

SCREEN TIME AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Presented by Wildflowers Children's Therapy

FEATURED THIS MONTH:

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YOUR BRAIN ON SCREEN TIME

According to the Institute of Child Psychology, young teens in our society are spending between 10-12 hours on technology every day. Additionally, diagnoses of ADHD, autism, developmental delays, learning difficulties, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders are associated with technology overuse and are increasing at an alarming rate. While engaging in screen time, our brain releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter that plays a role in how we feel pleasure. It makes us happy! This is the same neurotransmitter involved in how we feel when we engage in any type of activity that we enjoy, such as eating our favourite food, watching a funny movie, or being surrounded by people we love. It is also highly addictive and can be seen in more serious ways such as in gambling disorders and alcoholism. Human nature dictates that when something makes us feel pleasure, we want it even more. This is also true for screen time and social media. When we get a text message it makes us feel happy and essentially, we want to receive more text messages! Our society is becoming addicted to devices and how they are making us feel. When our brain becomes accustomed to feeling a certain way, such as how we feel when we are on any technology device, it begins to crave it even more. Over time, we require more to make us feel that same level of happy.

Children are becoming more attached to technology than to their parents/caregivers. Children require touch, movement, and human interaction beyond the screen. When we use touch, eye contact, and interaction with our children it activates their parasympathetic nervous system, meaning it calms them down and makes them feel centered and content. With technology, we activate the sympathetic nervous system, which is the body activating system. It is essentially the "gas pedal" which is why as parents we often see huge meltdowns when we take our child's screen time away.

Have you ever watched a young child on a device? Do you notice they often do not blink? Does it seem like they are staring blankly or maybe appear to be hyper focused on what is happening on the screen? This is because when our brain sees or hears something it does not recognize, like dancing letters, it focuses on it until it determines it is not a threat. Not to mention, the younger the child, the more underdeveloped and confused their brain is about the content on the screen! Making them "zone in," (or zone out), even more.

The reality is, technology is a large part of our world. It can have valuable uses too for many individuals, such as communicating with loved ones far away, easy access to information, and allows for more efficient and productive approaches to medical research. As with everything, moderation is key. Do not let your child's relationship with their device become more important than their relationship with you.

QUICK TIPS AND TRICKS

- If your child is playing a virtual game or APP encourage your child to also practice performing the same or similar type of task in real life. For example play a board game or make a puzzle with your child.
2. Keep computers, lap tops, iPads and cell phones in accessible places in the homes so that they can be supervised.
 3. Use technology as a free-time reward.
 4. Parents/caregivers generally "own" the internet so it can always be turned off if rules are not followed.
 5. Lead by example. Put phones away at meal times, bed times and during family time.
 6. Engage in your child's screen time; asking them questions, taking turns, make comments, having a conversation about the video or game
 7. If you cant engage during, engage after by asking them about what they were watching or playing
 8. Balance screen time with real games

Schedule times in your child's day for screen time. Requests for screen time outside of those times are not fulfilled by the parent. Use the American Academy of Pediatrics Media Time Calculator - healthchildren.org/mediauseplan to help plan your child's day and create a visual for yourself and older children to see their day.

A Pediatrician discusses screen time and the speed of a flashing screen - TedX - Media and Children - <https://tedxseattle.com/talks/dimitri-christakis-media-and-children/>

CANADIAN PEDIATRIC SOCIETY

Minimize screen time:

- Screen time for children younger than 2 years is not recommended.
- For children 2 to 5 years, limit routine or regular screen time to less than 1 hour per day.
- Ensure that sedentary screen time is not a routine part of child care for children younger than 5 years.
- Maintain daily 'screen-free' times, especially for family meals and book-sharing.
- Avoid screens for at least 1 hour before bedtime, given the potential for melatonin-suppressing effects.

Mitigate (reduce) the risks associated with screen time:

- Be present and engaged when screens are used and, whenever possible, co-view with children.
- Be aware of content and prioritize educational, age-appropriate and interactive programming.
- Use parenting strategies that teach self-regulation, calming and limit-setting.

As a family, be mindful about the use of screen time:

- Conduct a self-assessment of current screen habits and develop a family media plan for when, how and where screens may (and may not) be used.
- Help children recognize and question advertising messages, stereotyping and other problematic content.
- Remember: too much screen time means lost opportunities for teaching and learning.
- Be reassured that there is no evidence to support introducing technology at an early age.

Adults should model healthy screen use:

- Choose healthy alternatives, such as reading, outdoor play and creative, hands-on activities.
- Turn off their devices at home during family time.
- Turn off screens when not in use and avoid background TV.

SAFE SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Limiting Time on Apps

- Apple
- Open settings
 - Select screen Time
 - App Limits
 - Add Limits
 - Follow the instructions on the screen to set daily limits.
- Android
- Open the Family Link app
 - Select your child.
 - On the "Daily limit" card, tap Set up or Edit limits.
 - Follow the instructions on the screen to set daily limits.

Guided Access

- Apple
- Open settings
 - Tap General
 - Tap Accessibility
 - Guided Access on
 - Set a passcode
 - Open desired app
 - Triple-click the home button
 - Tap guided access
 - Tap start
- Android
- Open the settings app.
 - Tap Security & Location- Screen Pining
 - tap the screen pinning toggle switch
 - Open the desired app
 - Tap the square app switcher icon
 - Tap the thumbtack Screen Pining icon

AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PERSPECTIVE ON APPS AND TECHNOLOGY

Everyone knows that technology is a powerful tool. However, with all things, there needs to be a balance and a purpose for technology. Children are very easily seduced by the amazing visual, auditory, novel and fun experiences that technology provides. As a result it can be all consuming and everything else may appear dull by comparison.

Apps can be very beneficial in conjunction with active therapy to teach, practice and engage in various skill building activities. Applications include: visual stimulation, auditory stimulation, visual motor, visual perception, printing, sensory processing, relaxation, social skill building, communication and social stories etc.

It important to remember that there is no APP that can replace the actual performance of an activity or skill in everyday life! For example if you can build a puzzle in one of the game Apps, this does not mean you will be able to build the same puzzle on a table in front of you! This too applies if you were learning to make letters using one of the printing APPs, you still may not have the necessary skills to print on a piece of paper with a pencil. However, you may have obtained more knowledge and skill on how to print from practicing with the APP.

Advantages

- Easily accessible, take anywhere
- No mess
- Able to track progress
- Gradable- increased level of difficulty
- Skill Building, standardized instructions and set patterns of teaching
- Multi-sensory-auditory, visual, some tactile
- Lots of reinforcement
- Highly Stimulating
- Many different choices

Disadvantages

- Usually played independently or in chat room setting (limited social engagement)
- Can be highly addictive, consumes large portions of time
- Relies largely on auditory, visual and tactile stimulation (often very repetitive)
- May be difficult to generalize skills into real life activities
- Real life activities look boring and less interesting
- Safety concerns related to privacy, unsupervised content and contact
- Repetitive exposure to explicit language, content and violence with certain games

Music Therapy Perspective

- 1.) **Keep it Simple**- Songs that are repetitive can be crowd pleasers! Ring around the Rosie, farmer in the dell, or pick your favourite tune to sing. Don't worry children will not understand if mom or dad is tone deaf, sing anyways
- 2.) **Incorporate their Name**- Little ones love to hear their name in a song ex. Shake! Shake! Susie shakes her sillies out.
- 3.) **Rhythm**- Kids respond to rhythm, slow down, speed it up and go as fast as you can! Eg. Row row row your boat moving back and forth go very slow...very fast, make it a game.

Extended periods of time of (background) music, heAr is the scoop!
More than 30 minutes of music and our brains start to work to shut off background noise. If it isn't the focus of what you are doing, try playing music in the morning for 30 minutes, set it on a timer then turn it off. Maybe do another 30 minutes in the room later in the day if you are looking to get up and move with your child.



CHILDREN'S THERAPY

APPS AND RESOURCES

- Night and Day Studios, Inc - Peekaboo Pack (Barn, Forest, Wild, Presents, Fridge)
- PlayHome Software Ltd - My PlayHome Series (Home, Hospital, School, Stores)
- Development Studio- Toca Boca Series
- PlayDate Digital- Mr. Potato Head: School Rush
- Education- What's the Pic Articulation
- Education- Fun with Directions