

KIDS AND ELECTRONICS

To Worry or Not to Worry

BY DR. PHYLLIS BOOKS



Are your kids on electronics more than you'd like or more than you even realize? We live in a fast-paced world full of bright lights and sounds that keep our brains on alert. Electronics, smart phones, and televisions bombard with new information faster and faster. So fast, in fact, we can't process the information quickly enough to keep up. We end up frazzled and bleary eyed as our brains are desperately trying to process all the data.

Ever feel like your kids are in a trance and don't hear you when you call?

Similar to the way sugar is added to substances like tobacco and hot dogs to make us keep coming back for more, electrical impulses are emitted from electronic devices that keep us in a "fight or flight" state and we can't tear ourselves away. Ever feel like your kids are in a trance and don't hear when you call them? They are and the trance state is induced from the very devices you bought your child.

When you feel yourself going into overwhelm or you notice your kids starting into space

The best solution is turn your attention away from the screens and noise for awhile. Nothing else is being processed anyway. Your chuckle fall of information, and you actually need a little time away from the screen to process all the input.

"Screen time," gaming addictions, and Facebook addictions are all very modern problems.

It is easy to become "addicted" to an adrenaline rush of watching the screen light up when you push the right button. Addictions don't just happen to gamblers and alcoholics. Adults can become addicted to Facebook. Busy adults believe they are efficient by multitasking and watching several screens at once, when in fact

they are depleting their natural reserve of dopamine and actually making more shallow business decisions than if they gave a problem their full attention. "Neural addictions" to cell phones, iPads, and gaming devices are real.

Kids are very vulnerable to "neural addictions."

Their brains are still being formed. Scarily, the nervous system of a human being is very similar to the insides of a computer and the two can interact in ways that alter the way a child's brain makes connections and lays wires and patterns that affect tracks of brain development. Shannon, a 16-year-old patient of mine, confided to me that she

is worried about her 10-year-old sister who spends "way too much time on her iPad. She's on it all the time!" A concerned father of a 21-year-old called recently, worried sick about his son whose ambition slowly deteriorated and was now at rock bottom and the son barely left his bedroom.

In both of these cases, family members were concerned and called for help. And in both

BY TURNING OFF YOUR OWN ELECTRONICS AND LOOKING INTO YOUR CHILD'S EYES, YOU ARE SENDING AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE THAT THEY ARE IMPORTANT.

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cases, as an integrative healthcare provider, I could intervene and provide a new direction. In both of these cases, I ordered brain chemistry testing, heavy metal and mineral testings, performed neurological and structural examinations, and that implemented therapies that addressed the neurological, emotional, and chemical imbalances. The turnaround was quick and painless. The key was a family member taking charge and finding help.

The story isn't always that good. Many times, by the time a child has become addicted to electronics, they don't make eye contact, they mumble answers, they have lost interest in their personal hygiene, and they aren't sleeping well.

Why do kids like to spend "screen" time so much? At what point does it become a problem? What kinds of guidelines can parents put in?

Clues that electronics are becoming a problem:

- Lack of adequate physical exercise
- Lack of interest in the body
- Kids are in a trance, fixated or just plain don't hear you when you call their name for dinner, etc.
- They aren't sleeping well (too excited from too much information coming in and not able to process it)...
- Losing interest in personal hygiene
- In teenage and young adults, loss of interest in food and meals
- Lack of interest in friends or poor social skills

What parents need to consider?

- 1/ Do you find yourself rationalizing with phrases like:
 - "It's not doing any harm""He'll grow out of it""He's learning life skills.""At least, I know where he is."
- 2/ Video games are and inexpensive, reliable and convenient babysitter substitute.
- 3/ Video games are an instant form of discipline and reward.

- 4/ Video games are an easy distraction to give parents temporary quiet and breathing space.
- As a parent, here's how to model good "electronic behavior" for your kids:**

- 1/ No cell phones allowed at the dinner table.
- 2/ Power down on all electronics at least an hour before bedtime.
- 3/ No electronics devices in the bedroom during the night.
- 4/ Model good balance between computer time and exercise. Set your timer for 50 minutes at the computer. Then get up and exercise for a few minutes, stretch your body, get a drink of water. Modeling is the best teacher.
- 5/ "Unplug" totally one day a week. Take a screen holiday one day a week. Yes, this one will make you go into withdrawal probably. Even in the days of the bible, people rested one day a week. They unplugged from their daily activities, rested and rejuvenated. Our brains actually do their most integration while we are sleeping and resting. So to tune up your brain and your thinking, give it a rest.
- 6/ 10-20 minutes of face-to-face talk between parent and child daily.

That means no texting, answering calls, no playing screen games, no watching TV together. This means face-to-face, being fully present.

Parents, listen up.

We only have one chance to raise our children. Time is precious. Children are even more precious. Please don't let electronics seep into time you would otherwise spend with your children. By turning off your own electronics and looking into your child's eyes, you are sending an important message that they are important. They desperately need your seeing them and noticing them. Treating them as more valuable than your own electronics, you are instilling confidence and a sense of self worth. This is the best investment you can make in the future of your child!

About the Author



Dr. Books is an author, educator, doctor, and new thought leader. She is the founder of Books Neural Therapy™, a well-documented, systematic approach to dissolving systemic ADHD, head traumas, and many chronic health issues. She is the author of *Flourishing Dyslexic-Inspiring Learning and Behavior Without Drugs*. Also in 2013, Dr. Books released the world's first online treatment class for parents, *The Dyslexia Reversal System*. She then added online and live classes of BNT™ for professionals. Her formal education includes an undergraduate degree in education and English from Michigan State University, a master's degree in interpersonal communications from the University of North Carolina, and a doctor of chiropractic from Parker University. She has taught and lectured in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. Her *alma mater* granted her the Outstanding International Alumni Award for her many contributions.

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