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## **5 Tips for Managing Your Child's Screen time**

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One of the most common questions parents are asking me these days is, "How do I limit my child's use of technology and screen-time when it seems to be so much a part of their daily learning, socialization, and relaxation?"

Here are my top 5 suggestions:

**1. Have a family meeting** to explain why you are concerned about screen time and the need to limit it. Simply banning screens without explanation or a plan will back-fire! Ask for ideas on how all members of the family can reduce the use of technology, and what they think is acceptable usage. Attempt to understand and validate their point of view.

Use some facts! Over-use of screen time has been associated with increases in:

- a. Depression
- b. Anxiety
- c. Obesity
- d. Behavior Problems
- e. Low Self-Esteem
- f. Sleep disturbance
- g. Suicide in teen girls



**2. Practice what you preach!** Turn the TV off, put your phone away, turn off your computer and announce to your family that you are doing so, in order to model and bring attention to healthy behavior.

**3. Make a checklist of tasks to be completed on a daily basis that do not involve screens**, and ensure these tasks are done before any extra "fun" screen time is available. For example:

- a. 1 hour engaging with family or friends
- b. 30 minutes of taking care of yourself (taking a bath/shower, brushing teeth, etc.)
- c. 1 hour of exercise (play outside, do sit-ups/jumping jacks/treadmill, etc.)
- d. 1 hour engaging in hobby that does not involve screens (reading, Legos, drawing, etc.)
- e. 30 minutes contributing to the household (e.g., putting dishes away, making beds, chores, etc.)

**4. Spend time with your children and have open discussions on the dangers of searching the internet**, social media and online predators. Unfortunately, children are so tech-savvy that you will not be able to completely control what they are exposed to. Ask the hard questions, say the difficult things.

- a. Tell your children "if something you see doesn't feel right or makes you uncomfortable, please come to me. You will not get in trouble, and we can figure out how to handle it together."
- b. Share your experiences with your children to help teach them. (e.g., "I received a message from someone I don't know that says I am pretty. I am going to delete that and block them.")

**5. Create/structure technology-free times and spaces.** For example:

- a. 1 hour before bedtime = no technology
- b. No screens in bedrooms or bathrooms
- c. No tech at the table
- d. No tech before 11am.
- e. 4pm-5pm is family reading time on Saturdays.