

Take Time Away From Technology at Home

Technology—computers, cell phones, mp3 players and such—make information and entertainment readily available. However, too much of a good thing can, harm personal relationships.

With parents and children vying for time on the computer or three children each tuned in to their own mp3 player, interaction between family members may be nil. In today's world, screen time can replace personal interaction with family and friends, health-promoting physical activity, and other personal growth opportunities, such as reading a book or researching a topic for a school paper using multiple resources at a library.

Separating appropriate use from abuse can challenge parents. Some tips for using technology in the home include:

- Place the family computer in shared space—a corner of the family room or kitchen.
- Limit computer time, and monitor use.

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- Set boundaries for the Internet, so children do not view it as the only source of information.
- Check the content of interactive computer/video games, and don't be afraid to say "no."
- Model appropriate use, while continuing personal and family-style activities, such as reading a book, game night, cooking together or taking a walk as a family after dinner.
- Turn off technology during family meals and activities.
- Balance time with technology and time without.
- Encourage kids to share technology tips they learn at school.

Establishing guidelines—or rules—for use and posting them near the computer can be helpful in curbing disagreement. Make technology fit into your lifestyle, without letting it drive your lifestyle.

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