

# You'll fail if you watch too much TV

By John Madden

What is it about TV that causes us to miss out on life? Even now as I type this in a hotel room in Dallas, the TV is turned on, though presently on mute. It's the cable news channel; I guess I need to keep tuned-in to make sure nothing happens in the world without my knowledge; which is hard to do as they repeat the same news a hundred or more times a day.

When I first came to work in the United States, I was doing some field consulting work with a fellow who had to have the TV on while he worked. It took me a couple of weeks before I could get used to working with that distraction. He needed background noise. Why?

Have you seen how kids are getting fatter and fatter – as are adults? I think it has a lot to do with the need to eat constantly while watching TV. So while we are putting our brains on hold, causing this induced passive state to allow our heads to be deluged with mind-numbing drivel, we have an urgent need to balance that state of misguided euphoria by loading our bodies with gobbles of fat and acid-building foods.

Let's examine some of the ill effects of watching multi-hours of TV:

1. It deadens the brain - unless you're really learning something from programs on stations such as the history channel, national geographic, or public television. Work which needs to be done, whether cleaning out the garage or doing that research that you planned on the Internet, loses any sense of importance or significance while your body is in this almost-prone state. Your mind goes into a self-imposed state of procrastination.
2. It atrophies your body muscles as it *grabs* your body, fastening you to the chair or settee, preventing any form of exercise other than occasional trips to the fridge to maintain the junk food flow.

3. It causes fatigue, rheumatism, and possible arthritis due to lack of blood flow to the various limbs and muscles.
4. It causes depression by accelerating feelings of stress and guilt due to a sense of non-accomplishment

How can you convert from being an unproductive couch potato to a more productive person with a strong sense of well being? Apply these actions:

1. Make a decision to reduce your TV watching by one hour a day for the next week; then reduce it by two hours a week. I'd say turn the TV off all together, but we know that's not going to happen. Eliminate all soaps and get a life of your own!
2. Make a list of all the possible things you can get done in an hour or two. You can read, study, meditate, write a letter to a friend, make your to-do list for tomorrow, sweep the kitchen, do the laundry, get some information you need from the internet, review your life goals and current plans, call a friend to catch up, do some volunteering: read for the blind, tutor adults with literacy difficulties, serve at the homeless shelter, work with Habitat for Humanity.
3. Start a progress log. The first time you chop this hour off your TV time, write in the log book or diary what you did with that hour you just gave yourself – even it was just writing out ideas on how to spend this new free time. Then, each following day, make a new entry. Watch yourself get excited as you record all the things you're getting done, and how you feel so much more satisfied and relaxed when you go to bed – and how easier you sleep, knowing that your days are becoming more fruitful.

**START TODAY!** Don't give up. It'll feel a little weird at first, but it works.

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