

**WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for July 6, 2020**  
**Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.**

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll finish up our discussion about digital wellness. Over the past few weeks I've talked about the need to unplug and advice for parents of teens with screens. Today we are going to wrap up the conversation with a topic that comes up often- are video games safe for my children to play? It is a complicated question with no easy answer, but I wanted to share some of the latest research.

I think it is first helpful to define what we mean by a video game. Games have a wide variety of intended audiences and purposes. They range from education focused (like math or words games) to competitive skills games (like sports and racing) to those that are primarily focused on killing and violence. University of Minnesota Extension offers some positive results from healthy, balanced use of video games. These include increasing motivation for children, quick and clear feedback about performance, and they can promote a feeling of mastery for their participants.

For the purposes of this segment, we are going to focus on what research has been done about violent games, because these are usually the games parents and grandparents are most concerned about.

First off be familiar with the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings listed on the box. E is appropriate for Everyone, age 6 and up. E+ is appropriate for ages 10 and up. T means appropriate for Teens or youth, 12 and up. M ratings are for mature audiences and are not appropriate for any age youth. Parents are responsible to use these ratings, as most stores do not enforce them.

Over the past few years, there has been conflicting research data presented from media on the actual effects of playing violent video games. For decades, Brad Bushman at The Ohio State University has been studying this topic. In 2012 his study found that people who played a violent video game for three consecutive days showed increases in aggressive behavior and hostile expectations from others each day they played. Those who played nonviolent games did not. His more recent study last year found that children who played violent video games were more likely to play with real guns.

However, the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford recently found no relationship between aggressive behavior in teenagers and the amount of time spent playing violent video games. Experts from Common Sense Media cite there are lots of factors that will determine whether kids will become aggressive, antisocial, or apathetic towards others.

The following information from the American Academy of Pediatrics Media Violence Policy is incredibly helpful. “Some research has indicated that the context in which media violence is portrayed and consumed can make the difference between learning about violence and learning to be violent. Plays such as Macbeth and films such as Saving Private Ryan treat violence as what it is—a human behavior that causes suffering, loss, and sadness to victims and perpetrators. In this context, with helpful adult guidance on the real costs and consequences of violence, appropriately mature adolescent viewers can learn the danger and harm of violence by vicariously experiencing its outcomes.”

I have found the most recent research studies focus more on the “loss of good” behavior rather than the “increase of bad” behavior. Research at Loyola University Chicago compared the brains of gamers and non-gamers and results suggest chronic violent gameplay may affect emotional brain processing or ability to show empathy. Additionally, some of the actions players are able to do in the game simulations are concerning; especially with the treatment of women.

Be very familiar with any game your child is playing. Read up about it. Talk to them about it. And if you decide to exclude these games from your home, talk with your teens about why. Here is an encouragement from Philippians 4:8 “Whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.”

And here is an update about our OSU Extension Office. Though all of our staff continue to work from their home offices as we have done since March, we are beginning to open our office for limited hours to the public. Office hours beginning this Friday, July 10 will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

- We ask that you please call ahead of your visit so we can have your items prepared for you.
- We are rotating staff on different days, so calling ahead ensures that the appropriate staff member is there to meet your needs.

- One family will be allowed to come into the office at a time.
- Face masks are required (and we will provide one for you if you do not have one)
- Use of hand sanitizer required and is also provided

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu). Make it a healthy day!