

What you need to know about social skills, media, and children/teens



Center on Media
and Child Health
ASK THE MEDIATRICIAN

How children and teens interact with others is important for their social development and mental health. This tip sheet will help you understand how media can teach both positive and negative social skills. Use this information as a guide to help you choose media that are best for your child.

What do we mean by media?

TV	Internet	Music
Movies	Social Media	Books
Videos	Video Games	Apps

Media use facts

- Some TV shows, movies, and other media with positive messages can teach children to be kind, cooperative, understanding, and helpful, whereas violent media can encourage aggression and fear of others.
- When children and teens see heroes using violence, they learn to use force and bullying to solve problems or arguments.
- Media violence can make children less sensitive to seeing and hearing violent acts, and less likely to speak up or seek help when violence happens in the real world.

What you can do for your children and teens

- Choose media that show positive ways of solving problems and contain messages about listening, sharing feelings, working together, and being kind.
- Limit exposure to media violence by viewing the media ahead of time, or reading reviews and watching trailers.
- Talk to them about what they see and hear in media when it comes to problem solving, and how they talk to and treat their own friends.

Remember

Media are not the problem—it is how we use them that results in help or harm. Mindful and focused media use can be healthy for children and teens.