

Parenting and Social Media

Current technological advances present new parenting challenges for today's families. While not long ago a parent's biggest technology concern was monitoring TV or music content, times are changing. A recent study found that children ages 8-18 spend on average 11 hours daily in front of digital devices (computers, cell phones, TV). Growing popularity of today's social media outlets exhibit new challenges for parenting in today's technology and social media driven society.

Building strong family relationships

- Media free family dinners that prohibit use of phones, computers or television
- Placing the family computer in a general use or common areas
- Limiting personal computer use to common areas
- Keeping children's bedrooms free of television or computers
- Gain parental insight by monitoring your children's media use

Setting Limits

When setting limits on your children's media use, consider the age of each child and set limits that are age appropriate. There are 3 basic age groups to keep in mind when setting appropriate technology limits: Preschool (3-5), School Aged (6-12) and Teenagers (13-18).

Preschool Aged Children:

- Be mindful of own media use, as children of this age group tend to mimic adult behaviors
- Limit screen time to 1-2 hours per day of age appropriate material
- Use media as a part of a parent-child nurturing activity
- Media should never be used as a babysitter, as we were advised of the TV a generation ago

School Aged Children:

- Are learning how to follow rules, share and compromise
- Concrete limits and rules should be set, for example
 - ❖ Only age appropriate video games (E for everyone), movies (G or PG) are allowed
 - ❖ Use parental controls to set boundaries ensuring age appropriate use. This is available for all media including TV, computer as well as applications for smart phones, as available.
 - ❖ Limit screen time to 2-3 hours
- Establish good media habits now to prepare for the upcoming challenges as your child becomes a teenager

Teenage Children:

- Since the average teen sends 6+ texts per waking hour, don't ban text messaging, it will not solve the problem
- Teach your teenagers the appropriate use of social media by helping them think through texting behavior, ask
 - ❖ How often are you texting while doing other activities (i.e. in class)?
 - ❖ Have you ever sent a text you regret?
 - ❖ Do you know anyone who has been in trouble due to a text they sent?
- Help your teen establish socially and age appropriate media behaviors by being clear about your expectations
- Be actively involved in your teenagers media world by being a part of their social networks
- Hold on-going conversations with your teen about the pros and cons of today's technology
- Keep rules regarding non-school related media use and adjust as your teen goes through high school

Information adopted from the websites of "The American Academy of Pediatrics" & Massachusetts General Hospital