

SCREEN TIME: WHAT IS A PARENT TO DO?

TCMS: CONVERSATION WITH
THE PRINCIPAL

LORI JEANNE PELOQUIN, PHD
APRIL 24, 2019

WHY DO WE NEED TO BE CONCERNED?

- Risk of irreversible changes in the developing brain
- Screens are affecting attachment: can have long term effects on socialization and emotional dysregulation
- Excessive screen use is related to depression, anxiety and suicide attempts
 - Don't know which comes first, but even if depression/anxiety came first, the excessive time on screens means not engaging in the activities that would improve the situation
 - Depression and loneliness are predictors of i-tech addiction
 - 4 large studies of teens from US and UK: happiness and mental health are at highest: at half hour to two hours of extracurricular digital media use a day; well-being then steadily decreases with those who spend the most time online being the worst off. Twice as many heavy users are unhappy, depressed or distressed
 - Rates of depression among ages 14-17 jumped 60% from 2009-2017
 - Suicide rates among teen girls at 40 year highs

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY AND REFLECTION

- All screens matter
- "Educational" videos no substitute for parents: the more hours watched of educational videos, the lower the vocabulary scores (what is NOT happening?)—social engagement with parents is what matters!!
- Developing imagination is essential for future success in the world: Does not happen when playing video games, hanging out on social media, or watching YouTube videos.
 - Unstructured play
 - Develop own ideas
 - Need capacity to create out of boredom
- Need for processing thoughts and feelings
 - Blank spaces for reflection
 - Comfort with silence
- I-tech does NOT calm at neurological level

THE ISSUE OF AGGRESSION

- Increasing intolerance of natural children behavior
- Pressure on discipline and safety
- Taking fun, thrill and adventure out of play
- Culturally few outlets for aggression for children/teens not engaged in sports
- Rough housing and play fighting discouraged
- Drives kids to violent/destructive video games to have an outlet for expression
 - Don't feel real dangers—when don't feel will seek it
- Manufactured relationships causes kids to act-out
 - Need to belong over-rides morals and beliefs
 - Cyber-bullying
 - Peer orientation bullies—admired for dominance and rewarded with a following

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

- Equal problem between males and females, just looks different
 - Girls often texting and constant checking of social media
 - Fear Of Missing Out—fuels anxiety
- Kids with OCD, ADHD, anxiety, depression and ESPECIALLY ASD, are extremely vulnerable to addiction and dependence
 - Any issues with emotional dysregulation, perseveration, social inhibition or social anxiety
 - Differences in brain wiring/genetic predisposition
 - Environmental trigger vs buffer
 - Use to regulate and alleviate anxiety but increased deficiency in self-regulation (manage moods) and obsession with device/internet itself
 - Unable to detach
 - Self-medicating?
- One study showed 77% of individuals with internet addiction had EEG dysregulation

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

- Disproportionate risk for total derailment with any and all use of i-tech
- Hyper-focus on digital to exclusion of all other relationships
- Exacerbate all symptoms and compromise social-emotional development
- Dr. Swingle—NONE!!
- I-tech supports and exacerbates brain miswiring

WHO ELSE IS AT RISK?

- People with innovative and artistic brains prone to i-addiction
 - Decrease artistic pursuits
 - Hijacked by social media
 - Increase in brain waves similar to seizures
 - Will lose our greatest innovative thinkers
- Expectations on teens too high
 - A grades
 - Sports or Arts
 - Perfectly disciplined
 - Job at managerial level or higher
 - Expect to succeed at everything-not allowed to fail
 - Demand reward for participation vs proof of excellence

AREN'T GAMES GOOD FOR SOME SKILLS?

- Best studies show the ONLY benefit of gaming is fun
- Games have no chance for independent thought
 - Programmed for rote thinking-not novel
- Educational games often only one right answer
 - Penalized for out of the box thinking
 - Unilateral vs multifactorial
 - Repeat what know vs inquisitive mind
- Nothing rewards as well or as systematically for participation as i-tech
- i-tech reduces ability to focus when perceive things as tough or mundane
- Change expectation of gratification and entertainment-on demand

HOW TO RECOGNIZE IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD HAS A PROBLEM WITH I-TECH

- Increased irritability
 - Revved up and stressed out
 - People can't sustain levels of arousal without burning out, adrenal fatigue, depression and severe anxiety
- Increased anxiety
 - Edginess, sleeplessness, moodiness
- Need higher levels of stimulation to function
 - Inability to quiet-can't find off switch
- Increased depression
 - Negativity, apathy, withdrawal
- Increased emotional or behavioral dysregulation

HOW TO RECOGNIZE IF YOUR CHILD HAS A PROBLEM WITH I-TECH

- Denial
- Meltdowns when asked to put away
- Sneaking in middle of the night
- Sneaking during school despite negative consequences
- No symbolic/pretend play
- Not responding to therapy for other issue because unrecognized addiction
- Interference with interest in going outside, being part of sports/clubs, or face-to-face communication

WHEN IS IT AN ADDICTION?

- Like gambling addiction-looking for process high (control/power/success)
 - Variable reinforcement schedule
 - Anticipation of potential reward
 - Endless potential for more
- Interference with family relationships
- Over-indulgence in on-line relationships (over in-person)
- Developing tolerance (need for more and more) and neglecting daily routines
- Lack of control-can't stop
- Lying about usage
- Neglecting work/school
- Neglecting social life

RECOMMENDATIONS

- No more than one hour of screen time per day during the week
- No more than two hours of screen time on weekend (2 days)
 - Adjusted if engaged in person with friend(s)
- No screens for children under age 4 (Dr. Swingle says age 6)
- Play with your children-no matter what age
 - Follow their lead
 - Laughter and silliness!!
- No phones in bedrooms
- No devices within one hour of lights out
- No devices in the car for short to medium rides (TALK!!)
- Parents modeling screen free zones/times and non-tethered behavior

RECOMMENDATIONS

- No devices at the dinner table (eat with everyone at the table when ever can)
- Games used for education need to be bit boring or don't learn the task & generalize
 - If use educational games, play with your child while they are playing
 - Don't vocalize what program dictates-engage with child not the device
- Not all school work on keyboard
 - Scribing requires synthesis
 - Need to finish thought before write long hand
 - Staccato writing-no flow paragraph to paragraph
 - Remember more by writing than keyboarding
 - Processed at more shallow level
 - Scribing associated with more success at reading
- If true gaming addiction, restrict all that is not scholastically imperative

RESOURCES

- Swingle, M. (2016). [i-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming, and Social Media Are Changing Our Brains, Our Behavior, and the Evolution of Our Species](#). New Society Publishers: Gabriola, BC, Canada.
- Swingle, M. (2019). [i-Minds - 2nd edition: How and Why Constant Connectivity is Rewiring Our Brains and What to Do About it.](#) New Society Publishers: Gabriola, BC, Canada. (to be released in May).
- Twenge, J. (2019). [Put that Phone Away-Now](#). Time Magazine, April 1, 2019.
- Twenge, J. (2017). [iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us](#). Atria Books