

SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

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- Contrary to popular belief, watching a horror movie with violence and bloodshed does not prepare the child to be brave. It might in fact do the opposite.

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# The Hard Questions

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## Answers to Life's Hard Questions— Are You Ready?

### Dear Joy,

Is it considered okay or even normal for a seven year-old to watch horror movies like “Nightmare on Elm Street”? What effect does this have on a child?



Horror movies, I don't like them—way too gory and violent for me. Some people like to watch them for the excitement or the “thrill” of the scare or to prove it doesn't affect them, thus proving their courage or strength or whatever else they may deem it does for them. I, on the other hand, find enough in daily life to strike fear in my heart and provide all the scare I need.

Children may think they'd like to watch scary media to show they are “big stuff” but as studies show, the effect of these kind of movies and programs linger long after the viewing. Sometimes kids don't have a choice in what is viewed in their home and thus find they may be exposed to violence with a parent watching beside them. Many studies have been done on how this affects children of different ages.

One such study entitled, “Tales from the Screen: Enduring Fright Reactions to Scary Media”, done by the University of Michigan makes the following points: “more than 90% of the study's participants (more than 150 college students at Michigan and Wisconsin) reported a media

fright reaction from childhood or adolescence. Moreover, about 26% still experience a ‘residual anxiety’ today.”

And, according to this study, “the younger the study's participants were when they viewed a scary movie and TV program, the longer-lasting the effects. *In addition, their data provide little support for the popular notion that children who like thrilling media genres will be better able to handle their effects than children who do not like them.*” (Italics added)

In a column of parenting online at [YgoY, Where Else?](#) under the title: [“Can Parents Bring Their Children to Horror Films?”](#) It is stated:

“Some reasons why horror movies aren't good for kids:

- ◆ Children cannot distinguish between fact and fiction
- ◆ The images children see can be retained for a long time
- ◆ Children, while watching the movie, may undergo emotions such as shivering, crying
- ◆ They might avoid certain situations such as swimming, sleeping alone, etc.

Contrary to popular belief, watching a horror movie with violence and bloodshed does not prepare the child to be brave. It might in fact do the opposite. Children may get scared and dread common things such as darkness, sleeping alone, etc. The younger the children, the more they will be influenced by horror flicks. Children get desensitized to the violence and blood, and may imitate the violent character of the film like stabbing, piercing, etc.”

I certainly do not recommend allowing a child to watch horror films alone or even with family members. I know sometimes it may not seem like it, but children are a gift from God and a God-given responsibility to the parents to, “Train up a child in the way he should go and when





*Trying to toughen  
up our children -*

**Bad Idea!**

Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers,  
whatever is true,  
whatever is noble,  
whatever is right,  
whatever is pure,  
whatever is lovely,  
whatever is admirable—if anything is  
excellent or praise-  
worthy—think about  
such things.

he is old he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:5-7. I know when I raised my two, I wanted most of all for them to love God and follow Him and to be productive citizens. I think all of us want that for our kids. I find very few parents who desire that their children wind up in jail or become alcoholics or drug addicts, etc.

As you can see from the excerpts mentioned, horror films and other similar programs usually have long-lasting effects on children even through the teen years. I’ve even seen parents force a child to go through a scary haunted house in order to “toughen” up the child. Bad idea.

But what can we do about it? you may ask. With our own children, of course, we can block these from their television viewing, we can talk to them about the images if they see them elsewhere, and we can comfort them if they do see something scary. Enforcing what they might watch at a friend’s house presents a greater difficulty but talking to the parents and expressing your desires about it may help. I don’t advocate being hard-nosed about it and banning them from watching anything scary. Some kids learn from natural consequences; in other words,

how they feel after seeing something scary. Laying down the law and banning an activity usually serves to pique their curiosity and almost always insures they will try harder to investigate the activity.

All kids are different and react differently to the same thing so wise parents work at knowing each child individually. This is the real meaning of Proverbs 22:5-7. The only way we can train up a child in the way she should go is to know that child well and teach them from that standpoint. We make assumptions sometimes about our kids because of their gender. Boys like this; girls like that. That’s not always true. But we want a boy to be a boy so he will become a strong man and a girl to be girly so she exudes femininity when she’s grown. My advice is to relax, let God guide you in rearing each child so that it fits that child. You’ll be happier and so will he and this fosters a better relationship with each child.

Horror films are not good for children as we’ve seen but as you train your child, adding responsibilities and choices as they are capable of handling them, you slowly allow each child to make their choices as they mature. The best time to do this is when they are under

our supervision so we are there to help them deal with the consequences as they arise. Not to remove the consequences but to help them deal with the natural consequences.

Kids make wrong decisions and choices as they grow. They need their parents to steer them through these and not criticize them for making the wrong choices. After all, we have all made wrong decisions and choices as we have matured—and some even after we think we’re fairly savvy. Keeping our own growth process in mind helps us grow our kids. They may not believe we remember what it was like to be a teenager or ten or six but if we think hard we can conjure up those memories and be the parent our children need.

So if your teen chooses to watch the latest horror flick, don’t panic. Discuss it with them before and afterwards. Watching it yourself (if you can deal with that) gives you good discussion material. Try not to lay on the guilt trip or put on a “holier than thou” attitude; in listening to them and talking about what they’ve seen, you may help them decide horror films are not what they’re cracked up to be.

## RESOURCES & INFO

### Web Sites:

[Scary movies can have lasting effects on children and teens](#)

[The Effects of Watching Horror Movies](#)

[Television Violence: A Review of the Effects on Children of Different Ages](#)

[Halloween Horror Movies May Cause Emotional Problems In Young Children](#)

[The Effects of Horror Movies on Children](#)

HELPING YOU FIND GENUINE JOY!

# G Genuine Joy Ministries

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QUESTIONS????? Write us.

Sometimes you come up with really hard, tough questions that you don't have the answers to.

At times you're too embarrassed or uncomfortable to ask your friends and family... and when you are brave enough to ask the questions, even they don't always have the answers.

You don't think you have anyone that you can talk to... well now you do.

Genuine Joy Ministries is dedicated to helping you find the answers to life's hardest questions.

## Just For Fun

Two blondes walk into a building...  
You'd think one of them would have seen it.



All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.

British Psychologist, Henry Ellis

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[info@genuinejoyministries.org](mailto:info@genuinejoyministries.org)



THE HARD QUESTIONS — DO YOU HAVE ONE?