

The Brain on Electronic Gaming & Smart Phones

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Introduction: Brain Basics and the Dopamine System

- I. Fortnite
- II. Instagram
- III. Q & A

Final Thought: "Boredom is where creativity and imagination take place."

Dr. Michael Rich, Center on Media and Child Health, Harvard Medical

Guidelines

Tips for Managing Gaming

- 1) Play only a couple of games with your kids at a time, and then turn the game off.

There are many ways to bond with your children, and with healthy limits, gaming can become one of them.

- 2) Limit the amount of time your child/teen can play to 30-45 minutes per day (if you allow electronics during the week) and perhaps two separate 45-minute sessions on weekends. Recent research has shown that a daily one-hour limit helps increase children's sociability. That time limit includes gaming in your own home as well as at a friend's house.

- 3) Instead of implementing a time limit with Fortnite, consider having a two- or three-game limit. (This takes into account the fact that any child/teen would be

- horribly embarrassed to leave their friends in the middle of the game.) For other games, have a set time limit.
- 4) Implement rules for when the game can be played. Gaming time should only take place after homework is complete and should end at least 45 minutes to an hour before bedtime (active screens stimulate the brain and can inhibit the release of Melatonin—our natural sleep compound).
 - 5) Consider taking a total break from the game if your son or daughter is caught sneaking it, continually fights about turning it off, or is becoming overly frustrated or emotional while playing or is irritable afterward.
 - 6) Have a limit on how much money can be spent on Battle Passes. After all, what child/teen doesn't want to be part of the latest fashion trend?
 - 7) Try to keep gaming limited to family spaces.
 - 8) Keep school free of mobile devices. The temptation to hide a phone under a table in order to sneak a game in can be overwhelming for the developing brain.
 - 9) Be very strict with your time limits for first-person shooter games.

Tips for Managing Smart Phones

1. Wait until 8th!
2. Be good role models with your smartphone usage.
3. Start with a flip phone and have a “no-delete” rule for texting. Only parents should delete.
4. Phones must be turned over when requested by parents.

5. Create smart phone “free zones” and times in the house. No phones at the dinner table.
6. Talk to and do research with your kids about various apps. Help them be aware of various dangers (i.e.: bullying, predators, challenge games, pornography) and the potential social dramas inherent in social media usage.
7. For older teens, teach and role model turning the apps to “no notifications” during family time and during homework.
8. Discuss consequences ahead of time for misuse and how responsible usage equals increased freedoms.

Tips for Managing Electronics at Night

1. Start with daily limits on electronic usage outside of required homework.
2. Follow the advice of no screen time 30 – 45 minutes prior to bedtime.
3. Utilize nighttime settings on devices (f.lux).
4. No electronics in your child’s bedroom after “lights out”.
5. Use an alarm clock to wake up in the morning instead of a smartphone as devices should already be checked in to the charging station.
6. Most importantly, have a consistent bedtime and practice pre-bedtime rituals, which help soothe your child/teen emotionally and promote a good night’s sleep for their overworked President.

Knowing When it's Too Much

1. It is hard for my child to stop using screen media.
2. The amount of time my child wants to use screen media keeps increasing.
3. My child sneaks to use screen media.
4. My child needs more intense and novel games and apps to reach the same level of satisfaction.
5. When my child has had a bad day, screen media seems to be the only thing that helps him/her feel better.
6. My child thinks obsessively about their game or phone when not using it.
7. My child's screen media use causes problems for the family.
8. My child's academics, activities or health are suffering because of electronics.
9. My child is becoming more and more isolated.

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