

PERRY ELLIS.COM

>SHOP NOW

FREE SHIPPING

SEE SITE FOR DETAILS...

DEBONAIR | MAGAZINE

Search

Home Style Health Travel Toys Money Sex & Relationships Food & Wine Culture Galleries Videos Resources

HEALTH

Home > Health

Taking Your Life Back - A TV Addiction

Posted: Monday, February 05, 2007

By: Donna Sonkin H.H.C., A.A.D.P.



I imagine that there is no twelve-step program for those addicted to television, but if there were I would be in the front row at the meeting and after we said the “serenity prayer” my hand would fly up and I would proclaim, “My name is Donna and I am a television addict.”

I have been struggling with this addiction since age 5. I recall having to watch Don Ho sing “Tiny Bubbles” as he strummed the ukulele. If I was unable to watch him because my mother was vacuuming or some such nonsense I would throw a fit. Arthur Fonzerelli was my crush. I would have done anything to be his Pinky Tuscardero (Leather was too butch for me). At age 6 I begged my mother to invite him to my Barbie birthday party. He did not come (damn him!).

As I grew in age, so did my hunger for the tube. I moved on to harder stuff, the kind of programming that gave me a daily fix. Yes, I speak of re-runs — The Brady Bunch, each day wishing secretly that I shared the little blue bathroom with Marcia, Greg and the whole gang; in junior high, Star-Trek ruled my thoughts and occupied my time with inter-planetary travel and fantasies of me as the sexy blue Martian woman. In high school I would skip plans with my real life friends to hang out with Alex P. Keaton (Family Ties) and dream of Mallory’s fashion advice. My addiction only got worse as I moved through college and eventually got my own place where life afforded me unlimited on demand cable. I was consumed by the endless choices and I fell deeper into the throes of it, watching for 5 hours at a time – watching

PERRY ELLIS.COM



FREE SHIPPING

SEE SITE FOR DETAILS...

>SHOP NOW

Related Articles

[Donna Sonkin's Tips For A Healthy New Year](#)

[Tips and Tools For Living a Stress Free Life](#)

[Dinner For One Alternative - Recipe - Healthy Beef Stew](#)

[The Truth About Marijuana](#)

literally nothing, my thumb working the clicker like a temptress lover, gently at first and at times fierce and furious. The headaches came and I found myself letting the answering machine pick up my calls for fear of missing a single moment.

Then one day I met Andrea Beaman — who, in an ironic twist actually earns a large portion of her income as a TV host and appeared on Bravo's Top Chef. We became fast friends. She noticed my behavior and was the first to utter the words, "Hey, I think you watch too much television." She expressed her view that television was the ultimate time stealer — a robber of life and ideas, an unsolicited attacker to the mind filling the head with needs and desires and all sorts of crazy notions. I saw it all manifesting in my shopping cart at Duane Reade (creams and lotions), or at the super market. There were cans, jars and boxes of 'new and improved' items that I somehow 'needed' to make my home, laundry, and skin softer, fresher, younger.

I began to notice Andrea's mood. She was calm and even-mannered. She ate her meals at the table and went to bed reading the classics. She was a Zen Goddess! I asked her how I could get there. "Well," she replied, taking a long deep inhalation and then lowering her gaze deep through me and with purpose. "Turn off the damn TV." It was as if the heavens pressed open and the angels sang — as if I was being bathed in an angelic light of sorts. "Turn off the damn TV," I repeated aloud and again and again as if in a trance.

That was over a month ago and I have to say that I have accomplished more for my life and business in that month than over entire seasons.

According to the National Institute on Media and the Family, children spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleeping. Almost one in five watch more than 35 hours of TV each week (Gentile & Walsh, 2002). In a national education study, students reported spending 4 times as many hours each week watching television as doing homework (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1990).

Children who are heavy TV viewers (over 3 hours per day), show the greatest decline in reading ability (Reinking & Wu, 1990). Another study found that a television on in the background interferes with the retention of skills and information during homework time (Armstrong, 1991).

In his article, *Is your television viewing killing you slowly? Reclaim your life from the TV set* (Nov. 10, 2003), Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, Director, Chronic Disease Control, Alaska Division of Public Health, states that, "On average, American adults now watch more than four hours of television per day.

That's four hours wasted every day, four hours squandered on gaping into the vapid, make-believe world of the little screen.

That's four hours not spent talking with loved ones, helping kids with homework, volunteering in one's community or doing any of the wonderful things that bring meaning to life. That's one-sixth of your time on earth." What can you do?

1. **Stop surfing:** look at the TV guide and give yourself a TV allowance of one — two hours per week. This will allow you to get your fix of the Law and Order franchise and still be productive.

2. **Unplug the TV:** I found this very helpful over the first few days — as my normal habit was to tell myself the lie that I was just "tuning on New York 1 to see what the weather is — the reality is that New York 1 has a phenomenal website and the time and temperature is easily visible in the upper left hand corner. Basically, if you unplug the T.V. you are forced to think twice before watching.

3. **Start reading:** or writing or cooking or working out or any number of industrious things, the kind of things that you have been "putting on the back

burner”; the things that you have wanted to do for years but procrastinate in favor of Judge Judy. You can use the new found money you save on cable to rent a car and go fishing with the guys or take your girl to a bed and breakfast.

Your life is waiting for you! Go get it! Sure, I have sat at a T.V. over these past couple of weeks but it has been to watch a DVD. A good idea is to log on to <http://www.afi.com/tvevents/100years/movies.aspx> and start renting the AFI 100 greatest American movies of all time films like *Casablanca*, *Citizen Kane*, *Lawrence of Arabia* or *Chinatown*, to name a few. You could make it a weekly social event, have your buddies over for a potluck movie night — or a movie night beer tasting where everyone brings a different beer and gets hammered. You get the idea. The bottom line: “Turn off the damn TV!”

If I can do it, anyone can. I have not partaken in any mindless surfing in over a month and I feel at peace, still, calm. I feel, well, Zen.



Donna Sonkin H.H.C., A.A.D.P.

Donna Sonkin is a Certified Holistic Health Counselor accredited with the American Association Of Drugless Practitioners. Donna’s **“Get Thin For The Camera”** program is devoted to helping actors, models and performers of all types achieve their optimum weight through a ‘whole food nutrition’ approach.

[Check out Debonair Videos - Music, Movie Trailers, Travel Tips & More](#)

[Our Mission](#) [This Month](#) [Media Kit](#) [Who We Are](#) [The Swag Bag](#) [Ask the Debonairs](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

[Sitemap](#)

© Copyright 2007, Debonair Magazine - Hertzman Media Group, LLC. Powered by BlueSwitch.