



Gift-giving in the Season of Peace:

What can we do about violent video games?

This is a season of gift-giving and the many faiths of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) wish our gifts to be messengers of hope, understanding, love and peace. ICCR and its national coalition of over 275 faith-based institutions are concerned that video games with extreme violence are often the item most likely given or purchased for children and adolescents.

Behavioral science research has warned that playing violent video games increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in children and youth. In many cases, these types of video games encourage and reward players for performing acts of violence and brutality that include beating women, shooting police officers and committing racially motivated acts of violence. Games with extreme violence are labeled for “mature audiences” (ages 17 and older) by the industry ratings board.

The holiday season is a time of celebrating with loved ones the breaking in of light into a troubling and hurting world. Let us be instruments of light. Like the lights that brighten Muslim homes after a month of holy fasting, like the small amount of oil that remained lit for eight days at the Jewish Temple of Divine Service, like the star that guided shepherds and kings to the birth of Christ, like the candles that represent the principles of Kwanzaa – virtues of an exemplary life, let us draw on our spiritual strength, trusting in our enduring power to guide and exemplify the way to peace.

ICCR wants to make sure everyone understands these industry-created standards are put in place to prevent children’s access to violent video games.

WHAT YOU CAN DO?

There are four things you should know before video games are purchased:

1. Know the video game rating symbol (games are labeled with suggested age appropriateness rating symbols such as M-Mature, T-Teen, E-Everyone, etc.)
2. Know the video game content descriptors (the reasons why the game got the rating symbol.)
3. Be aware of T-Teen rated games (13 and over) as the criteria for graphic violence has changed over the years.
4. Know the retailers’ sale’s policies on video games to minors. Talk to the managers of stores that sell video games. Ask what the policies and practices are to prevent children from purchasing violent video games.

Recommended Resources For More Information:

- *Video Game Retailer Chart* (highlights retailers video game policy), <http://www.iccr.org/issues/violence/featured.php> or call ICCR at 212-870-2316
- *National Institute for Media and Family/Video Game Report Card*, annual video game report card (release date 11/20/07), www.mediafamily.org
- “*Virus of Violence*,” a documentary by Lt. Col. David Grossman on video game violence, info@killology.com
- “*Decade of the Child*,” www.pcusa.org/children/peace/violentvideogames.pdf
- *Common Sense Media*, www.common Sense Media.org
- *KidsRisk Guide on Media and Kids*, www.kidsrisk.harvard.edu