[IMAGE]

Time to Tone Down the Tech

By Editorial Staff

Are you slowly but surely losing your kids to technology? Perhaps you're even considering scheduling your children for outpatient surgery just to remove their smartphones, tablets, laptops and other electronic devices from their possession. Believe it or not, you can do something about their tech habits without such drastic action. It's not going to be easy, but the benefits could be profound.

Here's your lesson on how to tone down the tech in your household without becoming the "strict parent" your children will warn their friends about and rebel against. It's time to become a TECH parent.

According to a position paper in *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the TECH (Talk, Educate, Co-view / Co-use and House Rules) parenting model can be an effective way to control your children's tech / media use. Here's a brief explanation of each letter in the acronym:

- *Talk*: Discuss tech use with your children and don't be afraid to monitor their activities. Don't think policing as much as promoting dialogue. Ask about their favorite apps, online TV shows, social media platforms, etc., why they enjoy using them, how they use them to interact with friends, and any negatives they've noticed about using them. If nothing else, it's a chance to have a conversation with your kids – especially if you have teens who are progressively disappearing into their rooms for hours on end.

- kids on cell phone - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark *Educate* your children about the risks associated with various types of media they utilize with their devices. This can include discussions regarding online bullying, overuse issues (mental and physical), ads / marketing practices they may be exposed to online, etc.

- *Co-view / Co-use:* This basically means participate in your children's use of technology. Screen every app before letting them use it. If it's inappropriate, explain why. The same goes for the Internet, including all TV shows, YouTube videos, etc. But this is less about being "Big Brother" and more about understanding how your kids are using technology, and then making sure you're on the same page with regard to what's OK and not OK when it comes to using it.

- *House rules:* Establish clear rules for the use of technology / media in your home. For example, you

could make the dinner table a tech-free zone; limit tech use for certain hours of the day (during homework hours, on weeknights, and so on); or create a tech "bedtime" one hour or more before actual bedtime. You could even consider storing devices in a central location overnight so children are not tempted to stay up late / utilize them after you've gone to bed.

Don't think any of this will work? Is what you're currently doing working? If not, it's time to take control of your children's tech time the right way.

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