

Technology Black-Out for Children Under Age 12

If there is a time in a person's life that one should be very cautious about the use of technology (iPads, tablets, smart phones, computers, tablets, televisions) it is between the ages of 0 and 12. Recent research is telling us that overuse of technology is doing more damage than good to the brains of the developing children. While parents are proud of seeing their little two and three year olds swiping the screens of the iPads or smart phones we know now that might not be something really to be happy about. Research is telling us that the use or overuse of technology is not making our children smarter and might be stunting their physical and intellectual development.

When I was ten years old, I never could have imagined that fifty years later I would be holding a television in my hand or having small, hand-held devices on which I can play electronic games, connect to the world, watch the news, etc. while I am walking or running. Although these devices are of great advantage and evidence of an advanced society, over use is proving detrimental, especially for children. In a May 2014 Cris Rowan, pediatric occupational therapist wrote an article in the Huffington Post entitled "10 Reasons Why Handheld Devices Should Be Banned for Children Under the Age of 12." It gives a research report by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Canadian Society of Pediatrics on the dangers of overuse of technology. The article starts by giving the recommended lengths of time each age group should use these devices. The report states that "infants aged 0-2 years should **not** have any exposure to technology (no TV, computers, or hand-held devices), 3-5 years be restricted to one hour per day, and 6-18 years restricted to 2 hours per day" This parallels with a previous research that states that infants ages 0-2 should not watch television."

INSULTING BEHAVIOR

I have observed that a large percentage of the children who use hand-held devices (iPad, tablets, etc.) are developing poor social skills and etiquette. When they are using their devices they do not pay attention to their surroundings and acknowledge people around them. They keep on swiping their devices when being spoken to and not even aware that they are insulting others around them. Even when they are walking to the church door or shop they are continually using the device. Without the device they are bored and restless. They cannot sit quietly longer than a few seconds before picking up the device again. It is embarrassing and insulting behavior. Parents, you must put an end to this.

BAN TECHNOLOGY USE FOR THOSE UNDER AGE 12

Cris Rowan, "is calling on parents, teachers and governments to ban the use of all handheld devices for children under the age of 12 years." Here are a few of the reasons for the ban I am quoting directly from the report. Parents with little ones, read carefully.

Reason 1 "Between 0 and 2 years, infants' brains triple in size, and continue in a state of rapid development to 21 years of age. Early brain development is determined by environmental stimuli, or lack thereof. Stimulation to a developing brain caused by overexposure to technologies (cell phones, internet, iPads, TV), has been shown to be associated with executive functioning and attention deficit, cognitive delays, impaired learning, increased impulsivity and decreased ability to self-regulate, e.g., tantrums"

Reason 2 "Technology use restricts movement, which can result in delayed development. One in three children now enter school developmentally delayed, negatively impacting literacy and

academic achievement. Movement enhances attention and learning ability. Use of technology under the age of 12 years is detrimental to child development and learning.”

Reason 3 “Sleep Deprivation. 60% of parents do not supervise their child's technology usage, and 75% of children are allowed technology in their bedrooms (Kaiser Foundation 2010). 75% of children aged 9 and 10 years are sleep deprived to the extent that their grades are detrimentally impacted”

Reason 4 “Mental Illness. Technology overuse is implicated as a causal factor in rising rates of child depression, anxiety, attachment disorder, attention deficit, autism, bipolar disorder, psychosis and problematic child behavior. One in six Canadian children have a diagnosed mental illness, many of whom are on dangerous psychotropic medication.”

Reason 5 “Aggression. Violent media content can cause child aggression. Young children are increasingly exposed to rising incidence of physical and sexual violence in today's media. . . The U.S. has categorized media violence as a Public Health Risk due to causal impact on child aggression. Media **reports** increased use of restraints and seclusion rooms with children who exhibit uncontrolled aggression.”

Reason 6 “Digital dementia. High speed media content can contribute to attention deficit, as well as decreased concentration and memory, due to the brain pruning neuronal tracks to the frontal cortex. Children who can't pay attention can't learn.”

Reason 7 “Addictions. As parents attach more and more to technology, they are detaching from their children. In the absence of parental attachment, detached children can attach to devices, which can result in addiction. One in 11 children aged 8-18 years are addicted to technology.”

WHAT ARE PARENTS TO DO?: Parents, it is time you take charge. If you have not been sucked in to the technology culture, do not purchase your tiny ones any iPads or smart phones at this time. Wait until they start junior high. If your little child below the age of twelve is currently a hand-held device junkie then sit with the child and inform him or her that you will be restricting the use from now on. Follow the suggestions mentioned earlier in this article regarding recommended length of times etc. When your child is old enough to use an iPad make sure you are the one who controls what it is used for. Do not give the child the passwords for the Apps Store, etc. Introduce other physical and mental activities that will promote a more wholesome development. Make sure you child spends ample time outdoors everyday. Establish a “Technology Black-Out Time” in your home when no one will use electronic equipment, including the television. This can be an entire week or one day out of the week year round. Parent’s, learn how to use technology to advance wholesome learning and development. Remember, over use of technology will cause serious “pains in but” and no amount painkillers will be able to ease the turmoil.

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