

Olson Huff Center

2019 Quality Improvement Projects

Managing Digital Media Use

This broad effort was focused on prevention of media addiction in children and promoting healthy use of media in children and families. Activities included:

- Researching known effects of media exposure on children's social and emotional development
- Reviewing existing guidelines and resources for families and clinicians
- Surveying parents' knowledge and attitudes regarding media use in their children
- Determining priorities for prevention, intervention and management
- Developing products and resources on this topic for dissemination and training

Helpful professional resources/guidelines:

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162591>

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162592>

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162593>

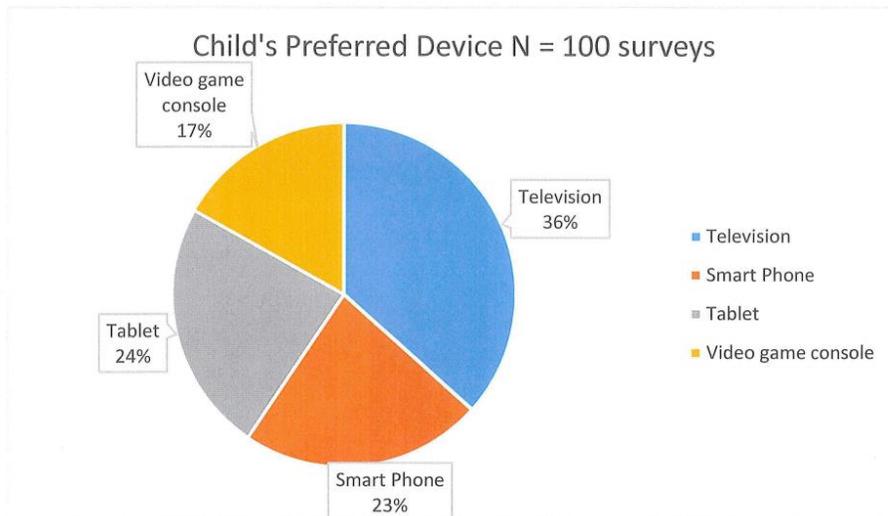
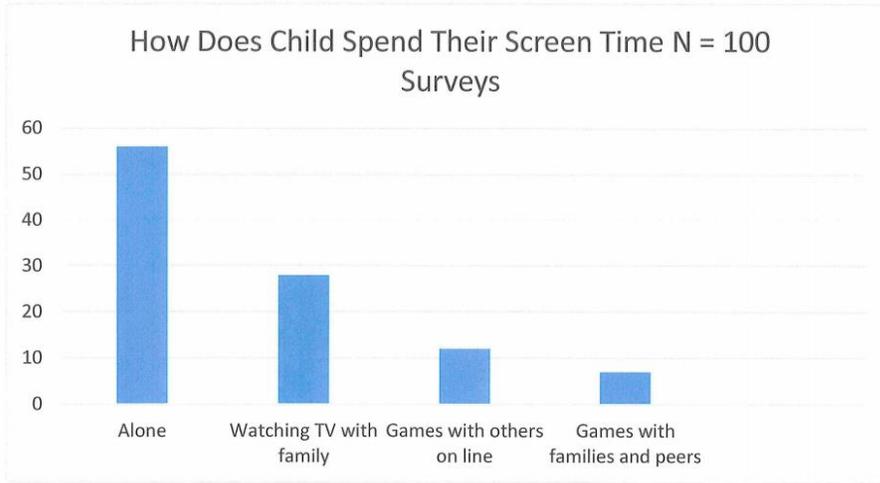
Relevant resources for parents:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/04/24/who-infants-under-year-old-shouldnt-be-exposed-any-electronic-screens/?utm_term=.fbd2db4e69ab

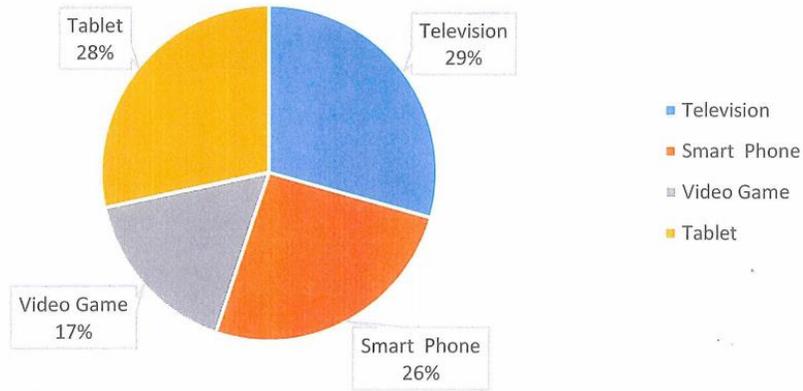
https://childmind.org/article/healthy-limits-on-video-games/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=strategy%20for%20getting%2C%20and%20keeping%2C%20gaming%20under%20control&utm_campaign=Weekly-07-09-19

Results of the OHC Survey on Media Use

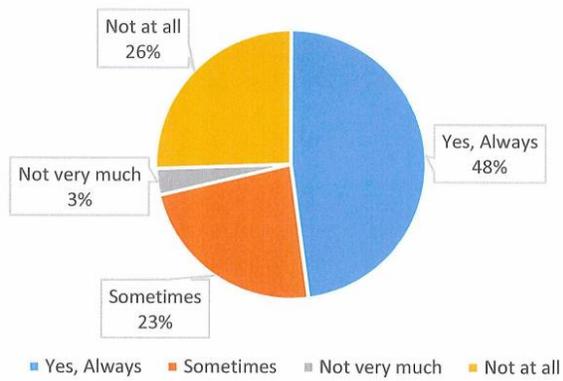
We conducted a survey of our own clinic population, including 100 children with autism and other developmental disabilities. Key results are shown here:



Use of Parental Controls N = 100



Do You Discuss Screen Time with Child N = 100



Media Use, Anxiety and Depression in Children

Our survey indicated that a significant number of children have had an increase in anxiety related to content they encountered through media use. Previous studies have shown that anxiety and depression have been correlated with high levels of screen time. Young people who spend seven hours or more a day on screens are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression or anxiety as those who use screens for an hour a day. Among preschoolers, high users of electronic media are twice as likely to often lose their temper and 46 percent more likely to not be able to calm down when excited.

Anxiety and depression may be due to the following:

- Tweens see “airbrushed” models on Instagram and other social media sites or see friends doing something fun without them and perceive their lives as unglamorous and boring.
- Young children can run into scary pictures and videos even on “child friendly” sites such as YouTube Kids.
- Earlier studies have shown an association between sedentary behavior and anxiety and depression. Most screen time is sedentary which may lead to anxiety and depression. Limited physical activity can also lead to obesity which can lead to lower self-esteem.
- Cyber bullying can occur not just through social media such as texting, *Instagram* and *FaceBook* but can also occur with interactive video games which are thought to promote social interactions.
- Children can create a cycle of avoidance by using games, TV, or phones to avoid dealing with the challenges of anxiety, depression, or another mental health disorder.
- Family conflict related to excessive screen time can also fuel mood disorders. Children become depressed and anxious when not allowed to participate in their favorite activities.
- Excessive screen time can lead to low productivity which can further lead to low self-esteem.
- Children who use screens excessively may have parents who do the same thing. Depression may be fueled by feelings of abandonment by parents.

Use of Timers and Schedules

Given our survey results, and the difficulty with change seen in ASD, combined with strong preferences for certain topics/activities (such as video games), it is no surprise that leaving a preferred activity can pose challenges for the child and family. Of the 100 returned survey, 41% of parents/caregivers noted that their child “Sometimes” has difficulty leaving screen time, and 22% said, “Yes, always” the child has difficulty, or nearly 2/3 of the children. Because of the immersive nature of some games, children can easily withdraw into them in an “escapist” fashion, and will protest leaving them to participate in the perhaps more mundane (but vastly more important) aspects of daily life. To help with this, use of two tried and true structured strategies, schedules and timers, can be applied from a young age.

Building certain times for media into the daily schedule:

- Schedule television times into periods or “sessions” (beginning and ending times) when possible. Denote start and stop time with visuals. Use of a “Stop sign” visual or a “TV finished” cue may be used to help let the child know the television time is over.
- Allow the child to make choice of *what* (among what you deem allowable) they would like to watch to offer some control in the process.
- Depict the activity entry on a schedule (free premade picture schedule sets are available through our Family Support Network (FSN))
- Schedule shorter sessions of video game play in 20-30 minute increments (timed with a visual timer such as the *Time Timers* (www.timetimer.com) or a visual timer app on a phone. Practice with starting and stopping game play will be enhanced and strengthened with many more opportunities to leave and later return to play as opposed to longer marathon sessions (where only one transition may occur). Practice with coming and going from the games will help your child
- Remind your child at the time of leaving, that “You can have another session in a while. Let’s put it on the schedule or write down the time when you can watch TV, or play your game.”

Visuals to use with this procedure include:

Start and Stop Cards

Stop signs (to cue when it is time to Stop==use of visual to supplement your verbal directive

Video game schedule cards [Minecraft, etc.] (to show when during the day session(s) occur

Tablet charging cards (to indicate tablet is not available)

Sample of how to indicate what is appropriate versus not appropriate content

A colleague recently said that video games are “sticky like *Velcro* or taffy, they pull you in!” The tips above may serve to reduce the “stickiness” of these fun, but potentially addicting pastimes for kids.

Examples of Visuals for Media Use in ASD (Feel free to share with families, or have the cut out and use with their child/teen!!)

Stop, please



Start time: _____

Stop time: _____



Stop, please



Start time: _____

Stop time: _____



Stop, please



Start time: _____

Stop time: _____



Stop, please

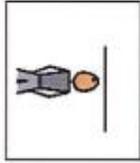


Start time: _____

Stop time: _____



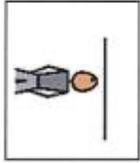
Video game turn taking



__ minutes



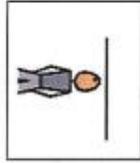
__ minutes



__ minutes



__ minutes



__ minutes



__ minutes



VIDEO GAME PLAY

OK

**SOON
NEED
TO
STOP**

**TOO LONG
YOU NEED
TO
STOP**

STOP

YOUTUBE VIDEOS AND WEB SITES



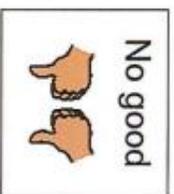
OKAY TO LOOK AT



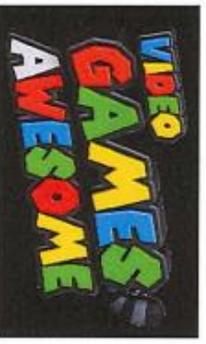
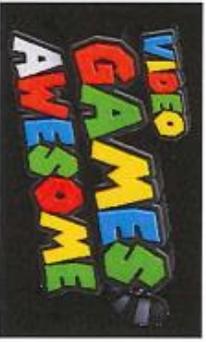
- Nice words
- Nice pictures
- For your age



NOT OKAY TO LOOK AT



- Naked pictures
- Weapons
- Fighting
- Bad words
- Cuss words
- For adults

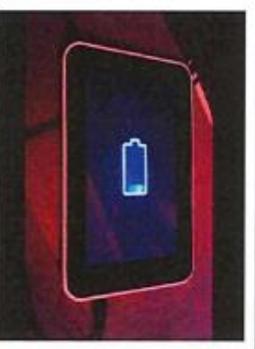
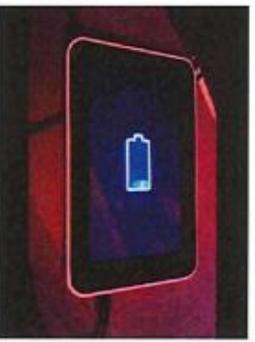
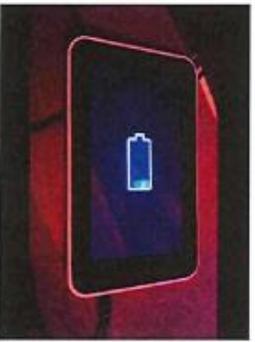


Generic game

Generic game

Generic game

Generic game



Tablet charging now

Tablet charging now

Tablet charging now

Tablet charging now

Promoting Social Interaction and Language

Our parent Survey of media use indicates that our pediatric population, which is primarily young children, spends a good proportion of screen time involved in solitary activities. We are concerned that this may interfere with appropriate social and language development in young children. Parents need to limit solitary screen time and encourage activities that promote social interactions and language skills. These can include:

- Watching age appropriate and family oriented movies and television shows and engaging children in conversation about what they are watching.
- If children are engage in solitary play, their parents can observe, show interest and ask them questions about what they are playing or watching.
- Adventure games that have a narrator who reveals the story as the game progresses can help improve listening skills. They can also encourage paying attention. Sesame Street's *Once Upon a Monster* (<https://www.amazon.com/Sesame-Street-Once-Upon-Monster-Xbox>) is one such game. *Zoo Tycoon* (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/zoo-tycoon-ultimate-animal-collection>) lets children get close to animals as they follow instructions and learn to care for animals.
- Games that are played online with other players encourage verbal communication; however, these need to be closely monitored to assure that parents know with whom their child is playing. *Little Big Planet* (<https://littlebigplanet.playstation.com/>) is a multi-player game that encourages interaction. Players can talk to each other online, as they work together to complete tasks throughout the game. *Monkey Quest* (<https://www.mmogames.com/game/monkey-quest/>) is another multi-player game played online. It's geared toward families. Together, family members learn to communicate with each other and work as a team.
- Certain adventure games can improve reading skills by have story line that is fun and entertaining to read. *Animal Crossing* (<https://animal-crossing.com/>) is a game that presents ongoing written requests that need to be followed to earn gifts. *Reader Rabbit* (<http://www.reader-rabbit.com/>) is a collection of simple games and puzzles that are designed to teach reading and spelling skills even for very early readers.
- Simulation games often present new words which need to be understood to progress in the game. *SimAnt* (<https://www.myabandonware.com/game/simant-the-electronic-ant-colony-197>) is a game geared for younger players that involves learning new words. *SimFarm* (<https://www.freegameempire.com/games/SimFarm>) is another game that expands a child's basic vocabulary.

- There is a significant amount of literature which indicates that video games can be an excellent way of learning a second language.

Of course, nothing can replace sitting and reading a book with your child!



Prevention of Media and Technology Addiction

Many parents worry about the effects of media and technology on their child's growth and development. Studies continue to show that parents are right to worry. Unhealthy exposure has been associated with learning difficulty, language and social delays, behavioral symptoms, obesity and sleep problems. There is much, however, that you can do to help your child become successful.

Do

- Make a PLAN, strike a BALANCE, be a ROLE MODEL
(visit healthychildren.org/mediauseplan)
- Question the value and quality of media content
- Teach your child to transition off electronic devices without your direct intervention
- Ask: "How does this nurture my child?"
- Assist your child to find a healthy balance between school, homework, afterschool activities, chores, friends, alone time and media use
- Monitor your child's media content and what apps are used or downloaded
- Utilize parental controls and privacy settings
- Choose prosocial content over violence
- Model the media usage habits you seek to instill in your child

Don't

- Abdicate your parental responsibility
- Presume that media content is appropriate or high quality just because your child's friends use it
- Allow media use to interfere with friends and family, reading and hobbies, imaginative play, meals, physical activity or sleep
- Underestimate the potential for injury to your child's safety and development by inappropriate media consumption
- Charge devices within the child's or teen's bedroom
- Forget that children with developmental differences may have more difficulty with reality testing and may be more likely to develop gaming or media addiction
- Use media as the only way to calm your child
- Avoid asking for help if you have concerns

Helpful resources and Websites

www.common sense.org
www.HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan

American Academy of Pediatrics
Media and Young Minds—Pediatrics 2016; 138