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Reach Out and Connect: Managing Screen Time

We can't deny that screen time usage has increased during this time. This workshop was designed to help you manage the amount of time you and your child spend using screens!

1. Don't stress! It's okay to be using screens more often right now.
 - a. Though screen time usage appears to have an impact on mental health, other factors such as parental support, family relationships, and childhood experiences are much more important ([UNICEF](#)).
 - b. **The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 2 years old only engage with screens with people on the other end, like zoom and facetime calls.**
2. During this time, there are benefits to using our devices!
 - a. Screens help us maintain a **sense of normalcy**. Pre-COVID-19, we still used screens. By providing a constant, screens can help keep us grounded.
 - b. Virtual media, including video games, videos, social media, and virtual books, offer **escapes from reality into a virtual world**.
 - c. Virtual books and audio books are a great way to **keep reading together** during quarantine.



3. It is important to consider both **quantity** and **quality** when thinking about screen time consumption.
 - a. Add screen-time to your daily routine (**quantity**)
 - i. Give kids a fixed time to do specific activities on their devices.
 - ii. The [World Health Organization](#) recommends **no more than one hour at a time in sedentary screen-time** so when developing your routine, consider interspersing screen-time with another activity, like a board game or playing with toys.
 - iii. Designate "**screen-free zones**." Many families will choose to designate meals and bedtime as "screen-free times."
 - iv. One useful resource that can help you develop a plan for this is [Brooklyn Public Library and Common Sense Media's Family Screen-Time Plan](#).



- b. Vary up *how* you use screens (**quality**)
 - i. Besides passive consumption, you can use screens in active ways.
 - ii. Use the technology to **stay connected** with family and friends! You can video chat, make phone calls, or play multiplayer games!
 - iii. Use technology to help your family stay **physically active**. There are lots of online videos and games to get our kids moving.
 1. Check out [GoNoodle](#) for free guided dance parties, breathing exercises, yoga, and even educational games for kids and families of all ages.
 2. There are activities in English and Spanish as well as subtitles in other languages.

- iv. Take an interest in the virtual activities your child is interested in. This will help you bond with your child, which is always important, but especially now during uncertain times. This will also increase the quality of the interaction you and your child have around screens.
 - c. **Engage with screens together as a family!** Ask your child questions while playing games or reading books on a device. This will help build your child's brain and language development.
 - i. Engaging with screens together is better than engaging with screens separately.
 - d. Every family is different and has different needs. What screen usage looks like in your home will be different than others, and that is okay. Just remember, balance is key!
4. How can we help every child use screens in a healthy, balanced way, both during a pandemic and when life goes back to normal?
- a. Actively communicate with your child about screens.
 - i. Talk with them about **safe online practices**.
 - ii. Make sure they only play games that are **appropriate for their age range**.



Resources:

- Common Sense Census: Media Use by Kids Age Zero to Eight, 2020: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-kids-age-zero-to-eight-2020>
- Young Kids and YouTube: How Ads, Toys, and Games Dominate Their Viewing: https://d2e111jq13me73.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/uploads/research/2020_youngkidsyoutube-report_final-release_forweb.pdf
- Early Childhood Development Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_5u8-QSh6A&feature=emb_logo
- Preschool Development Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gO4Z-kMTCl0&feature=emb_logo
- Common Sense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org>
- Wide Open School: <https://wideopenschool.org/#grades-3-5/>
- Brooklyn Public Library Family Screen Time Plan: https://www.bklynlibrary.org/sites/default/files/documents/4181_BM_Family%20Media%20Plan_6-spreads.pdf

We hope that these strategies and tips provide you with some guidance on how to balance screen time usage! For any questions about the content or our virtual programming, please email Kristen Rocha Aldrich at krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org.