

**TV TURNOFF WEEK AND BEYOND**  
**By Rev. Deborah Ann Bourbon, R.N.**

National TV Turnoff Week, the last full week of April, is an opportunity to fully experience our lives free from TV. During this one week free from programming we are all encouraged to discover our talents, share our ideas and time with others, and make the most of our valuable personal time. For many of us TV has become a background habit, a babysitter or a mind-numbing entrancer that disturbs our independent thought and fills our society with ideas and values that are detrimental and disempowering. So for the last full week of April, we make the effort to step free from TV.

As we enjoy a week of activities and interaction with friends and family, TV does drift to the background. We find that household tasks can be enjoyable with background music, that hobbies can give us a sense of fulfillment, that spending time outside helps us feel more in tune with Mother Nature. Freeing ourselves from the rut of TV opens up a great deal of time for personal improvement and enjoyment.

But what happens after National TV Turnoff Week? What have we learned from our week? Now that we have distanced ourselves from the media, what can we see more clearly? Hopefully we've discovered that there are many better alternative activities for free time than TV. Now that we have realized the power of the "OFF" button we have learned that we can easily censor media that has a content that is not in line with our values or programming that is violent or sexually exploitive. We can teach our children to be critical of the frequent gender stereotyping, risky sexual attitudes and media hype that can be so persuasive to the passive, accepting viewer. We can view desired programs on videotape. This way the tape can be stopped for discussion and we can fast forward through the commercials. We have learned that we have the power to control what comes into our homes and into our minds. We have taken back our independent thoughts and attitudes. We have reclaimed choice in our lives.

While TV does offer some useful information and healthy entertainment, we have learned to be selective with our use of our free time. We have discovered that there is a world of potentials and possibilities that is awaiting our interest as well. We have entered into a new chapter in our lives, one of independent free will and conscious choices. Congratulations on making the most of National TV Turnoff Week!

For more information and to organize a TV Turnoff campaign in your local school, library, church, or community group contact: TV-Free America, 1611 Connecticut Avenue, NW #3A, Washington, DC 20009, tel 202/887-0436, fax 202/518-5560, [tvfa@essential.org](mailto:tvfa@essential.org), [www.tvfa.org](http://www.tvfa.org).