

Anticipatory Guidance: Media and Time Management



It is important to manage screen media use as part of a balanced diet of activities. Time for family, friends, nature, school, and sleep are all integral to an adolescent's healthy development. Integrating media as part of a balanced lifestyle in mindful and focused ways can also benefit and enrich the lives of adolescents.

What the Evidence Says

- Media multitasking is a myth—despite the fact that many adolescents believe that they can multitask with media seamlessly.¹ Using media while doing homework can take away from their ability to focus and complete their work due to distractions.
- Excessive screen time during adolescence is associated with physical and mental health problems, including obesity, sleep disturbances, and poor academic performance.²
- How much time parents spend watching TV, playing video games, and staring at their phones will influence how their children behave around similar media.³

Recommendations

- The AAP's Family Media Plan is a useful tool to recommend to families struggling with balancing media use in their daily lives. Parents can complete the online form *with* their teen, scheduling time for both screen and non-screen activities. Advise the parent that learning time management skills early will help prepare adolescents for future success through early adulthood and beyond. The Family Media Plan is available online:
 - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media>
- Media multitasking is not as productive as teens may think. Help parents understand how screens can interfere with school performance and encourage them to talk with their child about prioritizing their time so that they are able to learn and complete their assignments in focused ways without multitasking with media.
- Help the adolescent and the family strategize how to incorporate media use into a balanced diet of activities. Start with setting aside dedicated time for essentials such as sleep, family meal time, school, homework, friends, and play/ exercise. From there, integrate extracurricular hobbies as well as media use. This will provide the adolescent and their family with a framework for how to spend their time and help them use media both mindfully and purposefully.
- If you have a patient or parent who is continually having difficulties managing time, or is resistant to change, explain that the process may take time and patience, especially if the problematic habits are ingrained. Identify small but crucial changes to make and set manageable and achievable goals. Use your knowledge about the patient's age and developmental stage to inform the goals that you set with the family about this age group to offer alternative ways to approach the change.

Future Directions

As technology advances, we will continue to spend time with them in various ways. We need to monitor how much time youth spend in front of screen media, and focus on the prevention of the negative effects.

References

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Suggested Reading

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