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Updating you about current events in the battle against addictions

Video Games and Violence

The question of the effect of exposure to violence in the media on behavior has been around for many years. There is over 40 years of research on the topic and the overall message is that exposure to violence is a risk factor for aggressive and violent behavior.

Recently the debate has been re-ignited with the evolution of a new generation of video games. Some of these newer video games are educational in nature and are excellent teaching tools. They help improve hand eye coordination, develop certain skills like problem solving and spatial reasoning as well as impart a better understanding of technology. However, the early 1990's saw the arrival of a new wave of ultra-violent video games which continues to this day. Some of these new games reward players for killing innocent bystanders, police and prostitutes with weapons ranging from flamethrowers to guns to knives to their bare hands. In many of the games, the player is the villain and not the hero.

According to Craig Anderson PhD, Chair of the Department of Psychology at Iowa State University, there are many studies which have linked violent video game play to antisocial behaviors including delinquency, fighting and violent crime. There are some who assert that even if these negative effects of violent video games really do exist, they are very small. In fact, Dr. Anderson points out that research indicates that the effects of violent video games on behavior are larger than the effect of second hand smoke on lung cancer and the effect of lead exposure on IQ in children. The size of the effect combined with the large numbers of youth exposed only drives up the potential impact and costs to society.

The argument that "it is just a game" is false. Research shows that even when people know that the violence they are seeing is not "real", it can still have the same negative effect on behavior. In fact most studies which have shown links between exposure to violent media and subsequent violent behavior, have involved individuals fully aware that the violence was not "real".

Source: <http://www.apa.org/science/psa/sb-anderson.html>
http://www.psychology.iastate.edu/faculty/caa/Video_Game_FAQs.html

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