



Institute of Sathya Sai Education Australia
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Future prosperity of remotely controlled generation

This presentation focuses on the remote control of Television (TV) and how it controls the viewer remotely in this global village.

The 'TELLY ADDICT CULTURE' affects individuals, couples, families and children as it has become the main source of our common, collective experience. It has become our main past time – in fact it is our prime time these days; it is a past time - only next to sleep and work. On an average, if a person spends 4 hours a day in front of the TV, by the time that person reaches the age of 75 he/she would have watched TV for 12 ½ years.

When did the remote control make its advent? It was in June of 1956, that the TV remote controller first entered the American home. The first TV remote control called "**Lazy Bones,**" was developed in 1950 by Zenith Electronics Corporation (then known as Zenith Radio Corporation).

Why do you watch TV?

For many reasons - Sports, relaxation, education, enjoyment, life style choice, convenience, freedom of information, etc.

First of all let us ask ourselves, “How does TV grab our attention?”

There is enough scientific evidence on TV's power to draw and hold attention. The stylistic cuts, zooms, edits and hi fidelity noises trigger an involuntary response within us and hold our attention to the screen.

And once we start watching, “How does TV make us keeping watching?” What is its allure?

1. Comparison to hypnosis – the brain treats incoming information uncritically because brain waves switch to alpha waves – our left hemisphere tunes out and the emotional right hemisphere functions unimpeded.

2. Because of attention inertia, which enables us to keep attending to an issue once it has got our attention. We are rewarded for our attention by our brain, which releases a chemical messenger called Dopamine.

Watching TV affects us in many ways.

TV viewing gets addictive and displaces other activities. It impacts us psychologically, neurologically and metabolically. Just the sheer amount of TV viewing, not its content, is associated with obesity, violence, depression, attentional damage, learning abilities, sleep problems and more. It arrests early brain development, slows down a child's metabolism, damages eye sight, leads to sleep problems. It impairs the ability to think, interferes with the development of inner speech, and erodes inner awareness.

TV could numb the true effects of real life violence, lead to copy cat violence and aggression. In Bhutan, the last country to introduce TV, crime rates have increased due to TV viewing.

Biological impact:

1. slows down a child's metabolism

As presented in Stanford Medical School study – TV viewing is the cause of increased body fatness. Harvard Medical school study – the act of watching TV slows down a child's metabolism. The child will burn fewer calories than if the child sat and did nothing.

A 26 year study on 1000 children – children who watched more than 2 hours of TV a day between the ages of 5 and 15 – suffered serious health risks at age 26. They had

- a. 15% raised blood cholesterol
 - b. 17% obesity
 - c. 17% smoking
 - d. 15% bad cardio vascular fitness
2. **damaged eye sight** – dramatic increase in myopia (short-sightedness)
3. **sleep problems** – Children with TV in bedroom will sleep up to one month less in a year
- a. more tired, irritable, drowsy in the day
 - b. compromised immune system - problems with immune system, more vulnerable to cancer
 - c. risk of clinical depression
 - d. hormone imbalance – melatonin is released less
 - e. sleep poorly – they are more likely to take up smoking, drinking and using drugs.
4. **premature puberty** in girls viewing TV due its sexual content and images. It was found that 12 year olds who watched shows, which only talked of sex or had sex scenes, appear like youths 2 to 3 years older.
5. **telly belly** – like a hypochondriac, people are reporting symptoms of illnesses based on what they see on TV.

6. **Exercise less, change in metabolism**, eat more. EEG – TV images trigger involuntary physiological responses.

Behavioural/social impact:

1. **violence** – violent crime would be half what it is today if TV had never been invented - Journal of American Medical Association study - it refers to all TV programs not just the violent ones. There is the example of Bhutan which was the last country to introduce TV and in Bhutan crime rates have increased.
Study of 707 families in New York starting 1975, showed that children who watched 1-3 hours of TV each day when they were 14-16 years old, were 60% more likely to be involved in assaults and fights as adults.
2. copy cat violence by imitating TV scenes
3. children become bullies – verbal aggression and physical violence.
4. numbs us to true effects of real life violence
5. TV is habit forming is an understatement. It is highly addictive. It is similar to substance dependence. The reason is dopamine release –we get neuro chemically dependent. Dopamine is implicated in a range of addictions
6. Social interaction and social skills are affected.
7. TV is almost like a family member – children are being tutored by it
8. Perceiving emotion – our brains are exceedingly responsive to emotional cues from the TV screen as the amygdala, a subcortical region of the brain sensitive to emotional signals, gets activated.

Neurological impact: Watching TV is a non intellectually stimulating activity for brain function.

1. TV can negatively affect early brain development. Affects brain cell connections, brain structure and regulation of neurotransmitters
frontal lobe - conscious brain – in front of the head - continues to develop until age 20. Controls voluntary movement, thinking, feeling, checks behaviour.
Negatively affect early brain development –It is a developmental issue with children – repeated exposure to any experience will have a powerful impact in mental and emotional development.
2. Attentional problems - Research of 2500 children– published in the journal Pediatrics – whether early exposure to TV during critical periods of synaptic development would be associated with subsequent attentional problems. Children who watched TV at ages 1 and 3, were at significant risk of developing attentional problems by age 7. For every hour of TV a child watched – there was 9% increase in attentional problems.
3. research of 2,500 children published in the Journal of Paediatrics – children who watched TV at ages 1 – 3 – significant risk of developing attentional problems by age 7. For every hour of TV watched – 9% increase in attentional problems early
4. TV exposure and ADHD - ADHD – 5% of children exhibit ADHD – University of Wisconsin study – confirmed the association between excessive TV viewing and

ADHD – a one year old spent 2 hrs each day and by age 3 it increased to 3.6 hrs – study of 1300 children.

5. TV is displacing many positive things that really make people happy and healthy
6. Inner awareness that we are born with is eroded – tunes our attention to the external. One's sense of identity suffers. Inner awareness and greater mental control are developed through meditation.
7. insistent noise of TV interferes with development of 'inner speech'. The ability to think through problems and restrain impulsive responses is lost when there is no inner speech.
8. Impairs ability to think
9. Stressful – indirect experience of a stressful event like September 11 attacks shown on TV can produce significant symptoms of stress in the viewers.
10. makes us more passive – e.g. – use of TV in prisons to control prisoners, used with gorillas in zoos
11. Lower grades in school – 26 year study of the “association between child and adolescent television viewing and adult health involving 1000 children – TV viewing in childhood and adolescence is associated with poor educational achievement by 26 years of age. Children of all ages should not have a TV in their bedroom – a study found that 8 and 9 year olds with TV in bed room have the worst scores in school.
12. lowered mathematics ability, reading recognition, comprehension
13. TV displaces educational and play activities
14. Stunts ability to speak – children are speaking in 'grunts', Mental/neurological
15. Autism – research from Cornell University – early TV viewing may be an important trigger for autism – again the incidence of autism is increasing.
16. Alzheimer's disease – middle age 20 – 60 years – each additional hour of TC increases risk.

Other damaging impact:

1. globalised screen – talk, behaviour, body language, someone else's emotions, change in mind set,
2. role models – many role models from reality television, to sports to soaps
3. perception of beauty – the beautiful TV people, body image
4. happiness – factors influencing it are the quality of personal relationships, followed by friends and community life. TV eats into this time
5. eating out – restaurants have TV
6. disappearing cultural differences –
7. glamorising itself
8. modesty and maintaining a public face do not make for good television. By focusing on the individual, TV amplifies our tendencies and desires, undoing much of the good work carried out by the ego, the rational, reasoning unit and the super ego, the haughty grand department for consideration, morality and ethical behaviour: the conscience.
9. People are setting their aspirations by people they see on TV. People are being 'remotely controlled'.
10. sense of inadequacy, insecurity, dissatisfaction
11. we see tragedies on TV and learn to be non-reactive- desensitised
12. news management – interest groups want to raise public awareness about issues
13. ethnic minority groups are under represented

14. veneration of youth culture
15. Consumer behaviour – stimulation rich; critical experiences in a child' life are replaced by TV
16. cult of the individual – creates a false intimacy with the TV characters, look at me culture; earlier culture – lack of conspicuous yearnings, urges, cravings, modesty; now TV shifts from consideration to gratification.
17. being modern in a western way
18. every one can have a camera and project the image that they want to

What is the effect of TV on relationships?

1. couples – time together in front of TV as shared activity is passive activity;
2. TV viewing is not just a past time – it is our prime time, a source of shared common experience; loss of connection between family members;
3. telly addict – staying in instead of going out
4. couples are having less sex – birth rate is dropping
5. TV – does not allow for meaningful conversations
6. for children – it has become a surrogate family.
7. children have more eye contact with TV than their parents;
8. parents want to rest after a day of work and use TV to occupy their children; use TV as a baby sitter.
9. young children are spending more time in front of TV than in school; by the time a child is 6 years old, it has watched one full year of TV.
10. Replaces many positive things in life

In an age when we complain of time poverty, we urgently need to reconsider what we are doing with our most valuable resources: our time and our children.

When we add TV viewing to the use of internet, computers, DVDs, videos, social media, instant text messaging, interactive mobile telephones etc, we spend an inordinate amount of time each day in front of a screen.

Daily exposure to high technology stimulates brain cell alteration and neurotransmitter release. The stimulation we are exposed to is critical in determining how our brains work. Brain cells are altered, gradually strengthening new neural pathways while weakening old ones. Human brain is evolving as never before, changing the way we live, communicate, feel, think and behave.

It has taken a million years for the human brain to evolve to this point but with the excessive use of digital technology the brain is changing at a rapid rate.

This could lead to a 'Brain Gap' between the younger generation, who are technologically savvy, and the older generation who are reluctantly embracing new technology.

As we master new technologies and take advantage of their efficiencies, we need to maintain our people skills. We need to make informed choices about the quantity and quality of our

brain's exposure to technology. To progress spiritually we need to turn off the gadgets and tune in.

Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for watching TV

1. No TV or any screen viewing for children up to the age of 3 years.
2. No TV in bedroom of any child up to the age of 15 years.
3. For teenagers – limit TV viewing to one and half hours a day.
4. For adults – 2 hours a day – all screen time including TV.
5. Replace TV time with other activities – reading, playing, learning a hobby, sport, instrument or music or art.
6. Do not allow children to watch TV while doing their home work.
7. After 3 years of age, good quality TV should be limited to an hour a day;
Some recommendations for children over 3 years of age-
 - parents should choose the program that the children will watch.
 - Better to choose videos or DVDs instead of TV.
 - children's channels are generally bad – esp. cartoons. If deciding to watch cartoons at least choose traditional cartoons such as Jungle Book or Mary Poppins over modern cartoons.
 - don't allow children to watch any advertisements - record programs without ads, explain what the ads are trying to do.
 - don't allow them to watch programs that you are not happy with.
 - watch TV with them or if you are busy at that time – then record what they are watching and watch them later yourself.
 - choose good story line, avoid loud noises, colours, effects, lots of editing, scene changes.
 - avoid programs with violence, which show disrespect.
 - avoid watching TV before bed time.
 - talk about the program with your children – explain why the message is flawed, if it is.
 - look for parental guidance on children's TV viewing.
 - as parents/adults - set a good example – limit your TV viewing.
8. watch comedy – use TV to change your mood.
9. for adults – use the TV guide to decide what you are going to view; be in control; don't surf channels – plan what you are going to watch/view – then turn off the TV;
10. use technology – block TV signals;
11. think of ways in which to harness TV for your benefit.

THE GOOD NEWS

Many of the harmful effects of TV viewing will go away if you stop watching TV, or reduce the time or choose the type of programs to view