that her children consume, she says that there is little she can do about it.

"As the help watches Hindi serials, my six-year old daughter has grown into the habit of watching them with her. I can see how this has a negative impact on my child's creativity, but she refuses to engage in other activities," Shireen adds mournfully.

Most of us are aware that watching TV isn't the healthiest of activities and yet, we give in to the sway of this seductive medium. We are willing to numb our brains and watch the shows that distract us from our daily lives. We don't think twice before introducing our infants to its corrupting charms. Children are found to be spending more and more time plugged into the world of TV even before they are able to string a sentence together.

Working parents like Shireen are often left with no choice but to leave their children under the care of family members or household helps. Children are often left unsupervised in front of the television and given free rein to watch whatever they want to as long as they remain quiet and occupied.

TV Addiction

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that kids under 2 years old not watch any TV at all. The first two years of life are considered to be most crucial for a child's mental development. But as we all know and grudgingly accept, even infants are exposed to more than a couple of hours of TV everyday.

General Secretary of the Bangladesh Paediatric Association, Professor Mohammad Shahidullah, agrees that children under the age of two should be kept away from the TV. Some parents have the terrible habit of plonking their tots in front of the telly without even realising the damaging effect this can have on their initial development.

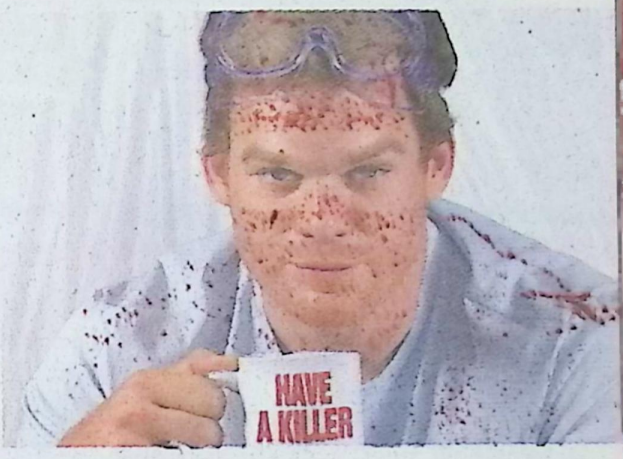
"Many parents have come to me with the complaint that their two-year olds won't speak. It's not like they are speech impaired but there is definitely a speech delay. Most often we find out that the delay in speech is caused because the child spends long hours in front of the TV," says Professor Shahidullah.

Young children can be restless when they are being fed. Parents often don't have the time or patience to indulge in tactics to engage their kids while feeding them. So they just sit their children in front of the TV, knowing full well that this would distract them into eating the food. Parents, however, fail to understand that this action can have a long term effect on their child.

Myesha, a third grader, will only eat if she is watching her favourite show on TV. Her parents have tried to encourage her to eat with them at the dining table but they haven't been able to change the habit.

Her mom informs us that Myesha used to be fed while she watched TV until she was three years old.

"When they are watching their favourite show on TV, children are too distracted to even know what is going in their mouth. Parents often fail to understand that they might be under or over feeding their child. The child will be so busy watching the show that he or she won't even register what is being fed to them," says Mahjabeen Haque, Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology, Dhaka University.



Children become desensitised to real life brutality when they are exposed to violence on shows like "Dexter."



There needs to be more quality TV programmes for children on Bangladeshi channels.

Children who eat in front of the television from a young age are likely to continue this habit into their maturity, thus boosting the child's dependence on TV, says Haque.

Child obesity is a growing concern around the world. Children who watch TV are likely to be overweight or unhealthy. While watching television, children tend to snack as they are inactive and need something to concentrate on. The intervals between shows are filled with ads that encourage kids to snack on unhealthy food like soft drinks or chips that are high in calories, salts and sugars but low in nutritional value.