



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

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How Should We Teach Our Kids To Use Digital Media?

Contributed by Jenny Radesky, MD, Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, University of Michigan
(adapted from The Conversation's How should we teach our kids to use digital media?)

Any time a new technology is introduced, it disrupts values, routines, and behaviors. This goes back well before the printing press replaced oral histories or the telephone replaced face-to-face conversations, but is evident today in our regular habits of checking our smartphones for notifications. Kids are growing up with the expectation of auto-playing streaming videos and having access to our phones when we need them to be quiet. With the rapid pace at which new digital products and services are being developed, parents report feeling particularly overwhelmed. They fear missing out on what benefits technology might hold for their families, yet don't fully trust that electronic devices and apps are designed or marketed with their child's best interest in mind.

We doctors used to urge parents to discourage media use under age two and to limit kids' use to two hours a day, at most. But we have now arrived at a more nuanced understanding of the various ways in which children use digital tools. Through review of the updated science, interviews and focus groups with parents from diverse backgrounds, and our own clinical experience, we are now recommending that parents use media as a teaching tool, a way to connect and create, instead of just to consume.

As a developmental behavioral pediatrician, parent of two young boys and lead author of the new American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement "Media and Young Minds," I wanted to share the essential health and developmental concerns surrounding digital media.

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How Should We Teach Our Kids To Use Digital Media? cont.

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- ✦ Obesity is associated with heavy media use.
- ✦ Disturbances in sleep duration occur with presence of media in a bedroom or evening screen exposure.
- ✦ Developmental delays in cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills are associated with excessive television viewing and diminished parent-child interaction. Content is a crucial factor influencing behavior and development.
- ✦ Parental media use, including background television and heavy mobile use is associated with decreased verbal interaction with children and increased conflict between parents and children.

Pediatrician's Principles to Keep in Mind:

- ✦ We emphasize teaching children that media use means more than just entertainment. It can involve connecting with others, creating and learning together. Steer children to take photos, record videos or songs, look up craft or science ideas.
- ✦ As far as entertainment, we recommend trusted content producers such as Sesame Workshop and PBS Kids, who design apps with the child's and parent's needs in mind. There is also Common Sense Media, a site for finding information on digital products and answering tech-related parenting questions.
- ✦ We recommend having unplugged spaces and times of day so that both parent and child can play, be bored, or talk without distraction or feeling a need to multitask.
- ✦ We ask parents to test apps and watch videos with their children to determine if they are a good fit for their child's temperament, rather than letting the child make all of these choices.
- ✦ Parents should not feel pressure to introduce their children to technology early in life for the sake of seeking a competitive advantage. If parents want to introduce media early, the youngest age we recommend is 18 months, and that parents play or view along with the child for there to be any educational benefit, such as learning new words. Otherwise that expensive tablet may just be a portable TV or cause-effect toy.

Our shared long-term goal in the special needs community and community at large, is to raise kids with good sleep habits, healthy bodies, a variety of interests and curiosity about the world, who feel good about learning and their relationships. As our children grow, we hope that they see the parents and professionals in their lives as guides when they encounter weird stuff online or have negative interactions on social media. I hope the new guidance can help all parents: medical professionals, therapy providers, and children begin a discussion and establish personalized guidance for the child with special learning needs who may rely on the support of their team to implement creative uses of media and meaningful and safe limits.

A Resolution for Responsible Technology Use in the New Year

January marks the beginning of a new year, and many will create New Years resolutions in a continual quest for a better quality of life. This year, consider the opportunity to work with older children and adolescents to understand and make a New Year's resolution- a promise to take care of one's self, one's health, one's progress toward living the best life that they possibly can. The American Academy of Pediatrics released a Technical Report on Children and Adolescents and Digital Media in November 2016. This insightful document reminds us of the importance of connecting with others, and not just (digital) things. As a professional who frequently relies on technology for the benefit of my patients, I remind myself and my patients of the adage that 'anything in excess' is not healthy. How fitting this is for the benefits and risks of excessive media use on learning, broadening interests, future independence, and social engagement. Here are some suggestions for New Years resolutions that promote responsible technology use, that could help set up an individual with autism for future success!

Please join me in my resolution to use digital technology in a healthy way in 2017!

**Contributed by Monica Puente,
M.A., CCC-SLP, Assistive Technology Consultant, AAoM**

For my health:

- ✓ I will eat meals without TV, smartphones, tablets, or video games and have conversations with those around me.
- ✓ I will limit screen time for programming that is not quality or educational programming.
- ✓ I will watch TV programming together with others, and talk about what we see, the characters, the plots, the humor and content.
- ✓ I will play educational games on tablets and phones that help me build upon BOTH my strengths and my needs.
- ✓ I will watch videos and visit web sites that teach me technical and social skills that will help meet my future career goals- such as Khan Academy, or making good choices on YouTube.
- ✓ I will turn off the TV and all screens 1 hour before bedtime and read a book, do a puzzle, or just relax. If I rely on technology to communicate, I will use a blue-light blocking setting on AAC devices 1 hour before bedtime.
- ✓ I will use technology in a pro-social manner-to solve problems, send greetings to loved ones far away, to laugh with others, and as a model for appropriate social interactions that I am also working toward in face to face communication.
- ✓ I will find alternate ways to self-sooth and relax – going for a walk, brushing my hair, singing, dancing, and playing an instrument.
- ✓ I will model appropriate technology use for others when I have learned how to use media in a healthy manner.

3rd Annual Navigating Autism Today Conference

Thursday, March 9th 8:00AM-3:00PM
VisTaTech Center at Schoolcraft College
18600 Haggerty Rd, Livonia, MI 48152

More Information & Registration Details at www.AAOMCONFERENCE.org



JANUARY AT A GLANCE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
1	2	3 New Superflex Social Skills Group (Northville)	4	5 Able Act and Special Needs Trusts (Bloomfield Hills)	6	7 Sensory Sensitive Movies at Rave Cinemas, Flint West 14(Flint)
8 Sensory Friendly Sunday at the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra by My Turn (Ann Arbor)	9 Canton Leisure Club Workshop Winter Session (Canton)	10	11 What Psychiatry Should Know About Contemporary Health Policy (Ann Arbor)	12 Financial Planning and Advanced Funeral Planning(Westland)	13 St. Francis Camp on the Lake Respite Care Weekend Retreats (Jerome)	14 The ABCs of ABA (Southfield) Golf Program (Ferndale)
15	16	17 The Benefits of Self-Care for the Selfless Caregiver (West Bloomfield)	18 Positive Behavior Supports (Otsego) Managing ADHD Through Behavioral & Tech.(Plymouth)	19 Positive Behavior Supports (Adrian) Making Time for Yourself (Rochester)	20 Spartans Stores YMCA Family Hope Program (Wyoming)	21 ASD 101 an Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder (Ypsilanti)
22	23 Sibling Support Workshop (Grand Haven)	24 Overview of Discipline for Students with Disabilities (Northville)	25	26 Nurturing Parenting Series (Iron Mountain) Developmental Disabilities and Dementia (Westland)	27 MSU Research on Autism Distinguished Speaker Series – Catherine Lord (East Lansing)	28 Midwest Behavior Analysis Job Fair (Kalamazoo)
29	30 Early Start Denver Model (ESDM)-Advanced Workshop (Ann Arbor)	31 Mental Health First Aid Course (Cadillac)				



The mission of Autism Alliance of Michigan is to lead collaborative efforts across the state that will improve the quality of life for individuals with Autism through education, comprehensive services, community awareness, inclusion efforts, and coordinated advocacy.

Please Visit Our Community Calendar for full event listings at www.navigators.autismallianceofmichigan.org/events

For more information on any of these events please contact MiNavigator at 877-463-AAOM or Navigators@aaomi.org

