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The Down Side of Screen Time

By CWK Network Producer

“Because being in the virtual world, being in front of a screen all day is not sufficient for good teenage socialization. You need to have a combination of a screen life, and a real life.

-Larry Rosen, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends two hours of screen time a day, max, for children. But according to a new Kaiser Family Foundation survey, the average American teen consumes over 10 hours of screen time a day, and that's not without consequence.

Sixteen-year-old Leslie and her dad are arguing over all the time she spends texting or on Facebook, instead of studying or sleeping. “Just go to sleep. Get a good night's sleep,” says her dad, Steven Doctor.

To which Leslie argues, “I'm sorry to say this, but my friends are more important to me than you know, math homework.” “Yeah, I know, friends are very important,” says Doctor, “but so is math homework.”

It's a common argument heard in homes across the country.

In fact, a new study by the Kaiser Family Foundation finds that on average teens spend over 10 hours a day online, playing video games, watching T.V. and listening to music. That's up dramatically from just five years ago.

The study also reports the more time kids spend in front of a screen, the more likely they are to be depressed, fight with their parents, and get poor grades. “Because being in the virtual world, being in front of a screen all day is NOT sufficient for good teenage socialization,” explains Dr. Larry Rosen, professor of psychology. “You need to have a combination of a screen life, and a real life.”

After Leslie got a cell phone and a Facebook page, her grades dropped. So, her parents changed the rules about homework.

“So, it was oh, you're going to work at the kitchen table, you're not going to work in your room. Ah, you're not going to have your computer, you're not going to have your phone, you, you know, get it done, we're going to be in the same area and just kind of help you stay focused,” says Doctor.

But the new rules didn't go over well.

“She would get pretty animated,” says Doctor, searching for words. “Or psychotic. Or however you want to put it.”

“When I get mad I usually just say anything that comes to mind and just- I mean I do that all the time,” says Leslie, “but this time it was like not my finest moment.”

“But,” says her dad, “I think in the end she understood why we did it.”

Limiting Screen Time

By CWK Network, Inc.

Research has found that the amount of time a child spends on homework is significantly related to how well he or she does in school. Since television viewing can interfere with the completion of homework assignments and reduce the amount of sleep a child gets, excessive viewing could affect your child's grades and alertness in school. According to the Media Literacy Review, television viewing can have positive effects if parents:

- Set limits. Know how many hours of television your children watch. Limit your children's viewing to one to two hours a day. Watching television is often more habit than choice. Establish good viewing habits for your children. Suggest

and participate with your children in alternative activities such as reading, sports, conversation, games and hobbies. Because children model their behavior after their parents, consider your own viewing habits. Set a good example.

- Eliminate some television viewing by setting a few basic rules such as no television during meals or before completing household tasks or homework.
- Plan. Encourage your children to plan their viewing by using a TV Guide or newspaper listing rather than flipping channels. Help the children decide which show to see and encourage them to watch a variety of programs appropriate for their level of understanding. The television should be turned on only for specific programs. It should be turned off when they are finished watching.
- Participate. Know what your children watch on television. Watch with them and talk about the programs afterward. Explain situations that are confusing. Ask why any violent scenes occurred and how painful they were. Ask your child for ideas about ways the conflict could have been resolved without violence.
- Encourage children to watch programs about characters who cooperate and care for each other. Such programs can influence children in positive ways by modeling desirable behavior and setting good examples.
- Analyze commercials. Children need your help to critically evaluate the validity of the many products advertised on television. Teach children to analyze commercials and recognize exaggerated claims. Point out that the makers of the products pay for advertising.
- Express their views. Call your local television station when you are offended or pleased by something on television. Stations, networks and sponsors are all concerned about the effects of television viewing on children and are responsive to parents' concerns.

Resources

- [Center for Media Literacy](#)
- [Media Literacy Review](#)
- [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)

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