



HELP! I CANNOT GET MY CHILD OFF THE SCREEN!!

SECAC-PG MEETING – FEBRUARY 22, 2022 – 6:30PM

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The Internet has become one of the most significant sources of information and entertainment for children and adolescents.

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With the advent of distance learning, due to the Covid 19- pandemic, many students have substantially increased their daily usage devices and online screen time.

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Do you feel that your child has become increasingly attached to the screen (cellphones, gaming, and computers)?

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Listen, as we learn about strategies that you and your family can use to monitor and reduce screen time.

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You will also hear about the steps should you consider if your child is having difficulties backing away from the screen.

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The Science..... According to Dr. Victoria Dunckley, author of "Reset Your Child's Brain...", screen time (especially interactive) acts as a stimulant but not like caffeine, cocaine, etc.

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The dopamine released by electronic stimulation effects children differently because their cerebral cortexes are not developed enough to feel satisfied in small doses or to self-regulate.

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As parents, we shouldn't expect our children's brains to adapt or manage the level of artificial stimulation their brain is not ready to or meant to handle. That includes managing their own screen time or mis-using social media.

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This expectation is a challenge especially when some of us adults experience the same challenges with screen time ourselves. Checking emails constantly, social media, "dings", etc.

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12-Step Program

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Step 1: Determine how much screen time to allow outside of school work or occupational need....

- 30 minutes in the morning/30 minutes in evening?
- 45 minutes in morning/45 minutes in evening on weekends?

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Step 2: Be clear and consistent...

- Don't let whining wear you down.
- Tears, screaming, etc. are normal because they are “hooked”. Stick to your guns and make sure the adults in the house are a united front...

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Step 3: *Absolutely no electronics if homework/chores are not done or they have misbehaved....*

- Screen time is a *privilege not a right!!!*
- Screen time must correlate to doing the right things.

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Step 4: Check phones, tablets, iPad, computers at the door!!

- Don't be afraid to lock away electronic items from your children. If they can't get them they will stop trying.
- If you don't, they will find them and hide with them.

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Step 5: Be Vigilant

- When they do get screen time, monitor what they are doing.
- See who they follow and who follows them. If they won't let see or monitor, take it away.

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Step 6: Explain dangers as best you can.

- Let them know that you are not trying to ruin their fun but protect them.
- Find examples of screen time gone wrong and explain that to them as a model or guide.

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Step 7: Expect boredom...

- Children will whine or cry when they don't have their electronic devices and say they are "bored."
- "I'm bored" is code for "I want my electronic fix".
- If they have nothing to do its okay. Entertain them with family fun...

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Step 8: Guide or direct them to alternative activities....

- Doing other things will get easier over time once they realize whining and crying is not working.
- Help them do other things like playing cards or board games.

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Step 9: Expect relapses or regression....

- Stuff happens that might require you to rely on electronics during emergencies. Its ok..
- When that happens monitor how often you have to rely on electronics for conflict avoidance, babysitting, etc.

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Step 10: Make adjustments as necessary....

- If your plan isn't working well, it doesn't mean it's a failure or you should give up.
- If necessary, tweak the screen time, etc. but don't abandon it. If they whine, SO!!! You are in charge!

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Step 11: Do an electronics sabbatical....

- If they attend a camp or program that doesn't allow electronics, take advantage of that.
- If a program is not doable, do it at home but incentivize it with rewards (not a new video game or device).

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Step 12: Be a role model....

- Lead by example. When you are with them, don't check your phone. Do the sabbatical with them.
- Do the off-screen time with them and catch up if you need to away from them out of sight.

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Step 12A: Be a role model....

- Make the time for family fun so that they know you are serious.
- **DON'T BE A HYPOCRITE!!!!**

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Questions