

Judge Baker Children's Center Speaker Series

Limit Setting in the Age of Technology: Effective Strategies for Kindergarten Through 8th Grade

Westwood High School

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**HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
AFFILIATE**



**JUDGE BAKER
CHILDREN'S CENTER**

Welcome

Robert P. Franks, Ph.D.
President and CEO
Judge Baker Children's Center

Panel:

Todd Danforth, Ph.D.

School Psychologist, E.W. Thurston Middle School

Licensed Psychologist in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Danielle Sutton, M.S.W., LICSW

Director at Westwood Youth and Family Services

Sarah A. Tannenbaum, Psy.D.

Associate Director, Camp Baker at Hale

Staff Psychologist, Center for Effective Child Therapy

Judge Baker Children's Center

Screen Time

2015 report issued by **Common Sense Media** found:

- Teenagers (ages 13-18) consume 9 hours of entertainment media per day on average.
- Tweens (ages 8-12) use an average of 6 hours a day, not including time spent for school or homework.

Environmental Research

(Volume 164, July 2018, Pages 149-157)

KEY COMPONENTS DETERMINING SCREEN TIME EFFECTS:

Duration

Content

After-dark-use

Media type

Number of devices

Disrupted Sleep

Increases Internalizing and Externalizing behaviors

- Depressive and Anxiety symptoms
- Dysregulated Behavior

Brain structural changes related to cognitive control and emotional regulation are associated with digital media addictive behavior.

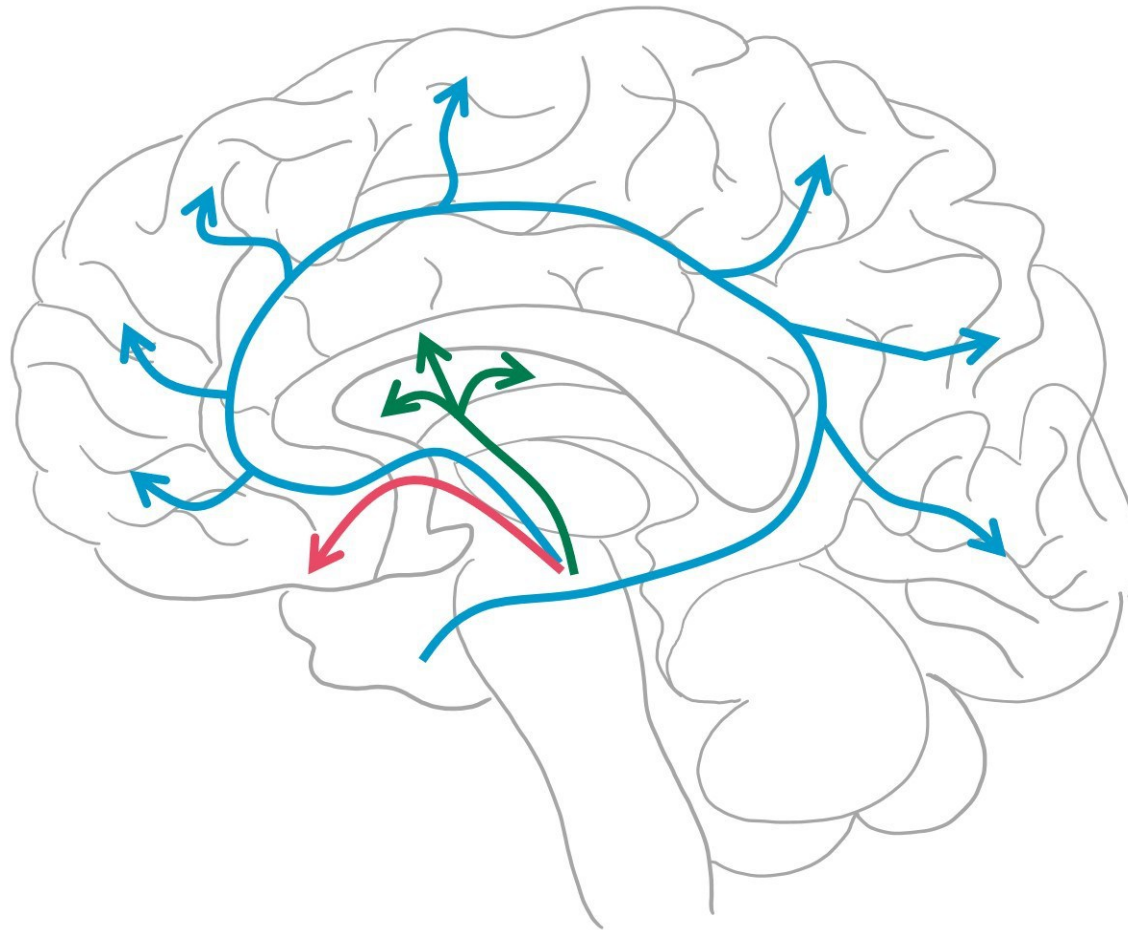
Dopamine

NOREPINEPHRINE- both in the brain and in the peripheral nervous system. Arousal, and regulation of sleep, mood and blood pressure.

EPINEPHRINE - affects the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system.

DOPAMINE- Regulates emotional responses and plays a role in schizophrenia and addiction.

3 Major Dopamine Pathways



MESOCORTICAL

Cognition, Memory,
Attention, Emotional
Behavior, & Learning

NIGROSTRIATAL

Movement & Sensory
Stimuli

MESOLIMBIC

Pleasure & Reward
Seeking Behaviors;
Addiction, Emotion,
Perception

B.F. SKINNER'S

Variable reward schedules

A reward pattern optimized to keep you engaged as much as possible.

“Programmers work very hard behind the screens to keep you doing exactly that”.

*Trevor Haynes
Department of Neurobiology at Harvard Medical School*

Why does positive social stimuli matter?

Laughing faces, positive recognition by our peers, messages from loved ones activate dopaminergic reward pathways and form emotional connections.

The issue:

A “like” on Instagram or Facebook is also a positive social stimulus and dopamine influx but occurs in isolation.

Ugly truth time...

Parent screen time is the strongest predictor of child screen time.

Parent screen time and parent attitudes influence child screen time.

Screen Time Use Recommendations from American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

Children younger than 18 months:

- Avoid screen media other than video-chatting (ex. FaceTime with family)

Children 18 to 24 months:

- Choose high-quality programming
- Watch with your child to help them understand what they are seeing

Children ages 2 to 5 years:

- Limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs
- Co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing

Children ages 6 and older:

- Place consistent limits on screen time (time, types of media, content)
- Make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep or physical activity
- Designate media-free times together as well as media-free locations at home
- Have ongoing communication about screen time use and safety

Lay a Foundation

What do the experts say?

American Academy of Pediatrics

Common Sense Media

Screenagers (Dr. Ruston)

What do other children and families do?

Common Sense Media “Census” Reports and Survey

Screenagers Blog Submissions and Comments

Talking with other families

What are the preferences and styles of your family?

Family values and expectations

Family strengths and challenges

What would “balance” or a “healthy diet” look like in our house?

Start and Maintain the Conversation

Conversations

Calm and positive setting

Age-appropriate language and concepts

Children go first

Brainstorm (no right/wrong answers or ideas)

Ideas, Limits, Problem-Solving Solutions

Narrow Down the List and Experiment

Weekly meetings

Tech Talk Tuesdays (Dr. Ruston of *Screenagers*)

Get it in Writing

Common Sense Media Family Media Agreements

Different Agreements for K-5th, 6th-8th, 9th-12th

This handout is included in the JBCC packet

Screenagers Family Contract Template

<https://www.screenagersmovie.com/family-contract>

Picture It!

I've Created a Screen Time Monster...



Grandma's Law (Premack Principle)

- If you do...(homework, chores, etc.), then you get X minutes of screen time

Avoid negotiation, make expectations clear

- Caregivers must be on the same page and model appropriate use
- Have specific “good behaviors” that result in earned screen time

DON'T say, “if you behave well, you get screen time”

DO say, “if you spend 30 minutes doing focused schoolwork, you earn 15 minutes on your phone”

Setting Limits and Structure Around Screen Time

- Create a chore and reward menu
- Discuss with your spouse and other caregivers what you agree to
- How much screen time is too much in your family?
- Set a limit and **stick to it**



Examples:

No more than 1 hour per day used by 8pm

Specific sites or modalities with a value that they trade in for

Case Example: Joel



- Meet Joel
- 14 year old boy with anxiety and social skills deficits
- Spends ~6 hours on screen per day
- Only socializes with friends through online communities
- Parents say, “he’s addicted to screens” and feel like they have no control
- When they try to shut screens down, he gets aggressive (e.g., verbal threats, throwing property, refusing to comply with instructions to stop)

What would you do?

Joel's Responsibilities

Responsibility Chart

Chore or Job	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Weekly Total
Bringing your dishes to the kitchen after dinner (2)								
Brush your teeth 1 time per day (2)								
Walk the dog within 15 minutes of being asked (2)								
Walk the dog without anyone asking (5)								
Brush your teeth 2 times per day (5)								
Ride the exercise bike for 30 minutes (5)								
Complete laundry checklist (15)								
Do something social (15)								
Complete trash checklist (15)								
Points Redeemed								
Points Remaining								
Total Points for the week:								

*Parents can earn give additional bonus points for good behavior and flexibility

Using Screen Time To Your Advantage

Rewards Menu!

Privilege	Cost
1 hour of screen time (must be used by 10pm)	1
Order Chinese take out for dinner	15
Trip to Orange Leaf	15
Trip to Game Stop	20
Trip to a comedy show	20
Getting an electric guitar	100

Don't Struggle Alone! Seek Help

If your child is like Joel, please reach out for help sooner rather than later.

- Recommended treatment = Behavioral Parent Training

These problems can start small but get big very quickly.

You and your child will thank you if you set and hold reasonable limits and expectations around screen time.

Q & A

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