Take-home Family Resources
MINDFULNESS

MISSION: Healthy Kids

Reducing kids' screen time

SCREEN TIME GUIDELINES

Today, in a world surrounded by digital media 24/7, and where kids are using technology at school and doing homework online, defining screen time is difficult.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) identifies screen time as time spent using digital media for entertainment purposes.

CURRENT AAP RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:

For children ages 2 to 5, screen time should be limited to one hour per day.
For kids ages 6 and older, parents can determine the restrictions for time spent using screens, as well as monitor the types of digital media their children use.
Babies are most vulnerable to screens, so screen time is not recommended.

HOW TO SET LIMITS AND REDUCE SCREEN TIME

- **Set clear boundaries** surrounding kids and screen time, and stick to them.
- **Decide which programs to watch ahead of time.** Turn the TV off when the programs are over.
- **Engage in family activities.** Play a board game, do a puzzle, read a book together or go for a walk. Keep a list of activities you would like to do together in your free time.
- **Enroll in extracurricular activities.** Get kids involved and engaged in activities like sports, theater and music.
- **Parents, model good behavior** by limiting your screen time, too. Leave technology behind when picking kids up from school, at school functions and when putting kids to bed. Give them your full, undivided attention. They deserve it, and it models good behavior for them, too.

MISSION: Healthy Kids

Grow healthy minds at home

Learning mindfulness can help kids pay attention better, be less distracted, learn more, stay calm under stress, increase patience, feel happier and become more empathetic.

MINDFULNESS IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

1. Take a listening walk. Go someplace – even your backyard – and walk together in silence, listening for sounds you might typically overlook: leaves rustling, a pine cone falling from a tree or your own steady breath.

2. Do a daily body scan. Have your kids lie down on their back on a comfortable surface and close their eyes. Then, tell them to squeeze every single muscle in their body as tight as they can. Tell them to squish their toes and feet, squeeze their hands into fists, and make their legs and arms as hard as stone. After a few seconds, have them release all their muscles and relax for a few minutes. This simple exercise gets kids to be more aware of their bodies and helps them learn to be present in the moment.

3. Practice mindful breathing with a Hoberman Sphere. a Hoberman sphere, or breathing ball, can help teach kids mindful breathing. It can be used to demonstrate how the lungs fill with air and expand on the in-breath, then contract with the out-breath. It also serves as a point of focus for mindful breathing.

4. Make a mindful jar. This activity teaches children about how strong emotions can take hold, and how to find peace when these emotions come up. When kids shake the glitter-filled jar, they imagine that the whirling glitter is their thoughts when they are stressed, mad or upset. Once the glitter settles, it demonstrates how it's easier to think and see clearly. (Instructions are on missionhealthykids.org)

5. Reduce screen time. Screen time includes watching TV, using a cell phone or tablet, working on a computer, or playing video games. Because screen time is a sedentary activity, it can have a negative impact on kids' overall health. It also can raise your child's risk for attention problems, aggression, anxiety and depression. Screen time, especially in the hours before bedtime, is associated with poor sleep quality.

More detail about these mindfulness ideas and resources are available on

missionhealthykids.org

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Reducing stress in kids and teens

What is stress?

Stress is an emotional and/or physical response to a threat or pressure. Some stressors, such as the desire to receive good grades, can be beneficial to overall performance. Stress that seems unmanageable though, can harm a child both physically and emotionally. Parents and teachers should understand that some things that aren't a big deal to adults can cause significant stress for kids. Let kids know that you understand they are stressed without minimizing their concerns, and help them find ways to cope.

Types of stress

There are three types of stress: acute, episodic and chronic. Acute stress occurs when there is a pressure or demand connected to a past, present or future important event. Examples of this could be feeling stress before taking a test or giving a class presentation, feeling anxious before a big game, or going onstage for a performance. Episodic stress is acute stress that occurs frequently instead of just one incident at a time. Chronic stress is a constant stress that can produce a lasting, low-level feeling of being tired or overwhelmed. Sometimes, kids need help to deal with these difficult situations that lead to intense or lasting stress.

Keep stress under control

There are ways to help kids reduce stress, including: being mindful of over scheduling; making sure they get enough rest; helping them build positive and supportive relationships; and finding ways to help them unplug and relax.

Using breathing practices to relax

One of the best ways to help reduce stress is to learn how to relax. The body's relaxation response is the opposite of stress and brings a feeling of well-being and calm. The belly breath or deep-breathing practice increases attentiveness and relaxation and can be done at school or at home. Deep breathing is the action of placing your hand on your stomach and focusing on how the breath feels both inside and outside your body. Ask kids how they feel before and after completing the exercise.

How to belly breath or deep breath:

1. Start sitting or lying down with one hand placed on your belly below the navel.
2. Begin to take slow deep breaths. Focus your attention on how it feels to inhale and then exhale.
3. Repeat slow, rhythmic breaths until more relaxed and focused.

Take 5ive mindfulness:

Take 5ive is a free resource created in partnership with Growing Minds that offers different videos and exercises surrounding mindfulness practices. Watch Take 5ive mindfulness videos on HealthyKidsLearnMore.com.

missionhealthykids.org

Mission: Healthy Kids raises awareness about the impact of nutrition, physical activity and healthy minds on kids' physical development, ability to learn and emotional well-being, and it offers resources for students, parents and educators to help kids eat right and stay active.

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