

## Chaplain's Chat

### Nurturing and protecting the developing brain

The way our kids consume and create media can profoundly affect their mental health and emotional development.

As parents and caregivers we need to be aware of what our children are playing, viewing and reading and be actively involved in ensuring the content is age appropriate for our children.

Maggie Dent has advised **“Developmentally, when children are exposed to violent images too soon it can create mental pathways of hypersensitivity, which potentially could trigger mental health issues down the track. It is so much better to protect our precious children than try to repair the damage done later.”** To read more from Maggie follow this link <https://www.maggiedent.com/blog/horror-movies-gta-and-other-parents-boundaries/> “

### How do I choose age-appropriate content?

A quick tip for books is that in general, the age of the protagonist is the age the book is aimed at. For example, the first three *Harry Potter* books are recommended for ages 8-9 years old but as he gets older in the subsequent books in the series, so does the recommended reading age. The content gets darker and more intense, and is therefore not appropriate for children in primary school.

Another handy hint, is don't be fooled by movies that may 'look' like movies appropriate for children. *Deadpool*, for example, is gory and is not recommended for kids at all. And it is rated MA15+. Always check the ratings as they are there for a reason. We need to look after these precious little minds and not expose them to things they cannot understand or resolve emotionally.

When it comes to the positive side of watching television there is a great article on the “Hey Sigmund” website which is very encouraging about the influence of parents <https://www.heysigmund.com/kids-and-television/?c=69bad7dd98f4>

### Helpful resources

The following sites can help you make informed decisions about your family's entertainment choices.

**The Australian Council on the Children and the Media** provides reviews of movies, apps and games, including gambling content advice, searchable by age and platform. <https://childrenandmedia.org.au/>

**Raising Children Network** has advice about choosing video games, online games and apps. <https://raisingchildren.net.au/>

**Commonsense Media** (US) reviews books, movies, TV shows, video games, apps, music, and websites and rates them in terms of age-appropriate educational content, positive messages/role models, violence, sex, consumerism and profanity, and more for parents making media choices for their children. <https://www.common sense media.org/> ·

**NetAware (UK)** offers a guide to popular social media apps, sites and games, including risks, age recommendations and safety tips <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

· Check age ratings and consumer advice for apps and games on devices your children use: via the App Store or Google Play, and for movies and games, the Australian Classification Board's online database. <https://www.classification.gov.au/>

Finally, I would like to say thank you to Laura Hart for helping me with these wonderful resources and information 😊

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