



youth service bureau

Growing Up Digital - A Summary

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A summary of research on digital media and screen time

In May 2015, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Friends of Children Fund held the “Growing Up Digital: Media Research Symposium,” which featured leading social science, neuroscience, and media researchers, pediatricians, and educators.

The goal of the symposium was to discuss how children and adolescents currently interact with digital media, to assess the existing research and evidence how it impacts physical, cognitive, social, and emotional health, and finally to determine if more research is needed on this topic.

This is a summary of what was discussed:

- **Digital media and screens are not “bad” things! They can have a positive impact on your children and adolescents... but it’s all about finding a balance between the online and offline worlds.**
- Digital media can be used to facilitate executive function, build self-control and problem-solving skills, and improve the ability to follow directions. However, **it is recommended that media should be shared together between parent and child** to help the parent more easily participate in media use AND model effective social and learning interactions.
- **Media content matters** more than the type of media or the time spent with media. If high quality content is available, a child’s interaction with media may be beneficial. **However, there is concern when media and screens take the place of unstructured free-play time and similar learning opportunities, which children need to grow and develop.**
- Well-designed games may have positive health and learning benefits for children, but more of these games need to be developed.
- **Parents need to take an ACTIVE role in guiding their children’s digital media consumption**, which includes being more aware of the apps, games, and other media that it considered to be of “high quality.” (At YSB, we recommend checking out www.common sense media.org to learn more about which media could be more beneficial for your kids).
- Media violence, such as aggressive and violent video games and television, is **not** healthy or beneficial for kids.

- Teens are using digital media to make new social connections, build independence, and explore their identities, and they will likely make mistakes online (as well as offline). **However, these mistakes can provide an important learning opportunity for teens.**
- The impact digital media can have on children and teens is not so black and white, but is more like a sliding scale, going from very negative to very positive. **It is important for parents and health care providers to ask kids and teens about their social media use, including what platforms they use, how it helps them reach their goals, and how it impacts them.**
- When it comes to both digital media and the offline world, **good parenting strategies include limit setting, establishing expectations for appropriate behavior, and teaching/modeling those behaviors.**
- **Youth need to understand the concept of “digital citizenship”** and parents, health care providers, and educators should all play a role in teaching and guiding these concepts.
- Parents should be **proactive** in discussing Internet safety and etiquette with their children.
- **What works for one family might not work for another** – one size does NOT fit all when it comes to digital media and screen time.
- **Digital media has a negative impact on sleep!** The light from screen media can disrupt sleep patterns, so children, adolescents, and parents should avoid technology at bedtime and throughout the night.
- **There is the potential for overuse and addiction.** Parents and health care providers should be aware of what classic addiction behaviors (and withdrawal symptoms) look like, such as excessive use and willingness to risk negative consequences to engage in the activity. As a parent, contact a health service provider if you have concerns.
- **Parents should model responsible media use and establish family media plans that support balance, boundaries, and communication. Setting limits at EVERY age is important, as is defining media-free times.**

For more information, check out the resources below!

Resources

Klass, Perri. (March 21, 2016). “A Reconsideration of Children and Screen Time,” from the New York Times. http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/21/a-reconsideration-of-children-and-screen-time/?em_pos=small&emc=edit_ml_20160324&nl=well-family&nl_art=4&nlid=74699726&ref=headline&te=1&r=0

American Academy of Pediatrics. (October 1, 2015). “Growing Up Digital: Media Research Symposium.” https://www.aap.org/en-us/documents/digital_media_symposium_proceedings.pdf