




Apr 8, 2021


Screen Time and Mental Wellness during the Pandemic: Information for Families

Webinar for Colonel By Secondary School, Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)
Apr 8, 2021, 6:40-7:25 PM Presentation | 7:25-8 PM Questions

Michael Cheng,
Child Psychiatrist, Mainly Working from Home
Parent of Two Elementary Kids
Special thanks to Mireille for watching the kids tonight!



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Objectives

- By the end of this session, you will be aware of
 - What we need for mental health, wellness and resiliency, such as connection to purpose, belonging, hope and meaning;
 - How modern technology, especially during COVID, can distract us from what we really need;
 - What we can do about this as parents, caregivers and families, to reconnect to those things that truly matter.

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Schedule

6:40-7:25 PM	Presentation (45-min.)
7:25-8 PM	Questions and Answers (30-min.)


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Welcome to the Great Experiment...

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Before cell phones and social media



this is how we figured out where our friends were.

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Introduction

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Its No Surprise Then Our Brains Need The Following for Wellness / Resiliency

- Basic needs
 - Face-to-face connections
 - Nature / Movement
 - Nutrition
 - Sleep
- Belonging, Purpose, Meaning, Hope*



* Health Canada, First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework, 2014

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First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework, 2014


Belonging	Feeling securely, deeply connected to other people Secure means that people can empathize, validate and accept you unconditionally (as opposed to feeling disconnected, lonely, having conflicts, conditional acceptance)
Purpose	Having activities that keep you busy and give you purpose such as: Family (e.g. being a parent, a daughter / son, etc.), Work (e.g. a teacher, a healer, a helper), Interests (e.g. volunteering, social activism, etc.)
Meaning	Knowing that what we do matters • Might be the same as our purpose (e.g. a social worker that makes a difference) • Might be different (e.g. data entry clerk whose work is not meaningful, but who volunteers in their community)
Hope	Knowing that things stay good, or get better in the future.

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For Most of Human Existence...

Hunter Gatherers



Farmers



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For Most of Human Existence...

- Children live close contact with adults doing day-to-day activities necessary for survival...






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For Most of Human Existence...


- Youth have
 - Purpose and meaning
 - Belonging with their family, their tribe.

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What is Making Us Unwell?

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 uOttawa

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For Most of Human Existence in Hunter-Gatherer Families...

- Children are in close contact with adults doing day-to-day activities necessary for the tribes' survival





Image: 123rf.com

vs. Modern society where children are sent away from family which frustrates their

- Need to be helpful, i.e. **purpose**.
- Connect with adults, i.e. **belonging**.



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For Most of Human Existence in Hunter-Gatherer Families...

- Youth have
 - Purpose and meaning**
 - Belonging with their family, their tribe.**




Image: 123rf.com

vs. modern society where many

- Lack **purpose**, i.e. focused on how to best entertain themselves and not on contributing to the tribe.
- Lack **belonging** to healthy adults, i.e. unstable peer relationships replace adults

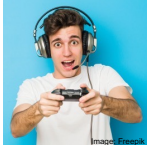


Image: Freepress

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Generation Squeeze

- Today's parents **work longer and harder to earn significantly less** than in the 1970's
- Nowadays
 - Both parents must work
 - Takes 5-years longer to save up for the first home
 - Takes longer to save before having kids
 - Less extended family support
- Thus, working adults have less time to spend with their kids, family and friends





Image: Institute for Applied Critical Thinking (IACT) <http://www.iact-now.com>

GENERATION squeeze

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How Addicted Are We?

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Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens, 2019

- Survey of 1,600 Americans aged 8-18 yo
- How much time on recreational screens, not including screens for school/homework?
 - Tweens 8-12 **4 hrs 44 min / day**
 - Teens 12-18 yo **7 hrs 22 min / day**
- Who has a smart phone?
 - 53% have a smartphone by age 11
 - 69% have a smartphone by age 12
- What are they doing?
 - Screen use
 - 50% TV
 - 31% gaming
 - 2% Video chat, reading online, creating art or music




Image: Common Sense Media


THE COMMON SENSE CENSUS:
Media Use By Tweens and Teens

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Montreal Study

- Survey of **recreational** screen use by Montrealers by Montreal Public Health Department
- Gr. 6 Students (Survey of 13,380)
 - 60% used less than 2 hrs/day
 - 19% used 2-4 hrs / day**
 - 21% (mainly males) used 4+ hrs/day**
- Adults (survey of 10,005)
 - 45% used less than 2 hrs / day
 - 39% used 2-4 hrs / day
 - 16% used 4+ hrs/day




Montreal Public Health, 2019

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Q. Which group (students or adults) were the healthiest in overall health, sleep, self-esteem, focused attention, self-control and empathy?

- a) Those using less than 2 hrs / day
- b) Those using 2-4 hrs / day
- c) Those using 4+ hrs / day


Montreal Public Health Department, 2019 

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Q. Which group (students or adults) were the healthiest in overall health, sleep, self-esteem, focused attention, self-control and empathy?

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- c) Those using 4+ hrs / day

Montreal Public Health Department, 2019 

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How Much Screen Time Is Too Much?

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Official Screen Time Guidelines


• Synthesis of various guidelines with minor differences removed

Age	Screen Time [1]	Physical Activity (2)	Nature Time (3,4)
Age 0-1	None	Several times /day	
Age 1-2	None	> 3 hr /day	
Age 2-5	Max 1 hr / day, ideally none	> 3 hr /day	> 1.25 hr /day
Age 6-11	Max 2 hrs / day, less better	> 1-hr /day	> 1.25 hr /day
Age 12-17	Max 2 hrs / day, less better	> 1-hr /day	> 1.25 hr /day

Adapted from ¹Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (2011); ²Canadian Pediatric Society (2017) ; ³Canadian Association of Optometrists; ⁴Xiong, 2017

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Why are Screens so Addictive?

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Who In Their Right Mind Would Want to Do This?




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To Ensure Species Survival, Our Brain Tricks Us into Doing Survival Activities


→



Adrenaline/Dopamine



Hunting/ gathering (i.e. violence)
 Reproduction (i.e. sex)
 Eating (i.e. high sugar foods)


→

Oxytocin





Face-to-Face Attachments


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Which is an Easier Way to Get Dopamine?



vs.




a) b)


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Which is an Easier Way to Get Dopamine?



vs.




a) b)


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Which is an Easier Way to Get Dopamine?



vs.




a) b)


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Which is an Easier Way to Get Dopamine?



vs.




a) b)


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Which is an Easier Way to Get Dopamine?



vs.




a) b)

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Which is an Easier Way to Get Dopamine?



a)

vs.



b)

Image: Adobe

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Why are Screens so Bad?

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When We Connect Excessively to Screens, We Miss What Our Brains Really Need for Wellness

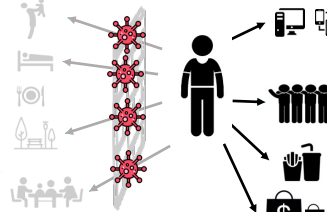
Attachment

Sleep

Nutrition

Nature

Purpose, Belonging, Meaning, hope



Recreational screens
4-7 hrs/daily
(Common Sense Media)

Peers (which are conditional) as opposed to family (which are unconditional) (Neufeld, 2007)

Poor nutrition, e.g. excess sugar, refined foods


Hedonism, narcissism, materialism...


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Problem: Screens Make Us Meaner

- Eye contact allows us to 'read' other people → Empathy and connection
- Lack of eye contact =
 - Lack of connection
 - More likely to be hostile (Lapidot-Lefler, 2012)
- Studies confirm that now compared to decades ago, we are
 - Less empathetic,
 - More narcissistic (Twenge, 2014)



Runaway violence grips class-rooms  Ottawa – May 5, 2019

Teachers threatened, kicked, hit, spit upon by even youngest kids

When her youngest child was in a kindergarten, an Ottawa mother was concerned about the amount of violence at school.

Physical or verbal, even just threat, the persistence of the targeting risk that undermines the heart's ability.


OTTAWA CITIZEN

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Problem: Our brains are adapted to this

- This is the type of sensory stimulation our brains are designed to handle
- Numerous studies confirm nature provides optimal sensory experience, leading us to have optimal brain waves and feel calm, relaxed, refreshed




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Problem: Our brains are not adapted to this

- Screens are addictive as they give our brains a rush of adrenaline / dopamine
- But it is not calming nor refreshing, and can trigger fight/flight responses
- Especially in those with brain conditions, e.g.
 - Seizure disorders,
 - Sensory processing issues,
 - Anxiety
 - Psychosis
- Multi-tasking just makes this worse...




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Problem: Screens Lead to Overstimulation

- With excess screen use over time, body is under chronic alarm / stress
 - Blood flow shifts from frontal (developed brain) to the more primitive parts of the brain
 - Body makes cortisol, a stress hormone
- Thus “Electronic Screen Syndrome (ESS)”
 - Signs/symptoms of overloaded brain mimic any psychiatric disorder
 - Problems with regulation, attention, creativity, social behavior, mood, anxiety
 - Can resemble ADHD, depression, anxiety, psychosis, etc.

Duncley V, 2014




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How Much Screen Time is Too Much?

Before the Pandemic...,

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Official Screen Time Guidelines

- Synthesis of various guidelines

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Adapted from ¹Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (2011); ²Canadian Pediatric Society (2017) ; ³Canadian Association of Optometrists; ⁴Xiong, 2017

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Before the Pandemic → Since the Pandemic

Stay off those screens!




There will be more screen time. Let's nudge it to be healthier...

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Screen Time Guidance for Parents

We accept there will be screens; let's try to make it a bit healthier.

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Teach Kids What We Need for Mental Wellness

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Limiting Screens Alone Is Insufficient

Teach People What They Need for Mental Health

Build These Things into their Daily Routines

Basic Needs (\$)

- Healthy food, housing
- Face-to-face contact
- Nature / Physical activity
- Sleep

Belonging, Purpose, Meaning, Hope*

* Health Canada, First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework, 2014

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Spend face to face time together with others

- Spend face-to-face time with meaningful people in your life
- Email, texting, social media have a place, but cannot replace deeper connection
- Show empathy, kindness and compassion towards one another
- Listen to how others feel, and accept how they feel

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Get Enough Sleep

- Left to their own 'devices', it is very hard for adults, let alone teenagers to self-regulate their use of technology
- Have an screen curfew
 - Consider 'technology bowl' for children/youth to turn in technology before bedtime

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Fill Life With Primarily Meaningful (vs. Primarily Pleasurable Activities)

- What makes people truly happy is not necessarily having fun, pleasure and hedonism, but living a life that is meaningful (Frankl, 1946)
- Usual things that are meaningful
 - Helping others
 - Making the world a more beautiful place
 - Caring for the environment...
 - Contributing, e.g. Chores, volunteering

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Spend time in nature

- **Ensure children/youth spend at least 10-hrs /week for eye health**
 - Studies suggest that children/youth need at least 10-hrs outdoors a week to prevent myopia (Rose et al., 2014)

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Get Physically Active!

- If so, reduce their risk of anxiety / depression by ensuring they are physically active
- Research shows **physical activity protects against screen time**
 - If kids are physically inactive (sedentary), then screen time is more likely to be associated with symptoms of anxiety and depressed
 - However, if kids are physically active, then they can tolerate the same amount of screen time, without being anxious or depressed

Everything gets better.

www.participation.com


Bélier M. et al.: Relationship between leisure time physical activity, sedentary behaviour and symptoms of depression and anxiety: evidence from a population-based sample of Canadian adolescents, BMJ Open, 2018

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Support Nature in Education

- Nature-based education is mainstream in many European countries (e.g. Waldorf movement from Germany; nature schools in Scandinavia)
- Unlike a many schools that have (recreational) TV in daycare and iPads in kindergarten, nature-based schools typically have no screen use until Gr. 6-8
- Even then it is only for learning; no recreational uses at all
- Examples in Ottawa:
 - Trille des bois, French public board, Ottawa
 - "Nouvelle école" (Finnish model) with French Catholic board, Ottawa
 - Ottawa Forest and Nature School (demonstration school through Child & Nature Alliance)




Trille des bois (CEPEO) (French public board), Ottawa

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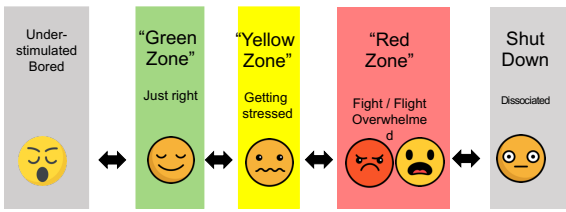
Help Your Child to Self-Regulate



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Self-Regulation 101



Under-stimulated Bored
Just right
Getting stressed
Fight / Flight Overwhelmed
Dissociated

Adapted from various self-regulation programs, including "How Does Your Engine Run?", "Zones of Regulation", Stephen Porges' polyvagal theory

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Is Technology Used to Deal with Boredom?




- Problem**
 - Many of us are turning to more technology to deal with boredom.
- Solution?**
 - Keep your kids busier with chores / responsibilities;
 - Help them learn the skill of being able to play without electronics
 - This skill developed naturally in previous generations, without the distraction and being seduced by "easy dopamine and adrenaline".

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Is Technology Used to Deal with Boredom?




- Humans are very capable of amusing themselves even in low adrenaline, low dopamine situations...


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Is Technology Used to Deal with Boredom?



- Ensure long enough tech free periods in your children's schedules with **non-tech alternatives** to occupy them such as
 - Building games, e.g. wooden blocks,
 - Creativity, e.g. crafts, drawing, sculpting with clay, play doh,
 - Puzzles
 - Books, anything we grew up in the 80's, 90's
- It's easier for them to turn to low dopamine activities if you remove competing free dopamine activities
- Does your child have high adrenaline / dopamine needs?
 - Let them move, stand, fidget, have background music — classic school strategies for ADHD.



A puzzling trend: Old-school pastime makes comeback during the coronavirus pandemic

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Is Technology Used to Deal with Boredom?

Under-stimulated Bored

• Humans are very capable of amusing themselves even in low adrenaline, low dopamine situations...




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Is Technology Used to Deal with Unpleasant Feelings?

"Yellow Zone"

Getting stressed



- Does your child struggle with anxiety, depressed or stress?
 - If so, it is natural that they may turn to screens.
- Ensure quality 1:1 time where they can
 - Feel accepted for who they are;
 - Express their feelings to adults, and
 - Adults can co-regulate, such as with radical empathy, validation, acceptance of feelings;
 - Eventually the child will learn how to self-regulate.

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Q. I Ask but My Child Doesn't Tell Me About their Day!

• Solution:

- Tell your child about your day first.
- Humans are wired to copy and reciprocate.

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4 M's

M)anage use
M)ake it meaningful
M)odel moderation
M)onitor

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Create a Family Media Plan

Family Media Plan

Media should work for you & work within your family values & parenting style. When media is used thoughtfully & appropriately, media can enhance daily life. But when used irresponsibly or without thought, media can displace many important activities such as home-to-learn instruction, family time, outdoor play, exercise, unplugged downtime & sleep.

By creating a Personalized Family Media Use Plan, you can be aware of when you are using media to achieve your purpose. This requires parents & users to think about what they want those purposes to be. The tool below will help you to think about media & create goals & rules that are in line with your family's values.

To make YOUR family's Media Use Plan, start by entering your family's information. This information will remain private and confidential.

To find this information in Spanish, click [here](#).

Get Started

Create Your Family Media Plan Media Time Calculator



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Write Down the Daily Schedule with Tech Limits

Example for school-aged child

8 AM		Wakeup, Breakfast, parent time with kids
9 AM		Outdoor time, walking the dog, etc.
10 AM		Learning time, e.g. reading, schoolwork Access to learning websites only
11 AM		Creative time, e.g. music, drawing, writing, sculpting Access to productive apps only
12 PM		Lunch, Cleanup, Chores
1-3 PM		Afternoon activities, e.g. outdoor, creative time, board games etc.
5-6 PM		Recreational screen time permitted, e.g. TV, videos, etc. No recreational screens past 6 PM
6-6:30 PM		Dinner time, then clean up
6:30-8 PM		Evening activity
8-8:30 PM		Bedtime routine
8:30-9 PM		Bedtime

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Write Down the Weekly Schedule with Tech Limits

Example for school-aged child



	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Recreational screen time	No ✗	No ✗	No ✗	No ✗	Yes ✓	Yes ✓	Yes ✓
Productive use, e.g. learning apps	Yes ✓	Yes ✓	Yes ✓	Yes ✓	Yes ✓	Yes ✓	Yes ✓

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Use Parental Controls

- Parental controls are settings that allow parents to whatever limits they have
- After it is set up on the child's device, it can be administered remotely through the parent's own device
- Can set limits such as
 - Screen curfew
 - Set allowed and non-allowed apps
 - Set allowed (and non-allowed websites, etc)
 - Set time limits

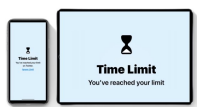
Apple's "Screen Time" Google "Digital Wellbeing"

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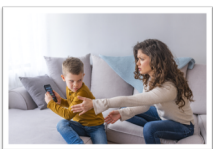
After all...

Isn't this easier?



Vs.

Than this?






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Third-Party Controls

- There are also a variety of third-party apps and devices that you can purchase to give you even greater levels of control

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4 M's

- M)anage use
- M)ake it meaningful**
- M)odel moderation
- M)onitor

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↑ Healthier Use

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Use Tech to Promote Social Connection

- Encourage real-time interaction with visual, audio (e.g. Facetime / Skype)
- Discourage asynchronous interaction that lacks visuals (i.e. lacks facial contact) and non-verbal cues (e.g. texting / Instagram / Tik Tok)
- Use less of these media that have been shown harmful for mental health
 - Instagram
 - Facebook
 - Youtube (when used for endless surfing of recreational content)

<https://www.psychalive.org/worst-mental-health-instagram-facebook-youtube/>
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/instagram-facebook-social-media-worst-for-mental-health/>

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Use Social Media More Safely, Part 1

- Set a specific time to use social media
 - Use less than 2-hrs / day – studies show > 2-hrs is associated with worse mental health.
 - Don't use social media first thing in the day.
- Before you comment
 - Ask: "Is it true?" "Is it necessary?" "**Is it kind?**" If not, don't post!

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Use Social Media More Safely, Part 2

- Live in the moment in your real life
 - When in real life, focus on real life, not taking photos to share on your social media feed.
- Connect not compare.
 - When using social media, ask, "Am I comparing myself to others? Or am I genuinely connecting and feeling closer to them?"
 - If seeing someone have a good time, try to be genuinely happy for them.
 - But if you find yourself comparing, then stop!

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Use Social Media More Safely, Part 3

- Use social media privately (e.g. messaging friends)
 - Associated with less of self-harm and thoughts of suicide) vs. using social media publicly (and looking for likes) (Kingsbury, 2021)
- Focus on your real life friends
- Follow people that spark joy.
 - Does following someone make you unhappy → Stop following them.
- Ultimately
 - Ask yourself if social media is improving your life...
 - **If not, delete social media apps from your phone**

Kingsbury et al. Computers in Human Behavior 2021

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Use Technology to Create and Invent (Instead of Just Consume)

- Use technology to
 - Create media (e.g. music, art, videos)
 - Do programming
- The reality on screen use in aged 8-18 (Common Sense Census, 2019)
 - 50% TV
 - 31% gaming
 - Only 2% is video chat, reading online, creating art or music



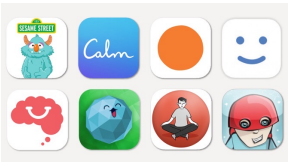
Stock-Adobe.com

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Use Apps that Tend to Make People Feel Happier

- Use more these apps which tend to help people feel happier
 - Relaxation,
 - Exercise,
 - Weather,
 - Reading, Education
- Common Sense Media has a curated list of more educational content
<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/free-online-games-activities-kids-at-home-for-entertaining>





Adam Alter: "Why our screens make us less happy", TEDS Talk

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Consider Mental Health Apps

Publicly Funded Apps

Commercial Apps

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Promote More Healthy Uses of Technology

- Watching family friendly movies together with kids (or at least being in the same room with them) (vs. letting your kids watch anything)
 - Consult MediaSmarts / Common Sense Media that have rated TV shows / movies and content for family friendliness

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Mindfulness, i.e. Promote Slow Dopamine

- Mindfulness is about enjoying the moment, i.e. slow dopamine
- If using technology anyways, then technology ways to get "slow(er)" dopamine include
 - Video games
 - Retro video games
 - Video games that are essentially board games such as
 - Online Ticket to Ride, Monopoly, Chess, Backgammon, etc., that kids can play with their others online
 - TV
 - Retro TV series from 70's and 80's that are less overstimulating for your kids
 - Younger kids
 - Read aloud videos
 - Older kids
 - Audiobooks, podcasts

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↓ Less Healthy Use

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Use Less of These Apps that Tend to Make People Feel Unhappy

- Try to use less of these apps which tend to make people less happy
 - Dating,
 - Social networking,
 - Gaming,
 - Entertainment,
 - News and web browsing apps

Adam Alter: "Why our screens make us less happy", TEDS Talk


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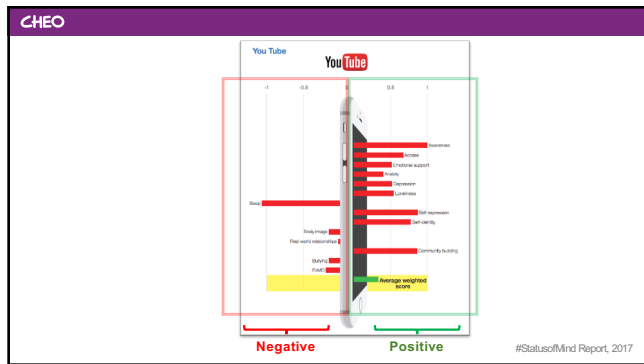
Most Social Media is Bad for Mental Health

According to the #StatusofMind Report on Social Media and Young People's Mental Health (2017)

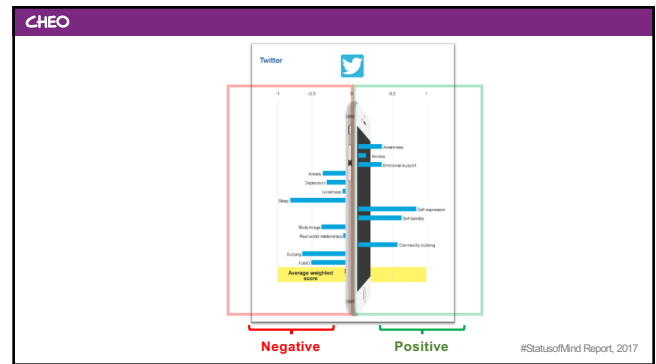
- **Slightly positive effects on mental health**
 - Youtube
- **Negative for mental health**
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Snapchat
 - Instagram (the worst!)



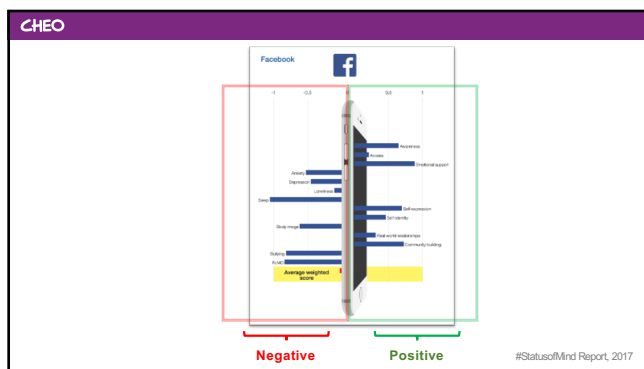
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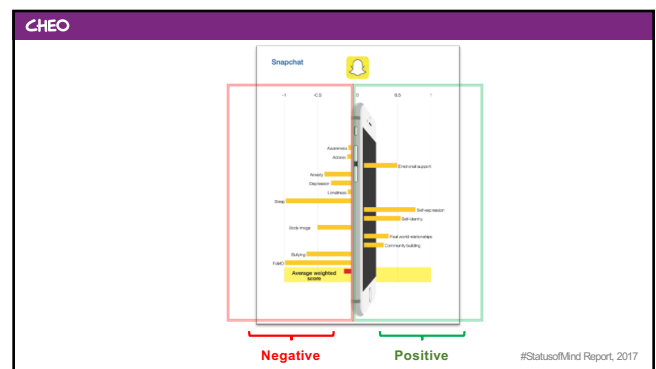
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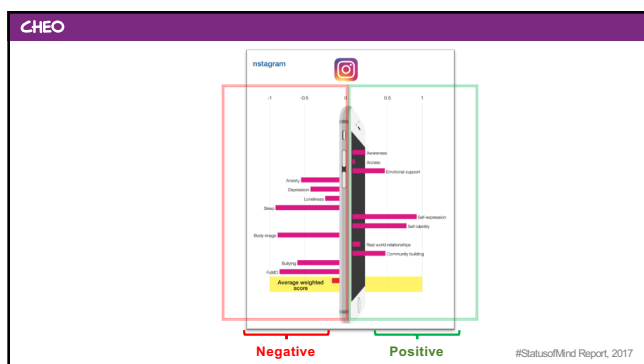
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Watching Recreational Videos?

- Challenge
 - Streaming services continue endlessly, creating the new phenomenon of 'binge watching'.
- Solution
 - Find ways to set limits on what you watch
 - Consider renting DVDs (as opposed to subscribing to a streaming service)
 - Use Netflix?
 - Consider using the Netflix DVD Service
 - Netflix actually started as a DVD rental service through the mail



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Going to Use Social Media? Make it Educational

- Can't stop using social media?
 - At least use it to learn something
- Example
 - Since the pandemic, TikTok reports increases in searches for the following
 - Learning an instrument
 - Meditation
 - Photography
 - Origami
 - Painting
 - Youtube
- Note
 - Parental controls is challenging to set with social media
 - With younger kids, it is easier to simply restrict certain websites, e.g. Youtube



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4 M's

M)anage use
M)ake it meaningful
M)odel moderation
M)onitor


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Model Healthy Tech Use as a Parent


- It is much easier to get your kids off video games and social media if you set a good example
- Steve Jobs on the iPad in 2010...
 - *"They haven't used it. We limit how much technology our kids use at home."*



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What did Steve Jobs tell his engineers that created the iPhone back in 2003?



Create something so that I can read my email while on the toilet.

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Use Your Smartphone How Steve Intended... Away from your Kids



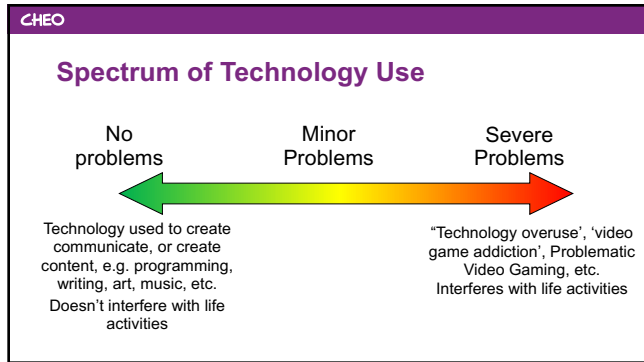
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Is My Child Addicted? Am I Addicted?

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Is Your Child Having Problems from Too Much Technology?

- If so, consider doing a detox
 - Gradual detox – slowly cut back on the technology time week by week, with a plan to get to zero screen time for at least 3-weeks
 - During the detox period, the hope is your child will do better
 - Write it down!
 - Write down what the daily schedule and weekly schedule is going to be, and how it will change week by week.

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Example of a Step-by-Step Detox Schedule

- Week 1
 - Don't start by simply taking away technology.
 - Insert healthy activities / routines, e.g. family board game night; chess time; family walks; etc.
- Week 2
 - Let them know that you're trying an experiment to help the whole family – a screen curfew!
 - All devices will be off by 1-hr before bedtime, e.g. off by 8 PM or so.
- Week 3
 - Gradually cut back on screen time;
 - Have tech-free days to break the cycle of addiction and dependency.
 - Etc.

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Is Your Child Having Problems from Too Much Technology?

- Many families will notice improvement as screen time limits are set.
- Some families will find they still struggle, and that it is best to actually get to a detox period, i.e. **no recreational screens for at least 3-weeks ideally.**
- **The child/youth will naturally reconnect to other healthy people / activities that give purpose, hope and meaning.**

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Is Your Child Having Problems from Too Much Technology?

- Most families will then gradually re-introduce technology, with a new 'screen use contract'.
 - Hopefully your child can tolerate the new limits – your child is a "moderator".
 - Unfortunately, some children cannot tolerate the new limits and continue to have problems – your child may be an "abstainer"
 - I.e. Your child may do best with little to no recreational screen time.

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Is Technology Use Causing Significant Problems In Your Life?


- Consider
 - Adults / teens
 - Rideauwood Addiction Services
 - Children/youth
 - Crossroads (up to age 12)
 - Youth Services Bureau (age 13-18)
 - Centre psychosociale (francophones)
 - Private practice
 - Psychologist, social worker, or registered psychotherapist

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Still Struggling on How to Survive without Screens?

- Ask...
 - A grandparent
 - Your Mennonite, Amish friends
 - A traditional knowledge holder



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Summary

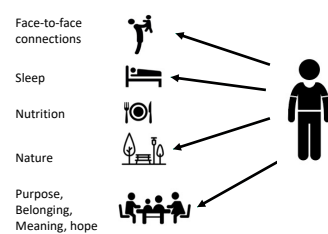
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Our Brains Are Wired to Need the Following for Mental Wellness...



Face-to-face connections

Sleep

Nutrition

Nature

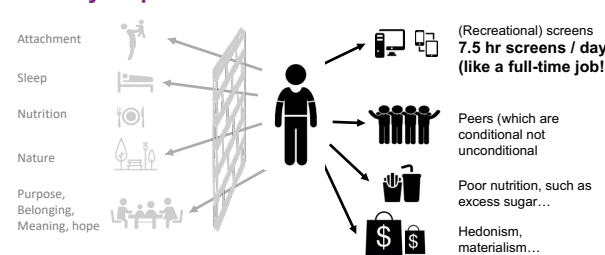
Purpose, Belonging, Meaning, hope

Health Canada, First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework, 2014.

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Modern Society Hacks Our Brains So We Turn to Easy Dopamine



Attachment

Sleep

Nutrition

Nature

Purpose, Belonging, Meaning, hope

(Recreational) screens
7.5 hr screens / day
(like a full-time job!)

Peers (which are conditional not unconditional)

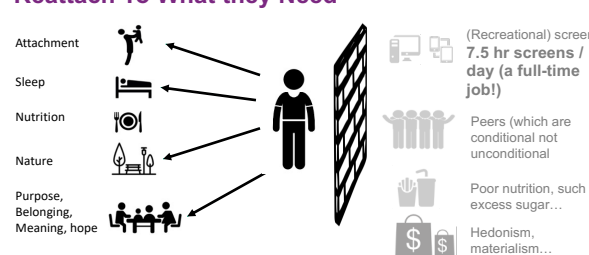
Poor nutrition, such as excess sugar...

Hedonism, materialism...

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Help Your Kids Become Indistractable to Reattach To What they Need



Attachment

Sleep

Nutrition

Nature

Purpose, Belonging, Meaning, hope

(Recreational) screens
7.5 hr screens / day
(a full-time job!)

Peers (which are conditional not unconditional)


Poor nutrition, such as excess sugar...

Hedonism, materialism...

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For More Information

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CBC Nature of Things: Kids vs. Screens

Kids vs. Screens

f t i n

How screens affect our children's development, learning abilities and mental health.

NOW STREAMING ON CBC GEM



Available on CBC Gem

Kids vs. Screens
Nature of Things


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Parent Handouts from CHEO


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BACK TO SCHOOL DURING COVID-19 TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



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PARENTING AND COPING DURING CORONAVIRUS




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Parent Handouts from eMentalHealth.ca/CHEO


- **Technology: Unplug and Connect**
 - General advice for parents about technology
- **Technology Contracts for Parents to Use**
 - Contracts that parents can cut/paste and modify
- **Nature**
 - Strategies to help parents get their kids outside into nature, which naturally balances out technology



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Looking for information about mental health and where to find help?



Information | Find Help | Screening Tools | Events Calendar

An initiative of **CHEO**

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Social Media

- Troubles with using social media? →




- Persuasively filmed documentary about how social media uses our data and manipulates us
- "The technology that connects us also controls us"
- "Dark side of technology from those that created it"

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Game Quitters

- Have a video gamer in the family? →



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Numerous TED talks on technology including tech addiction

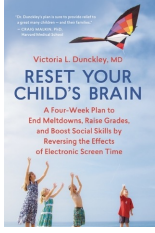
- Escaping video game addiction, Cam Adair
- What you need to know about internet addiction, Dr. Kimberly Young
- What you are missing while being a digital zombie, Patrik Wincent
- Why I don't use a smart phone, Ann Makosinski
- A year offline, what I have learned, Paul Miller



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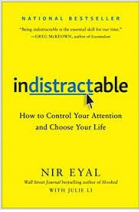
Readings

- Is your child addicted? → 
- Practical tips on how to do a tech detox for your tech addicted child

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Readings

- Want to learn how to keep connected to that which truly matters? → 
- Written by the one who literally wrote the textbook on how to create addictive technology; his advice on how to not get addicted

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Readings: How to (Re)Connect




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Readings: How to (Re)Connect




www.wholebrainchild.com www.ahaparenting.com

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Screen Guidelines (Pre-COVID)

- American Academy of Paediatrics has screen / media guidelines (2016) <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx>
- Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) has screen / media guidelines (2017) <https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children>
- MediaSmarts.ca, Canada's Centre for Digital/Media Literacy, has a good summary of evidence and is targeted towards educators, parents as well as professionals
- Position Statement on Outdoor Active Play <https://www.haloresearch.ca/outdoorplay>
- 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children/Youth www.csep.ca

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References for COVID Screen Time

- Applying Harm Reduction Principles to Address Screen Time in Young Children Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic
https://journals.lww.com/jrnlbbp/Citation/2020/07000/Applying_Harm_Reduction_Principles_to_Address.1.aspx
- Preventing problematic internet use during the COVID-19 pandemic: Consensus guidance
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0010440X20300225>

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References for COVID Screen Time

- Impact of COVID-19 on gaming disorder: Monitoring and prevention
<https://akjournals.com/view/journals/2006/9/2/article-p187.xml>
- Mental health considerations for children and adolescents in COVID-19 pandemic
<http://www.pjms.org.pk/index.php/pjms/article/view/2759/544>
- Impact of the COVID-19 virus outbreak on movement and play behaviours of Canadian children and youth: a national survey
<https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-020-00987-8>

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References for Mental Health


- Freeman J (2012). The health of Canada's young people: a mental health focus : summary, Health Canada. Retrieved Mar 18, 2015 from <http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/upload/hbsc-mental-mentale-eng.pdf>.
- Jones et al. (2015). Relationships between Negative Spiritual Beliefs and Health Outcomes for Individuals with Heterogenous Medical Conditions, 17(2): 135-152.

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Thank You!


Questions?



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QUESTIONS FROM COLONEL BY STUDENTS

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CHEO

Q. Is virtual learning in schools a detriment to our mental health? If so, how do we get around this?

A study surveyed 1290 parents of students aged 5-12 in Oct-Nov 2020.

	Virtual school or hybrid (virtual / in-person)	In-person learning
Students in Distress	25% of students in distress (according to parents)	16% of students in distress (according to parents)
Parents in Distress	54% of parents in distress	38% of parents in distress

Conclusion: Everyone is having distress. But those with virtual / hybrid are having more distress.

Verlenden et al.: Association of Children's Mode of School Instruction with Child and Parent Experiences and Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic. JAMA. Mar 19, 2021.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7911111/pdf/ncj011111.pdf>

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CHEO

Q. Is virtual learning in schools a detriment to our mental health? How do we get around this?

- What is it that in-person schooling has, which is missing from virtual school?
- Likely includes things such as
 - Face-to-face contact
 - Physical movement
 - Nature time
- Recommendation:
 - Eye recommendations, like 20/20/20 – every 20 min, look 20 feet away for 20 sec.
 - Try your best to find other ways to build these things into your daily schedule.
 - Are you on your computer for virtual school?
 - Any way to do it outside, now that the weather is nicer?
 - Talk with your friends / neighbours / family to see if there is a way you can schedule things together, like every Tuesday everyone meets up at the local skate park or park for physically distanced hanging out.

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CHEO

Q. I'm really struggling to fall asleep without browsing through social media, but I heard using your phone right before you sleep is bad for you. What should I do?

- Recommendation
 - During a time when you are awake and thinking logically, write out a daily schedule with your routines which includes your
 - Wakeup time
 - Morning routines with
 - Exposure to sunlight, physical activity, nature during the daytime. These set our body's internal clock.
 - Evening routines such as
 - Bedtime routine, e.g. shower, brushing teeth, PJs
 - Turning off blue light (i.e. devices) by 1 ½ hr before bedtime, like 8:30 PM – set your device to automatically shut off at that time (don't worry, you can always cancel it if you absolutely have to);
 - Evening calming activities, e.g. reading, drawing, listening to music
 - Consider having a red or orange LED light (instead of a regular light) in your bedroom
 - Want more information?
 - Visit www.eMentalHealth.ca > Info Sheets > Sleep / Insomnia

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CHEO

Q. No matter what I try, I can't fall asleep before 1 am. My parents don't want me to take any kind of medication for it either... are there any proven ways to shift your sleep schedule naturally?

- Have you tried all the usual sleep hygiene strategies like
 - Morning routines with exposure to light, outdoors, physical activity
 - Regular meals
 - Face-to-face human contact
 - Evening routines with no devices after 8-9 PM
 - Red lights
 - Soothing activities
 - Yoga / meditation, e.g. Calm.com app
 - Binaural beats at bedtime, e.g. Binaural beats apps, or music on Apple Music / Android / Youtube
- If so, other strategies include
 - Melatonin 0.5 mg at 5 PM or 3-9 mg at 8-9 PM
- Still struggling?
 - See your doctor

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CHEO

Q. Can't technology also be a benefit? It gives me my only social outlet right now.

Absolutely, technology has many benefits. It can help us learn; help us connect to others; help keep us entertained during this difficult time.

Every person's life is unique and you will have to ask yourself:

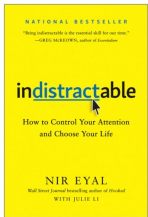
- What are the positives of technology in my life?
 - E.g. socialization.
- What are the negatives of technology in my life?
 - Pre-pandemic, studies generally showed that using more than 2-4 hrs daily of recreational screen time has been shown to get in the way of healthier life activities.
 - Is technology allowing you to socialize?
 - Wonderful, consider ensuring you use healthier ways, e.g. real time Skype / Facetime (as opposed to Instagram, TikTok, etc.)
 - Even better, find ways to set up real face-to-face contact with your friends in a park, etc.

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CHEO

Q. What are some ways I can stop myself from getting distracted by social media while working?

- Have a schedule where you write down what times you are going to be working
- Decide what times you can reward yourself with free-time, like social media.
- Set up your computer so that when you are working, that you are not interrupted by your social media.
 - E.g. disable notifications on your computer.
 - E.g. is the social media on your cellphone? Put your cellphone on airplane mode or somewhere else.



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CHEO

Q. Without being able to go out, how can I bond with my family without relying on devices so much?

- Classic ways for families to bond include:
 - Having meals together especially dinner together as a family.
 - After dinner walks.
 - Getting a dog in order which forces you to have walks together.
 - Doing chores / responsibilities together as a family.
 - Family board game night.
 - Shared interests such as playing music together.

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QUESTIONS FROM COLONEL BY PARENTS

CHEO



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Q. I try to limit screen time but when they are having the virtual lessons or have to do homework using the computer (there are no textbooks here) and they have to click to the links provided by teachers to finish their homework...

Indeed, it is very challenging to set limits when they have to use devices for virtual school.

Parents are busy, and don't have the time to provide constant supervision...

Consider parental controls such as

- Built-in controls;
- Third-party controls that can limit access to gaming sites or social media during school hours.

Eventually however, today's generation will need to learn how to be responsible and regulate their own use of devices...

What do teachers think?

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Q. How do we help those youth who need help realize they need help?

- "Connection before direction"
 - First, don't start with direction and simply telling your youth what to do.
 - Although it might work with some youth, this often simply works with others.
 - Connect by
 - Spending regular quality time together.
 - Doing essential household chores together such as getting groceries ; cooking ; cleaning.
 - Are you making dinner? Involve your child with you together (and not sending him/her elsewhere to do a different non-dinner chore like clean the basement, clean their room, etc.)
 - Is your teen expressing a feeling like being upset or frustrated over something?
 - Listen, and validate your child's feelings like you might validate that of a good friend or your spouse.
 - Do not start by giving your teen advice.
 - Once connected, mention to your teen that you are concerned about their stress level, about their feeling sad / upset.
 - "I'm worried about all the stress you're under.... Its tough to see you sad all the time. What do you think?"
 - "How can I help?"
 - "I'm wondering if you'd be open for us to talk to a doctor or a professional. What do you think?"
 - AccessMHA

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Q. What to do when your teen doesn't want to listen to you when you ask him to stop electronics and uses internet all the time for school and leisure as that's the only place where he feels good?

- "Connection before correction"
 - Validate that your teen is trying to feel better.
 - Ask what the electronics is providing
 - Sense of achievement? Intellectual stimulation?
 - Helping others?
 - Connection to others?
 - Try to problem-solve together, in order to find real-world activities to give the same thing.
 - Is your youth spending over 4 hrs / daily?
 - Look at ways to involve your youth with more daily chores / responsibilities.
 - Volunteer work.
 - Is it to feel connected? Support your youth in finding face-to-face ways to connect.
 - Is it to feel a sense of adrenaline? Go mountain biking with your youth. Invite friends over for a nerf-gun battle.
- Is your youth still struggling? Could it be depression, anxiety, tech addiction?
 - Speak to the school about resources / supports
 - Contact <https://www.accessmha.ca/> to access mental health services

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CHEO

Q. Recommended number of screen time for children by age groups?

- Synthesis of various guidelines with minor differences removed

Age	Screen Time [1]	Physical Activity (2)	Nature Time (3,4)
Age 0-1	None	Several times /day	
Age 1-2	None	> 3 hr /day	
Age 2-5	Max 1 hr / day, ideally none	> 3 hr /day	> 1.25 hr /day
Age 6-11	Max 2 hrs / day, less better	> 1-hr /day	> 1.25 hr /day
Age 12-17	Max 2 hrs / day, less better	> 1-hr /day	> 1.25 hr /day

Adapted from ¹Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (2011); ²Canadian Pediatric Society (2017) ; ³Canadian Association of Optometrists; ⁴Xiong, 2017

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Q. Strategy for convincing (fellow) parents to limit screen time?

- Connection before direction
 - "Try to agree on a common goal", e.g.
 - "For our kids to spend more time outside."
 - "For our kids to do more healthy, non-electronic things, e.g. sports, board games."
 - Once you agree on a goal, you can then try to agree on a strategy
 - "What if we cut back on their screen time?"
 - "What if we had a rule that when our kids are playing with each other, that they aren't allowed to play video games? Or that they have to spend time at the park first?"

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Q. How do you improve your energy levels without resorting to caffeine?

- First step, ensure that your body is getting what it needs to be functioning well such as
 - Sleep: Get enough sleep (at least 8-11 hours / night)
 - Physical activity: As an adult, try to get at least 30-60 minutes physical activity, e.g. Consider brief 15-min walking breaks.
 - Healthy diet: Have a breakfast with whole grains / protein; At lunch, don't have a big carb filled lunch.
 - Are you drinking more than 4 cups coffee? Consider cutting back within 2-4 cups daily... Or even consider a coffee detox...
- Are you still struggling?
 - See your doctor to rule out medical issues, e.g. thyroid problems, etc.

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Q. What do you suggest for a teen in virtual school (due to health issues) and does not have friends. I am very concern about his well being, although he says he is fine and never complains I am wondering if it is really...

- What is the health issue?
 - With certain health issues, there might be a support group of other youth with going through similar issues.
 - Does the teen have services at CHEO for example? If so, is there a social worker at the clinic, or doctor at the clinic who might have some ideas.
- Are there any ways for that teen to meet with others outside?
 - We would assume and hope that the teen does have friends that s/he met earlier – can they get outside?
- If not, then it sounds like that this youth needs help making new connections to people and activities that give purpose, hope, belonging and meaning...
 - Connection starts at home
 - Ensure the youth is contributing with family activities and spending time with family.
 - Purpose
 - Are there ways for the youth to volunteer and help out neighbours with outdoor tasks?
 - Ask the school

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Q. COVID Anxiety and teens. What are the long-term effects of COVID anxiety / mental health issues?

- It is hard to comment on the long-term mental health effects of COVID, as this is all unprecedented.
- Sick Kids did a study, surveying 1,000 parents of children/youth aged 2-18, and 350 youth aged 10-18, in Apr/June 2020.
- Results showed children are:
 - Mostly worse, i.e. 70% had worsening in at least area of depression, anxiety, irritability, attention span, hyperactivity, obsessions/compulsions
 - Those with pre-existing conditions such as ASD, ADHD have been more vulnerable to doing worse.
 - Some better, i.e. 20% of school-aged kids, and 30% of pre-school children, had improvement in at least domain
- What about the long run?
 - It all depends – If we can support a person with their stress such that it can be "healthy stress", they may emerge stronger from this.
 - If a person however is overwhelmed with stress such that it is "toxic stress", then they may continue to struggle with long-term effects...

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