



Young Media Australia fact sheet

Scary movies: true or false?

It doesn't really matter if parents take young children to scary movies ...

Because children can tell that monsters and things aren't real

False

Actually, children under the age of seven or eight *can't* tell that monsters aren't real. They do not yet have the maturity to understand the difference between fantasy and reality.

Children under the age of seven or eight are convinced by what they see with their own eyes, not by words.

Explanations that appeal to their logic and capacity for rational thought won't work because they may not have these abilities yet.

Even older children, who can tell that certain images aren't real, can nonetheless be disturbed by them.

So long as it all turns out all right in the end

False

Many children under seven or eight don't follow plot lines. They see stories as a series of isolated incidents, and they focus on the immediately scary.

Young children can't tell themselves that it's all going to be all right in the end, as a child over eight often can.

Because children get used to them

False

Young children under seven or eight are unlikely to be able to overcome their fear responses.

Older children may become desensitised to media depictions of violence and horror. Research tells us that, unfortunately, children who become desensitised to such media depictions are also less moved by real life violence and suffering.

Because children will soon get over it

False

For many young children, exposure to scary images will result in those images staying with them for many years.

These internalised images can continue to frighten, cause bad dreams, cause fear of being on their own or cause fear of certain situations through childhood and sometimes into adulthood.

Young Media Australia recommends ...

Always check a movie's rating before taking your child to see it, but remember that the under sevens may still be scared by images in G movies. Use the Young Media Australia Movie Review Service (www.youngmedia.org.au or freecall 1800-700-357) for detailed information about the movie's content and our age recommendations.



For more information about Children and the Media, call the Young Media Australia Helpline

Up to date and reliable information for parents and caregivers about the impact of the media on children.

1800 700 357

Freecall anywhere in Australia, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Or go to the Young Media Australia website

www.youngmedia.org.au

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Young Media Australia has over sixty printed fact sheets about the impact of media on children.

To get a list of available Young Media Australia fact sheets, or to order your copies call the
Young Media Australia Helpline
1800 700 357

You may also download a fact sheet order form from our web site www.youngmedia.org.au or browse the fact sheets in topic format online.

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