PARENTS STEP AHEAD
PADRES UN PASO ADELANTE™

THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS
of Screen Time

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Children today grow up with a world of technology at their feet. Unfortunately, research shows that this new technology has taken a heavy toll on our children.

According to the statistics, children spend an average of six to nine hours of screen time every day, with some children spending even more screen time than that.

Because children spend more time watching television, playing video games, and using smartphones, they lose out on valuable playtime, sleep, exercise, and interaction with parents, teachers, and friends. An unhealthy lifestyle is developing.

Busy parents find it hard to set boundaries for their children's screen time. Children do not have the attention span to read, play outdoors, or even concentrate during class because of the increased screen use.

And **studies show that children who spend more time on screens are less physically active, stunting their brain growth and development**. But there's more.

What are other alarming effects of screen time?

1.Problems with behavior. Children who spend an excessive amount of time in front of screens are more likely to be defiant, disobedient, and passive. They become less respectful towards adults, have lower self-discipline, and are more likely to engage in risky behavior.

- Excessive screen time also means these children are likely to have social, emotional, and learning difficulties.

- The solution? **Limit screen time to no more than 2 hours per day.**

2.Increased violence. Children exposed to violent media are more likely to become aggressive.

- Research has found that children in households with access to televisions, computers, or video games are more likely to exhibit aggression and hostility towards their peers.

- **Parents can replace violent television, video games, and computer time with constructive, enriching activities like reading, sports, or going to a park.**

3. Lack of sleep. Time spent on the screen directly impacts sleep duration and quality. Children who watch too much television, play video games, or surf the internet for many hours of the night are more likely to fall asleep late and suffer sleep deprivation.

- Every sleep therapist will agree that using electronic devices right before bedtime can negatively impact sleep. Not only does it make it more difficult to fall asleep, but **the brightness of the screens also prevents the brain from producing the sleep hormones needed to fall asleep.**

- If you're a parent, set an excellent example for your teen by going to sleep and turning off all electronic screens an hour before bed.

- Also, enforce a "no screens" rule after 8 p.m. The practice helps teens reduce screen time, leading to better sleep.

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4.Negative mental health effects. Depression and traumatic stress are more common in teens who spend long periods in front of screens.

- Studies suggest that excessive screen time can cause symptoms of depression, such as sadness, loss of interest in the things that they used to enjoy, and loss of appetite.

- Excessive screen time can also contribute to stress, affecting school performance and unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking and substance abuse.

- One study by the National Institute of Health discovered that children scored lower points in language and thinking tests when they spent over two hours each day on their devices.

5.Weakened social skills. When teens spend more time with screens than people, their social skills suffer. They tend to get preoccupied with the device and forget to be present with people. So when they experience real-life events, such as social gatherings, they don't know how to respond appropriately.

- That results in them failing to connect with others and have interesting and enjoyable conversations.

- **Parents can help their kids overcome this by providing them with more opportunities to connect with real people.**

As you can see, excessive screen time during childhood poses many problems.

Although it can be entertaining, it's important for parents to educate their children about the harmful effects of excessive screen time, be strict with their children's screen usage, and set up rules so that they can limit the amount of time spent on screens. As a result, your children will benefit immensely.

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