

Parenting Tips for Teaching Good Screen Time Habits

TEENAGERS

Teens love to be on their devices and stay connected to friends and the world. When they spend a lot of time in front of screens, they have less time for other activities such as playing outside, hobbies and spending time with friends and family. It can also interfere with their sleep, learning, and relationships.

“Screens” includes TV’s, videogames, tablets, computers, cellphones and other handheld devices. 12-17 year olds in Canada spend 4.1 hours per day in screen time pursuits. It is recommended that teens limit recreational screen time to 2 hours a day. Only 8% of 10-17 year olds spend 2 hours or less on screens. This screen time limit may be challenging, so any reduction in recreational screen time will benefit your teen.



Face to face time with others, away from screens is important!

This allows them more time to be physically active which helps teens learn social skills, emotional and psychological wellbeing, thinking and learning. Taking a break from screens may support more face to face time with friends and family, while providing a rest from some of the harmful interactions that often happen online (e.g., cyberbullying, violent videos, negative images, marketing, and messages urging teens to engage in high risk situations).

Save Bedrooms for Sweet Dreams Not Bright Screens!

The teen brain is going through a stage of brain development that can affect their sleep patterns as they tend to want to stay up later and sleep in longer. This is natural and can result in a tired teen getting up early for school. Also, light from screens (called ‘blue light’) tricks the brain into thinking it is daytime, which makes it hard to sleep at night. Regular, uninterrupted sleep is important for teens to improve memory, and learn at school. Turn screens off at least 1 hour before bedtime.

Here are some tips to help your teens learn good screen time habits!

1. Limit the number of screens available in the house, particularly in the bedroom, and restrict screen time before bedtime.
2. Set boundaries for teens; this shows them that you care. Having them involved in creating screen time limits for the family helps everyone to reduce their screen time and they will be more likely to follow them (Set a good example by following the same boundaries you set for your teen!). Discuss with your teen what types of media content are appropriate for them.
3. Make it a habit to have screen free times in your life. For example putting screens away at restaurants, when friends and family are over, at bedtime, in the bathroom, and at meal times.
4. Talk to your teen to help them find other activities they enjoy instead of screens; visiting a friend, going outside for a walk, drawing, family board game nights, playing musical instruments, BBQ with neighbours. This helps motivate them to limit screen time
5. Use screens together as a family. Co-viewing media with youth/teens creates a good opportunity to talk about difficult content and family values.
6. Give teens your full attention when you talk to them about screen time. Make it a point to turn off all distractions (TV, computer, cell phone)
7. Enjoy meals together! Teens choose to eat healthier foods when they eat with others, when screens are turned off, and when they are involved in the planning and cooking of meals and snacks. (can we add the benefits to the relationship building)

Reference:

https://www.participaction.com/sites/default/files/downloads/the_participation_report_card_on_physical_activity_for_children_and_youth_-_2018.pdf

For more information
call 1-800-660-5853
or visit www.healthunit.org



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