

[Games that Kill](#)

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Games that Kill

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Nintendo - it's a toy, but it's not a game. Toys real influence in shaping young minds and emotions, more than parents realize. When kids play in an open field or in the woods, they are experiencing nature, and learning how to relate to natural things. So many messages are going into their minds, so much information is being absorbed. It's very different when our kids spend their hours alone with the popular video games like Nintendo, which work within the subterranean stratum of the subjective mind, aligning the vasanas of the chitta to kill, kill, kill.

Nintendo - it awakens the desires to succeed through intimidation and force. Nintendo - it teaches kids that the world is full of enemies to be slain, opponents to be conquered, attackers to be attacked first. Nintendo - it complements a strategy to develop a nation of terrorists within every home that harbors this asuric mechanism.

To develop sattvic youth, we have recently asked moms and dads and the youths themselves to disarm themselves of toy guns and knives, and of Nintendo and all other kinds of computer, killer games. Among the families in our fellowship, this has been accomplished. Lots of seven-year-old kids have burned their guns and dismantled or sold their Nintendos in the name of ahimsa, the dharmic principle of not harming others - even in one's mind, even in one's dreams - physically, mentally or emotionally. The big Nintendo and Genesis and all the little similar computer and video games and toy guns and knives and cannons are out the doors of my followers' homes. Instead of learning the "us versus them" world, our children are learning about the "us helping them" world of cultured society. It took a little courage, because these games are amazingly popular. But our homes have all been disarmed, with no more violence for fun. How about yours?

These video and computer games, as well as toy guns and knives and other weapons of destruction, educate children that this is the way to live on planet earth. They learn - to solve a problem, "bang, bang you're dead." You don't have to reason with anyone, negotiate, compromise or use any form of intelligence. "Bang, bang, you're dead" solves the problem. Playing like this hour after hour teaches children that life is cheap. Those with the "bang-bang-you're-dead" subconscious mind - how will they ever learn that life is precious?

The subconscious mind consists of all of our memory patterns. It is a rather dumb state, for it contains and holds only that which is put into it. These memory patterns are like a cassette tape, which for a baby freshly born has nothing upon it at first. But with that first cry, the subconscious is activated and begins to record all the impressions. Those that get there first are shaping the experiences of later life.

Of course, there are positive and creative computer games. But not that many. More are needed. Perhaps there are among our readers programmers who could develop a series of games based on dharma. That would be nice, Or you could call Nintendo, as our staff did this week, and ask them to market more games that teach kids in interesting ways. Their phone number in Seattle, Washington, is (206) 882-2040.

In the meantime, we may think a Nintendo game or a toy gun is harmless because it actually does not kill anybody. But what it does do is give permission to kill and makes preparations to kill and that is very dangerous. Survival and conquest become the goals. Vocabulary develops and little ones are speaking of invasion, commandos, assault, combat, war, battle and all the words of hurtfulness. No wonder they argue with sisters and brothers instead of getting along. That's what they learned from their heroes.

A Sri Lankan citizen told me a story that shows that war toys and real-life conflict are not unrelated. For generations there were no war toys in the Hindu communities of north and eastern Sri Lanka. But when the ethnic clashes began in 1983, guns became popular among kids. They played soldier and Tiger in the streets, like the big boys. And when they grew up moved on to real guns. Toy imports from Europe supplied the need, and soon many homes had a "gun" collection.

When the Sinhalese army moved through homes looking for hidden arms, they were sometimes fooled by the realistic looking plastic toy guns. It caused them so much trouble they took to beating the men of households which had toy guns, and soon the toys became less popular. So the toys' world and the real world are not always separated.

Nintendo is a small, Japanese-produced video computer system that plays a variety of-arcade-type game tapes. A new book from Harvard University Press called *Video Kids: Making Sense of Nintendo* focuses on the above issues. The author, Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., says these games are excessively sexist and aggressive, making them a "powerful and largely negative cultural influence." Another book, *Boys Will Be Boys: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence*, was just published by Doubleday. In it Myriam Miedzian discusses how our culture, lacking nurturing fathers and examples of conflict resolution, encourages violence among boys.

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