NEWSLETTER

SCREENS AND TEENS

With the advent of the pandemic, screens have become increasingly omnipresent in our lives and those of our teens; clearly sparing no one to this new reality. These technological tools which provide both entertainment, a means to stay contacted with friends and family, and the possibility to work and study remotely, are now an integral part of our daily lives. Even though we are aware of the benefits associated to technology, we have also become more and more aware of the potential dangers associated with screens on both the physical and mental health of our teens.

This awareness brings forth the need to learn to live with screens within a healthy framework and the importance of guiding our teens as they navigate this virtual world. Helping them develop a critical thinking regarding the messages they view and receive is essential to an appropriate use of screens.

Time spent in front of screens, whether television, tablet, smart phone or game console has an impact on the physical and mental health of our teens in a variety of forms;

- Reduced physical activity and increased sedentary behaviors create postural difficulties, muscular skeletal and cardiovascular issues
- Affects sleep patterns and reduces sleep quality
- Creates vision problems and headaches
- Incites poor nutritional habits. Eating in front of screens encourages the consumption of salty, sweet and fatty foods, reducing one`s ability to gage the feelings of satiety.
- Induces depressive feelings
- Heightens anxiety linked to body image as teens are exposed to unrealistic models of beauty
- Deteriorates family relations
- In addition, increases hyperactivity and emotional difficulties

Other possible risks include;

- The occurrence of cyber intimidation
- And exposure to sexual content and violence inappropriate to the age group

How as a parent, do you support your teen in the use of their screens?

1. You are first and foremost a model for your teen; take time to question your own screen habits and ensure that you are providing an appropriate model of healthy screen use.
2. Show interest in what they are viewing online, and insure that the content is age-appropriate
3. As a family, determine a screen use schedule which will consider the priority needs of your teen like five fingers of the hand; eating, sleeping, moving, studying and socializing. Once these elements are taken care of, the teen can indulge in screen time.
4. Help your teen recognize and question the publicity messages and stereotypes to which they are exposed and to choose positive models on social media.
5. Encourage your teens to swap screen time for other activities such as reading, outdoor play, sports or creative activities.
6. Shut off screens during meal times, before bed times and during families activities
7. Turn screens off that are not in use in your home.

Remember that everything is a question of balance.

The solution is not to ban screens but to limit their use to allow other healthy activities to take place.

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