

The MSC issued a comprehensive questionnaire to almost 50 growing Muslimahs aged 11+. The very last question put to them read: ‘What worldly item do you think destroys your relationship with Allah?’ 48 girls answered: ‘TV’



We are certainly living in the times of the screen age– the TV has become another household essential. No dwelling is without one, whether you’re sat in a run down flat, a plush Hotel foyer, a family home in Europe, in a village far from home or even yards away from the splendour of the Kabah. No doubt, the sleek flat screen surround sound TV will happily assist you to unwind, entertain the kids and to frit away the hours after a long and testing day.

Our faithful friend the Television has surprisingly become the focal point in many Muslim homes not only strategically positioned in our living rooms but also in our bedrooms (including the kids), in the kitchen and for some of us long car journeys have become less stressful and manic as we sit back and watch the more compact screen which is embedded in the back head-rests of our car seats.

Could it be that so many of us have invested in the television as we class ourselves as ‘seekers of knowledge?’ As Servants of Allah we are encouraged to seek two kinds of knowledge, true wisdom and the knowledge of Allah swt– hence, if we are honest with ourselves the TV is a far cry from the knowledge which we should have a thirst for.

Why did 48 young girls single out the TV as being the BIGGEST factor which is leading them to drift away from Allah swt? What are the ill effects of TV? There are a host of negative points associated with the TV, yet, in order to keep this piece short and sweet I have only focused on 5 areas.

Time: Time waits for no man– it’s a scary thought but without sounding too technical stats show that the average person watches more than 4 hours of TV each day (or 28 hours/week, or 2 months of non-stop TV-watching per year). In a 65-year life, that person will have spent 9 years of their life glued to the box. How damaging is this to your child when a large part of their childhood is spent motionless watching television? Children's health, motor skills and social development are surely retarded. A day will come when each and everyone of us will be questioned about how we spent our time and what we gained from it: Allah says: ‘*By time! Surely the human being is at loss. Except for those who have faith, and do righteous deeds and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of patience.*’ (Surah Asr).

So, let’s take a moment to view the daily routine of a child / teen who attends school. The average school child is awake for 15 hours (give or take), of which 6 hours are spent away from you whilst they are taught at school, fundamentally by people who do not always share your views and beliefs. Once your child returns home he or she is then (on average) sat in the company of the TV for about 3 hours in total– that’s a total of 9 hours of being indirectly influenced by ‘people’ who don’t share your think tank– the remaining 6 hours are spent getting to and from school, perhaps trekking to the Mosque, attending after school clubs, chilling with their siblings, friends, and of course pretending to do their homework! So how much quality time remains for the young, easily led child to learn from those who love them most– their parents?

Content: As a responsible adult would you allow a child in your care to view, be subjected to or be part of any of the following :

- Would you allow your child to attend a live music concert lasting a number of hours, featuring loud blaring music (along with inappropriate lyrics), scantily dressed musicians and screaming fans?
- Would you allow your child to witness a crime, rape, robbery, shooting, murder etc?
- Would you allow your child to be in the company of those with little shame and immorality, e.g. would you allow them to free mix, witness first hand the ‘enchanted’ atmosphere in a pub, upcoming bar, night club, holiday resort etc?
- Would you allow your child to experiment with drugs, handle a gun, befriend and learn from a gangster?
- Would you allow the same child to sit in the company of those who are intimately engaged?

By ushering our children towards the TV set in hope of getting a bit of peace and quiet, you, as the responsible adult have in fact invited: the pub goer, the musician, the immoral scantily dressed performer, the rapist, the drug user, the bully, the murderer, the thief, the alcoholic, the gangster and not forgetting the love birds and a load of other weirdoes into the MIND and HOME of your child. TV will encourage a new way of thinking for your child, ideas that do not mirror the thinking of that belonging to a righteous Servant of Allah, or indeed the thinking of any sane parent / adult. Unknowingly, we have opened up a door of problems for ourselves as we encourage our children to view these things but expect them not to grow, aspire and take from what they see. The TV is, in fact, assisting your child to become world wise, to try new things, to live the adventures that home life doesn't offer. Why is it that our Muslim youth are constantly battling with their parents? Is it because the TV undermines Islamic family values?

Music: Music is an integral part of TV. No show is complete without music. Islam has forbidden music. It has been reported from Abdullah ibn Mas’ood (ra): *‘Music sows hypocrisy in the heart like water causes seeds to grow in soil.’* (Ad-Durru al-Manthoor, by As-Sayuti– explanation of verse 31:6). A TV viewer is unable to escape the ‘azhan of the shaytaan’ which we will be accountable for.

TV feeds our GREED: Everyone hates a sales rep...right?! The TV has swallowed that sales rep and has led our young-uns to believe that ‘gifts in small packages’ are naff, resulting in added pressure for all you parents out there to deliver at a drop of a hat... some of our kids have adopted the Veruca Salt (you know the brat from Charlie and the Choc factory) mentality of... *‘I want the world, I want the whole world, presents and prizes and sweets and surprises, all shapes and sizes... give it to me...before I scream!’* And as Roald Dahl, my favourite childhood author cleverly put it *‘she was a bad egg!’* TV ads have left us all wanting that much more– it encourages us to live only for the dunya.

TV leads to inactivity: It is a known fact that most kids (and us adults) have become lazy merely because our entertainment has become limited to a screen, be it the TV, the internet or the latest games console. Physical exercise has been replaced with virtual games on the likes of the Nintendo wii.

Our levels of literacy have flown out of the window as often young teens are tucked away in their bedrooms with nothing more than a screen to educate them.

Many of us would say we view TV out of boredom. If channelled in the right way boredom can, and often leads to creativity– unleash your child’s true potential by limiting their viewing hours today!

Zina (Adultery): Allah Ta'ala says in the Quran: '*And come not near to Zina*' (17:32). Here Allah is warning us to stay clear from things and practices which lead to Zina. Yet, despite our beloved Prophet (saw) saying: '*Modesty is part of Faith*' (Tirmidhi) we still find a father, mother, sons and daughters happily sitting together around the TV committing zina of the eyes, ears and zina of the heart.... How? To look at the nudity and evil portrayed on TV constitutes the zina of the eyes. To listen to the immodest and illicit speech of the TV is zina of the ears. Lust which is aroused by the display, discussion of nudity and perversion on the TV screen amounts to zina of the heart—which are all stepping stones to fornication.

Life without TV - can it be done... Of course!

As a child the TV was located in our shared kitchen and lounge. Alhamdulillah it was never an appliance that we glorified, depended on or even resorted to for hours on end. As kids, our parents would annually remove the TV by de-plugging and covering the box at the start of Ramadan. As the holy month sadly drifted away from us our black box would re-appear like the new moon! This was the norm for my siblings and I. As we grew that much older we made a collective decision to eradicate our home of the TV- Alhamdulillah its now been 8 years + since we made this change.

Does living without a TV make me any less in touch with the world? Does it mean I'm boring and unable to connect with others? Does it make me abnormal? NO. In fact I believe it has made me stronger, more independent and able to view things the way I want rather than to be swayed towards a certain mindset. It has left me with more time to concentrate on things that truly matter and has resulted in better relations as we are not just sat there mouth opened and entertained by the TV.

We must realise that Shaytaan is presented to us in many ways and forms- and the TV is one the most accessible and damaging of all. You may say that it's easy for me to say life without TV is easy peazy seeing as I live with a bunch of adults, perhaps, but I have many friends with young children who have also made this decision and are still able to child rear correctly and happily.

The purpose of this piece isn't for all those reading it to pick up a hammer and smash the thing to bits, but rather, for those who don't wish to get rid of the TV (just yet) to consider the following:

1. If you're going to have a TV stick to the ONE! Be sure to place it in a central area for safe viewing by all.
2. Limit the amount of TV per day—designate certain days / hours
3. Keep it switched off at meal times. This will result in happier more interactive more wholesome meal times.
4. Cancel satellite channels—if not all, then some.
5. Don't use the TV as background noise- if it's on you'll soon be tuned in.
6. Use the sleep feature on your television to force the TV to shut itself off after a certain amount of time.
7. Avoid using TV for winding down. Instead, read a book together or allow your child to listen to an audio book.
8. Check TV listings and programme reviews ahead of time—i.e. ensure that they are developmentally appropriate and reinforce your family's values.
9. Choose programmes that foster and enhance interest and learning in hobbies and education—this doesn't include programmes such as EastEnders!

For those of you who like a challenge, trial it , live a week without the waves from your TV– it would be great to hear how you get on!

A few questions to think about...

How many of us remind our children to recite ‘Bismillah’ before that initial morsel but then follow every munch, chomp, gulp etc with the glitz and glamour displayed on the TV?

How many times do we welcome guests into our homes without truly benefiting from their company because everyone is magnetised towards the big screen?

How many times have we viewed something on TV that has led us to utter the words of ‘Istighfaar’ as we were too late to flick the channel over?

Let’s ask ourselves how many times a day do we pick up our copy of the Holy Quran as opposed to stretching and hunting high and low for the TV remote control?

May Allah Ta’ala grant us all tawfeek. May He, (swt) protect us and our children from the perversion and immorality presented to us in all forms and make us amongst those who spend our time in acts that truly please Him (swt).

Muslim Saturday Club

Serving the young Muslimahs of Oxford since ‘97

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