

## ***YOUR CHILD AND MEDIA***

Do you remember your childhood? Did you play board games with your siblings, friends or parents? Did you invent games to play outdoors? Did you entertain yourself on a long car ride by playing “I spy” or reading a book? Did you build a campsite out of old blankets and boxes? Did you ever explore a park, collect bugs, and bring them home for observation? Before the “electronic age”, children’s activities allowed their brains to develop problem solving skills, promoted creativity, and encouraged children to explore nature.

Screen time decreases the time spent on other, more worthwhile activities. A child who is watching a screen, is not spending time...

Communicating personally with others (parents, siblings, friends)

Reading

Thinking creatively / problem solving

Relaxing / reviewing the day

Exercising (unless using a Wii)

Unfortunately most children now spend a significant amount of time in front of a screen - whether watching television, playing video games, or using the computer for email and social networking sites. Research continues to document the detrimental effects that this “screen time” has on children and adolescents.

**TELEVISION** – Children and adolescents who watch more than 2 hours of television a day, are more likely to:

1. Eat more unhealthy snacks
2. Exercise less
3. Be obese
4. Have higher cholesterol levels
5. Sleep less than the recommended 10 – 12 hours a night
6. Have learning difficulties in school
7. Have difficulties paying attention in school
8. Participate in high risk behaviors as an adolescent – initiate drinking and sexual activity at younger ages
9. Act aggressively toward others

**VIDEO GAMES** - Children and adolescents who spend more time playing video games (especially violent games) are more likely to:

1. Have difficulties paying attention in school
2. Act aggressively toward others
3. Interpret others’ behaviors more negatively
4. Respond more violently when confronted

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES – Adolescents who spend time on social networking sites are more likely to:

1. Experience cyber bullying
2. Develop a misconception of friendship
3. Have difficulty interpreting others' emotions
4. Be exposed to messages promoting unhealthy behaviors; be exposed to pornography
5. Become narcissistic
6. Have a shorter attention span
7. Need instant gratification
8. Have poor grades

### ***IS IT WORTH IT? CONTROL YOUR CHILD'S ACCESS TO MEDIA***

#### ***TELEVISION:***

1. LIMIT THE TIME YOUR CHILD WATCHES TV or PLAYS VIDEO GAMES TO 1 HOUR A DAY.
2. Turn the television off during meal times
3. Do not allow your child or adolescent to have a television or computer in the bedroom
4. Watch television with your child so you know what programs your child is watching and what lessons your child is learning. Every TV program and video game will teach your child something. Think about what the program is teaching and choose programs that support your family's values.
5. Ask your child questions while watching the program. Does he understand what is happening? Does he think things like that really happen? Young children often cannot understand the story's idea – they just see the action.
6. Avoid violent programs and video games. If you see unnecessary violence, ask - "Are there better ways to solve the problem?"
7. Explain commercials to your child. Commercials are made to encourage us to spend money. Children can understand that we do not need a certain product to really be happy. Ask your child, "Do you think having that will make us any happier?" "Do you think that toy comes with everything you see in the commercial?"

#### ***VIDEO GAMES***

1. Video games have a rating system. Make sure you know the rating of the games your children are playing.
2. Video games often become more violent at the higher levels. Make sure you have watched the games your child plays, especially at the higher levels
3. Be careful of allowing your child to play video games linked to the Internet

4. Limit the amount of time your child is allowed to play games to 30 minutes. (Playing video games can become an addiction.)

Be a good role model in your use of media:

**-Turn off your smart phone / television / computer during meal times.**

-Don't text / talk on cell phones and drive.

-Don't hand your smart phone to your toddler or preschooler to entertain her. Think of "old-fashioned" ways / non technological ways to distract her. (Make up stories, sing songs, carry books with you)

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