

[IMAGE]

Worried About Screen Time? So Are Your Kids

By Editorial Staff

The Digital Age has brought with it costs and benefits, with one of the greatest costs, at least if you ask many parents, being the amount of time their children are immersed in potentially dangerous, distracting, mind-numbing "screen time" via cellphones, laptops, tablets and all other manner of electronic devices. But don't think you're the only ones worried about your kids' screen time. *So are they* - well, sort of. Here's another reason to limit your children's time and some great suggestions on how to do it.

No parent wants their child to experience anxiety, much less depression, but it can happen for various reasons. Peer pressure, home / school demands and other factors can all come into play. So why would anyone want to add "screen time" to the mix when research suggests it also may contribute to anxiety and depression?

Researchers recently investigated the potential connection between exposure to digital media – television, video games, computers, tablets, smartphones, and other devices – and anxiety / depression in children and adolescents. Here's what some of the current research suggests, according to the researchers' review, published in the peer-reviewed research journal *Pediatrics* last month:

- "Anxiety resulting from lack of emotion-regulation skills because of substituted digital media use"
- "Social anxiety and depression from lack of social interaction because of substituted digital media use"
- "Anxiety because of worries about being inadequately connected"
- "Anxiety, depression, and suicide as the result of cyberbullying and other media use behaviors"

screen time - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark So, what can you do about it? Limiting your child's digital media use seems like the easy answer, but it's not necessarily that simple. After all, as the researchers suggest, removing digital media, particularly for communication purposes (texting, emailing, etc.) can increase your child's anxiety and depression because they feel they're helpless to connect with their friends / communicate with "their world." Here are a few suggestions the researchers provide to create a healthy balance of digital media use in your home:

- Develop household rules about digital media use and media use in general.
- Help teach children about appropriate vs. inappropriate content using ratings, reviews, plot descriptions, etc.
- Screen material before allowing your child to access it, and block sites / use content filters according to age.
- Look for high levels of anxiety, sleep problems, behavioral problems and other symptoms that could be related to digital media use.

Finally, keep in mind that in moderation, digital media has benefits for your children, particularly with so many apps and websites at your fingertips to teach, motivate and inspire your child to learn. Talk to your doctor for more information about the pros and cons of digital media and how to make it a healthy part of your household.

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