

AND NOW A WORD FROM THE DOCTOR...

Television – Too Much of a Good Thing?

By David Perlmutter, MD, FACN



We're all familiar with the Nielsen ratings. They're the folks who tell us which television programs are most popular. But their information gathering provides some compelling data about our television habits.

Americans watch, on average, more than four hours of television each day. That means that in a 65-year life span, nine of those years are spent transfixed by the television screen. Children are found to spend an average of 1,680 minutes each week watching the tube, while reports indicate that they spend an average of 3.5 minutes weekly in meaningful conversation with their parents.

But perhaps most distressing is a recent report published in the journal *Neuroscience* indicating that the more television people watch, the more likely they will interpret reality based upon what they see on TV as opposed to what's really going on around them. That is, they function and behave as if what they see on television actually represents the rules of society. So either their world is one big sitcom or an environment filled with violence, again based on what they're watching.

The statistics further reveal that by age 18, the average American has seen 200,000 acts of violence on TV. No doubt this helped prompt the American Psychiatric Association to endorse National TV-Turnoff Week, stating, "We have had a long-standing concern with the impact of television on behavior, especially among children."

Therefore, we would do well to turn off the TV, interact with our families, and gain some real-world experience about what is happening around us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David".