



UNPLUG WITH YOUR CHILD!

The average child spends five hours a day “plugged in” to a television, computer or video game for entertainment. In the course of a year, that can mean they’re spending more time in front of a screen than they are in school! The American Medical Association recommends that children under the age of 2 not be allowed to have any screen time, and that children 2 and older—even teenagers—have no more than two hours every day. **Set boundaries today and unplug with your children!**

WHEN IS MY CHILD “PLUGGED IN”?

When adding up your family’s screen time, remember to include:

- television
- movies (at home & theater)
- DVD player in the car
- Internet
- email
- instant messaging
- video games
- handheld games
- texting on phones

There are so many negatives when children watch too much TV, communicate too much via email and online chats, and play too many video games:

Health problems and weight gain: Children who watch more than five hours of television a day are four times more likely to be overweight. When a child sits in front of a TV, those are hours he or she is NOT being physically active. TV and online advertisements also heavily market junk foods to their young audiences.

Behavioral issues, such as aggression: TV and video games—which often glorify violence and expose even young children to sexual situations—are risk factors for violent behavior in children. They can cause aggression and anti-social behavior, create a false sense of reality and encourage irresponsible sexual activity.

Isolation and boredom: Simply put, a child alone in front of a TV, computer or game console is a child NOT talking with their parents, studying for a test or playing outside with siblings and friends. As TV becomes a habit, we lose the time (and opportunity) to bond with our children and enjoy quality time together at the end of our busy days.

UNPLUG TODAY WITH THESE 7 SIMPLE STEPS:

1. Record your child’s time being “plugged in” for a week. You may be shocked by how quickly it adds up!

2. Decide on new guidelines WITH your kids (such as 2 hours per day).

3. Find new ways to fill the time. Go outside, get books from the library and develop family-focused ways to unwind, such as a weekly game night in place of a weekly TV show.

4. Set an example. Don’t use the TV as background noise or constantly check your email, and turn off TV during meals—daily conversations over dinner are a great way to bond.

5. Remove all TVs, computers and gaming devices from your child’s bedroom. Period.

6. Don’t use TV or video games as a reward or punishment.

7. When your child DOES watch TV or surfs the Internet, do it WITH them if possible, or talk about their activity after they’re done. Being there for them can change the way they interpret what they’re watching.

8. Explain what commercials are to your children. Focus on the fact that every ad is trying to sell a product and make them want something that they don’t necessarily need.



Parenting can be tough, but asking for help doesn’t have to be. *If you need help with other parenting challenges, reach out!*

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