Love & Logic Parenting: Technology Addiction

Even though the problems associated with kids and technology seem to be getting worse rather than getting better, it has been a problem for many years. Over ten years ago, in 2011, we received the following from one of our customers:

> *"My typically nice and responsible kid turns into a monster after he plays his computer games."*

If you've noticed this or similar behaviors with your kids, you're not alone. This week we will revisit why this is so common, as well as actions that we can take to protect our kids.

Electronic Games can be Extremely Addictive

Because most video games operate according to variable schedules of reinforcement (the user cannot entirely predict when something exciting will happen) our kids get hooked into thinking that they "need to play just a little bit longer" each time.

Even educational games present these risks. To grab the attention of the learner, our kids' favorite games are highly entertaining—and stimulating. Is it any wonder that kids who spend too much time glued to these games find everything else boring?

Real life is always a downer when you're hooked on electronic uppers.

The symptoms of withdrawal also reflect the addictive nature of these games: Irritability, extreme moodiness, and attempts to get a "fix" even if it requires manipulating and mistreating those who love you the most.

Set Enforceable Limits

Children under 5 should spend almost no time playing video games, computer games, or watching television. This also applies to educational games and shows.

Many older children must spend a significant amount of time on computers and the internet due to school requirements. However, they should not spend an excessive amount of additional time each day playing video games or using the internet for entertainment purposes. Wise parents set the following limit:

> *I allow video games, computer games, or TV shows in our home only when they are causing no problems.*

Wise parents also don't hesitate to remove these items from the home when "problems" begin.

Replace Electronic Screens with Loving Relationships

Kids don't miss their computers and TVs nearly as much when they have parents who spend plenty of time with them playing catch, riding bikes, sledding, or doing other sorts of good old-fashioned

things that build relationships. When you build these kinds of relationships while kids are very young, and you will find that they are less likely to become addicted to technology.

In our new audio, ***Healthy Kids and Families in a Technology-Filled World***, I talk about the critical importance of the relationship approach to handling technology addition, including topics such as limits, supervision, and accountability for kids' use of technology. This audio will give you more tips on how to address technology issues with your kids.

Thanks for reading!

If this is a benefit, forward it to a friend. Our goal is to help as many families as possible.

Charles Fay, Ph.D.