

[IMAGE]

Too Little Talking

By Editorial Staff

That's how screen time can negatively influence the parent-child relationship, according to new research – and the damage can be done during a critical time: a child's first three years of life. Let's see what the research found and how you can help foster more parent-child communication (at any age) by tightening the reins on screen time.

First, the study, which investigated the potential relationship between screen time and three specific measures of parent-child talk: adult words, child vocalizations and conversational turns. Children enrolled in the study were 12-36 months of age. Researchers utilized speech recognition technology to capture both the children's screen time and "home language environment" (in other words, how much they talked with their parents) every six months from 12-36 months.

Findings, which appear in the research journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, revealed that "for every additional minute of screen exposure, parents and children were generally talking or vocalizing less and were engaging in fewer back-and-forth interactions."

OK, so how do we limit screen time, particularly when our children are young and will benefit the most from live interaction that aids in their development; while appreciating that certain screen engagements can be beneficial (e.g., for learning)? Here's one of the most important tips specific to young children, courtesy of the Mayo Clinic: "If you introduce digital media to children ages 18 to 24 months, make sure it's high quality and avoid solo media use."

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