Your county Extension office . . . the place to go when you need to know!**



**Texas
Agricultural
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Prepared by
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