

Managing Screen Time

The overuse of phones, gaming, iPads, computers and televisions is an increasing problem for many children and adults.

I recently watched 'The Social Dilemma', a documentary/film which depicts some of the issues surrounding social networking and the methodology behind the various mediums. It reveals some of the dangers and influence these networks have and how much they know about us.



A number of parents have shared with me the difficulties in getting children off their devices, the addictive nature of many of the games (they're designed that way) and the conflict that often ensues when managing it all.

Here's a few suggestions that may help in dealing with this difficult area. The suggestions may need modifying depending on children's ages, differences and your family situations. Some serious planning and thought may be necessary to overcome bad habits.

- Try and stay as positive and controlled as possible throughout the process, without condemning the use of these devices
- Limits need to be put in place for children eg. a set time for after school and non-school days
- It is empowering for children to be involved in the decision making process – have an open discussion, asking what they think is appropriate, try their suggestions as an experiment
- A chart keeping a record of right behaviour with their devices culminating in a small prize can be a very helpful incentive
- Devices should be out of bounds at bed time – encourage other activities – see below
- It's often helpful to give children a few minutes warning, preparing them for the end of a time limit
- Try and stay as connected as possible with your child's games and activities, play the game with them sometimes – encourage them to use their devices in the family area as opposed to alone in their room
- Our modelling as parents/carers of how we behave around our devices is more powerful than we might realise – are we setting a good example with phones, games, TV etc?
- Alternative activities may be the best strategy eg playing a board or card game with your child or as a family, develop a family project, go for trips, outings, begin a family night etc.
- Eat dinner together as a family around the table with the TV off, phones away – try and develop this as a time when each person shares something about their day
- Ultimately and as a last resort, if devices aren't used appropriately, they should be taken away from children for a set time – an achievable well thought through consequence

Good luck with this. I firmly believe it's worth the effort to manage these things. Don't forget, you're the parent and you may need to be unpopular for a time to ensure your child is safe and well. Feel free to give Tash or me a call to talk anything through.

Kindest regards, Rob. Chaplain LPS.

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