



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

SCREENS ARE VERY STIMULATING

Not necessarily in a good way

According to 2018 Nielsen Company report, the average adult spent about 11 hours each day on smart-phone, iPads, computers, video games or TV. In 2020, children spent an average of 4-5 hours on screens (not including school!) Teens averaged about nine hours. Some of these statistics (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry) will change during pandemic-era times, but if you were wondering what schooling, working and socializing remotely means for our emotional and physical health, let's start with looking at our EYES.

A study was done by Emory University schools where 123,535 students were screened (1st – 6th graders) after being quarantined. It found myopia had skyrocketed. This rate was especially high for 6 to 8 year olds. Symptoms include: blurry or double vision and headaches. Prevention is vital to keep it from progressing to a more serious eye ailment. This study can be read in New York Post as written by Dr. Milan Ranken, Ophthalmologist. He gives a tip which he calls the "20-20-20" rule: For each 20 minutes of activity, look away from screen for 20 seconds (or more!) and then rest eyes for 20 seconds (or more.) His other suggestion is: "back to school will be better for kids' eyes."

Another issue is more specific regarding infants under 18 months. Dr. Jenny Radesky, M.D. and assistant professor at pediatrics at University of Michigan Medical School states, "Kids under 18 months have the least to gain from watching videos." The issue is that younger children exposed to hours and hours of screen time may not be getting the face-to-face social interaction they need to develop. For children over 5, the AAP recommends a "family media plan" that balances the digital world with mindful interaction. Better yet, find activities (e.g. outside) that have them using their imaginations - NOT involving digital devices.

Besides our eyes, the other vital organ being impacted by too much screen time is our brain. This condition is being referred to as "Zoom Fatigue" and the struggle is real. There are many reasons for this issue- both psychological and biological. According to Dr. Gianpiero, M.D., when we have face-to-face

interactions, humans subconsciously absorb and respond to a host of signals that help us communicate. On the other hand, while on screens our brains have to put more effort into that processing and this is mentally exhausting.

So how do we find ways to ensure that we are enhancing our minds (e.g. those little developing brains of our children) rather than "turning us into giant piles of dead brain cells with aching necks and social-media-perfect-life influencer envy?"

Seriously, look at your OWN screen time because kids who've HAD faces hooked up to screens this past year also have "Zoom Fatigue." We need to DETOX! So let's begin with a review (last article called "The New Normal" is on our webpage.)

- Children under 18 months = NO screen time (exceptions are quality, monitored time with family chats, Face Time and music.)
- Children 18-24 months = Choose ONLY high quality media and watch it with them.
- Children 2-5 years less than 2 hours per day; school age children who do more than this are more likely to have emotional, social, and attention issues.
- (These recommendations are according to American Academy of Pediatrics.)

TVs in bedrooms equates children doing worse on academic testing because the light emitted from screens interferes with the sleep cycle and the brain activity. Again, JAMA researchers have concluded that higher levels of screen time were associated with poor performance on screening measures assessing children's important opportunities to practice and achieve social, motor, and communication skills.

Quote of the Week

"Your child will not remember what TV shows you watched; they will remember what fun activities you did together."

So, how do we find a balance that both protects and enhances our lives? Let's begin with a few adjustments to our way of thinking. It's possible that this will help build better relationships too – and that's what is most important for families.

- NO digital devices during meals.
- NO electronics during "Family Fun Night" or after ____ time at night. And, YES teenagers will have a minor (hopefully, not major) fit. Give them areas of autonomy in setting limits so they use their screen time wisely.
- Screens are VERY stimulating so time is needed for that energy to dissipate before winding down to sleep – or even to transition to another activity.
- Set boundaries – especially IF game playing or other screen time is interfering with your child's life. For example, appropriate game time could be based upon appropriate grades. The struggle will be worth the effort in the longer scheme of academic goals.

Author of The Art of Screen Time says, "Technology is often serving in the role of an emotional comfort object." So as easy as it can be to JUST give in – i.e. give them the iPad, take some time, ask them to name their feelings/needs and then maybe, just maybe you can come up with some other activity that meets their need in a healthier way.

So, in conclusion, give some serious thought to how you (& yours) can "power down"- have human face to face time by developing a Family Media Plan that will benefit everyone and possibly improve relationships.

Isn't that what we really need most in this world now?

References/Resources:

www.zerotothree.com
Journal of American Pediatrics
Good Housekeeping Blog

ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUR CHILDREN AT HOME

April 2021

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



				1 Play Catch	2 Find Shapes in the Clouds	3 Enjoy Reading a Book
4 Wash the Car or Bikes Together	5 Play Games Together: Simon Says, Duck Duck Goose, Red Light Green Light	6 Family Picnic Inside or Outside	7 Cuddle and Look at the Stars	8 Share the Best Part of Your Day	9 Learn and Draw Shapes	10 Draw with Sidewalk Chalk
11 Look for Your Favorite Colors	12 Build with Legos or Blocks	13 Have a Texture Scavenger Hunt	14 Sing and Dance to Music	15 Blow Bubbles	16 Make a Healthy Snack	17 Make a Tent/Fort
18 Find Items that Start with the First Letter of Your Child's Name	19 Family Movie Night	20 Take a Nature Walk	21 Play Hop, Skip and Jump	22 Taste a New Food	23 Play I Spy	24 Make and Play with Playdough
25 Read a Bedtime Story	26 Make Dinner Together	27 Swing on Swings	28 Play Dress Up	29 Help Your Child Send an Email or Letter to a Grandparent	30 Plant Seeds from Something You've Eaten Like Watermelon	

MEET CENTENNIAL'S EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTATION TEAM



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Ages 0-5

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counties:
Logan, Morgan

LAUNCHING ZOOM SECURE TELEHEALTH SERVICES!

Our ECMH team is excited to announce that consultation services are now available using Zoom Secure Telehealth Services. These services are available to client families, schools, childcare centers and community partners with group and individual meetings available. All services will be provided using this private, secure video platform, and can be accessed using most electronic devices. For more information or to set up a consultation appointment, please contact our ECMH team or your local Centennial Mental Health Center office.



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Morgan, Washington
& Yuma

For additional support during
the COVID-19 Pandemic you
can call Centennial's
**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT LINE**

You can do this by calling your
nearest Centennial office:

Akron - 970.345.2254
Burlington - 719.346.8183
Cheyenne Wells - 719.346.8183
Elizabeth - 303.646.4519
Fort Morgan - 970.867.4924
Holyoke - 970.854.2114
Julesburg - 970.474.3769
Limon - 719.775.2313
Sterling - 970.522.4392
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Yuma - 970.848.5412



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Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson,
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Contact your local Centennial Mental Health Center for assistance with any Early Childhood need.

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