Screen Time, The Brain, and COVID-19

How are we doing?
Layne Pethick, PhD.
Behavior and Autism Consultant
Region 10 ESC
How has screen time use changed in your family over the past 3 months?
Limits on screen time probably looks a lot different today than it did even a few months ago…

Be honest with your kids and yourself…with school and socializing happening online, increased screen time is unavoidable, but there are still ways you can maintain boundaries
Tips That Might Help During COVID-19
Set Boundaries... As Best You Can
Compassion

• With so much happening in the world that causes increased stress and trauma, unstructured screen time can be an important source of comfort and entertainment for many kids (distraction from the “crazy”)

• Let your kids know that you understand that they may have this need. This is a simple way to reduce stress for everyone.
Brainstorm

• If you are going to tell your child not to be on their screen, there needs to be other options to choose from:
  • Choice Boards
Schedule

• It may be helpful to set specific times of the day or week when your kids know they’ll be allowed to use their screens.

• This helps kids know what to expect and cuts down on their requests for screens at other times.

• It also gives you time to schedule other tasks when you know your children will be busy.
Keep Going

- Once you have some routines and schedules in place, you may get some push back

- The pushback will likely fade as kids settle into their new routines
Set An Example

• Be the role model for appropriate screen time

• Make a point of setting aside your own screens during set times, your children will be more likely to do the same without putting up a fight
Wellness For All
• Look at how your child is spending their time in general

• Consider whether a child is engaged in activities important for healthy development

Ask yourself:
• Is my child sleeping enough and eating a somewhat balanced diet?
• Are they getting some form of exercise every day?
• Are they getting some quality time with family?
• Do they use some screen time to keep in touch with friends?
Keep Up Social Connections
• **Family**
  - Virtual time with family during this time may be a source of connection
  - Set your children up to chat with relatives

• **Creativity**
  - come up with fun ways to connect with friends online
  - Zoom party is still a way to help your child feel close to peers and loved ones during social distancing

• **Typical social schedule**
  - Think back on your child’s regular social life before coronavirus to figure out how much social screen time makes sense
  - Big bursts of socialization may cause more stress!!
Genuine Time...Be In the Moment
• Get insight into the gaming of your child
• Play with your child
• Encourage exploration
Grace
• With all that is going on, it’s impossible for anyone to be the perfect parent right now.

• Times like these don’t call for stricter limits…so cut yourself some slack!!!

• If easing-up on the rules for screens gives you time to work, exercise, or do whatever else you need to do, accept that that may be the best decision right now.

• At the end of the day, if you can give yourself a “C to a B-” (a few meltdowns, some tension, but everybody was fed and getting some rest, then you are doing quite well!!)

• Grace for yourself and your family is much more important than getting the rules just right.
Thank you!!!!