

An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

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Screen Time and Young Children

Children under 5 years old are exposed to more screens than ever before, including televisions, computers, gaming consoles, smartphones and tablets.

When thinking about how much time your child spends with screens, be sure to include all these different devices. Also include time spent viewing at home and in other places, like child care.

The recommendations below are aimed at typically developing children. If your child has special needs, ask your family doctor or paediatrician for advice.

What is the right amount of screen time for my child?

Young children learn best from face-to-face interactions with caring adults. It's best to keep their screen time to a minimum:

- **For children under 2 years old**, screen time is not recommended.
- **For children 2 to 5 years old**, limit routine or regular screen time to less than 1 hour per day.

Why should I limit my child's screen time?

Very often, screen time is a lost opportunity for your child to learn in real time: from interacting, playing outdoors, creating or enjoying social 'downtime' with family. Too much screen time also increases your child's risk of becoming:

- **Overweight**
- **Sleep-deprived**
- **Less school-ready**
- **Inattentive, aggressive and less able to self-soothe.**

How can I set screen time limits at home?

Setting limits when children are young is easier than cutting back when they're older. As a family, agree on basic screen time rules that everyone understands and shares. Consider developing a **family media plan** to guide when, how and where screens can—and can't!—be used.

Here are some tips:

- Be a good role model with your own screen use—on *all* devices.
- Turn off devices for mealtimes, reading with your child or doing things together as a family.
- Turn off screens when no one is using them, *especially* background TV.
- Avoid using screens for *at least* 1 hour before bedtime and keep all screens out of your child's bedroom. They interfere with sleep.
- Choose healthy activities, like reading, outdoor play and crafts, over screen time.

How do I choose the right apps, videos or programs for my child?

Whenever possible, make screen time an activity you and your child do together. Watch with your child and talk about what you're seeing. To ensure quality content:

- Choose educational, age-appropriate and interactive programs and apps. Educational apps have a clear learning goal and encourage participation.
- Try out apps before your child uses them.
- Make sure your child watches programs you're familiar with.
- Avoid commercial and adult or 'entertainment' programming.
- Use a [media rating system](#) to guide your viewing choices.

Are e-books a good learning tool?

Quality, age-appropriate 'learn-to-read' apps and e-books can help with language, as long as you and your child are reading and learning together. But even the best e-books don't help with skills like page-turning and the physical 'book experience',

which includes heavy handling, being scribbled in or chewed (board books, of course!). Won't my child fall behind if he isn't exposed to digital media early on?

There is no evidence to support introducing technology at an early age to improve your child's development. Young children always

learn best from face-to-face interactions with caring adults. Given the choice, they almost always choose talking, playing or being read to over screen time.

Is it OK to use screens to calm or distract my child?

Screen time might help in the moment, but used repeatedly, over time, means your child won't learn how to self-soothe without it. Talk to your child's doctor if you need [new strategies](#) for calming your child or helping with daily transitions.

My child gets upset when I take away screen times. What can I do?

In today's world, managing screen time is an ongoing challenge. Setting shared family limits at an early age can help. In the moment, use a calm voice, acknowledge your child's frustration and try redirecting her interest to another activity or toy.

~This resource was made possible through an unrestricted grant from TELUS.

<http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/screen-time-and-young-children>

Why You Need to Stop Avoiding Conflict and What to Do Instead

Most people don't like conflict. They associate conflict with negative thoughts and don't see how helpful it can be in their relationships. They don't make the distinction between conflict and how people respond to it. What can be of concern, is how people address conflict. If someone yells or becomes defensive when faced with conflict, these are unhealthy ways of responding. But it's not the conflict itself that is the problem. We have to move away from seeing conflict as a bad thing.

Healthy conflict can provide a deeper understanding of people. It allows you to be vulnerable and express your true thoughts and feelings. Which in turn can allow you to connect better with the person because you're able to know them at a deeper level. It can also allow people to understand your boundaries, your morals and your belief system. They will see what you're willing to stand for and what you can compromise on.

Do you find that when an issue arises with a colleague, family member, friend or even your partner you often bite your tongue? Now there are times when it's necessary to not address an issue, but if when faced with a possible conflict you usually remain silent in order to avoid it, then this may be a problem.

When you remain silent this is interpreted as acceptance, which very well may not be your intention. And keep in mind that the issues you have will only snowball. They won't go away. You may later begin to feel that you're living a life of resentment. And if you think that you're making your relationships stronger by avoiding conflict, you're wrong. Research shows that increases in positive feelings in close relationships depend on enhancing intimacy rather than on decreasing conflict (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146167205274447>). One of the best ways to increase intimacy in your relationships is to be honest about how you feel. Let people see who you are.

So the next time an issue arises, consider these tips:

Determine whether there's an issue to address

Not everything has to be an issue. There are definitely times when it makes sense to let something go. Examine the consequence of remaining silent to determine whether you need to speak up.

Decide whether it's an appropriate time and place to discuss the issue

Are you at a business lunch around clients or out with your in-laws and your partner? These may be times when it's best to wait until you are alone with the person to address an issue. People tend to respond better in a discussion if it's in a private setting. So you may want to hold off on bringing up the issue until a time when you can speak with the person privately.

Listen first

It's important to clearly understand the person's perspective before expressing your own. You can use active and reflective listening (<https://psychcentral.com/lib/become-a-better-listener-active-listening/>), by asking questions to ensure that you understand the person. For an example, "Are you saying that you feel neglected when I stay out with my colleagues after work?". If you don't listen, it's possible that you can misinterpret what

someone says and find that there really isn't conflict and instead miss-communication.

Clearly explain your position

Be specific about your thoughts. Don't generalize and don't bring up issues from the past. Speak with the goal of the person being able to completely understand your position. It's also best to use "I statements". For an example, "I feel overwhelmed when I have to do the dishes by myself" instead of "I hate that you never do the dishes."

Brainstorm and present solutions

It's helpful to think through all of the possible solutions (<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/leveraging-adversity/2015/03/got-problems-13-solution-focused-questions-to-ask-yourself/>) to the problem. Don't waste time dwelling on the issue. Be prepared to present the solutions that you've thought through, and also allow the person to present solutions as well.

Be willing to compromise...when needed

Accept that there will be times when you won't get what you want. Aim so that both of you will be content in the resolution. But do not be willing to sacrifice your morals and your integrity in order to compromise.

Decide on a solution and check back in if needed

Once a solution has been decided on, accept this. It's not helpful to continue to bring up the issue, once it has been resolved. However, if you feel that the solution is no longer working for you, it's ok to ask the person to have a conversation about it. Don't walk around continuously contemplating whether you should bring it up, just bring it up.

Remember that there is no such thing as a relationship without conflict. We are different with different thoughts and beliefs and at some point we will differ with someone. It's guaranteed to happen. The only conflict free relationships are those where someone is hiding their thoughts and beliefs. And this is not healthy, nor is it sustainable. Don't forget that conflict can strengthen your relationships and allow you to connect with people on a deeper level. So keep these tips in mind the next time you're faced with a conflict.

~By Natalie Pizzolla, LMSW

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2017/08/03/why-you-need-to-stop-avoiding-conflict-and-what-to-do-instead/>

Warning: Misdiagnosis of Personality Disorders Can Be Damaging

The other day, a client came in describing his wife's behavior as Borderline Personality Disorder. He had numerous examples of how perfectly she fit the profile and how he had been traumatized by her behavior. For example, she was fearful of his abandonment and in desperation would rage anytime he mentioned separation. Yet every time the conversation was redirected to him, he became evasive.

Physically, his face seemed unusually red, he was a bit shaky, noticeable uncomfortable, and yet was meticulously groomed. His manner of speech seemed rehearsed and he was hyper-focused on his wife. He desperately wanted affirmation that he was right in his diagnosis of her. It took nearly the whole session to gain the most basic information about him. That's when it became clear. He was an alcoholic. Several sessions later, it was apparent that she was not Borderline, but rather severely co-dependent.

He was attempting to use the therapeutic process as a way of justifying his addict behavior. By exaggerating his wife's symptoms, he looked normal in comparison and therefore could hide his addiction for a longer period of time. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon tactic. Here are a couple more examples of how personality disorders are misdiagnosed by clients:

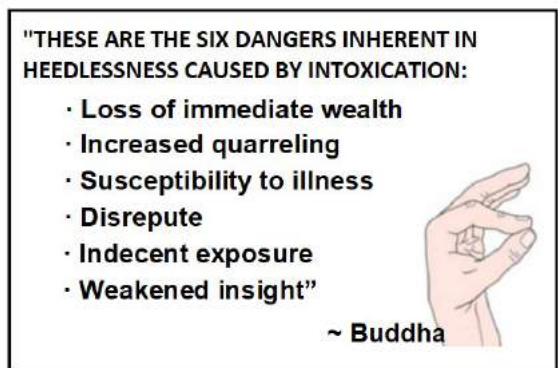
- An exquisitely dressed female came in describing her husband as having Narcissistic Personality Disorder and her marriage on the brink of divorce. She was engaging and likeable but when questioned about her own failures, she was elusive. She described him as being controlling but refused to allow the session to be about anything else other than his disorder. When confronted, she played to role of victim a bit too well. She too was seeking affirmation for her diagnosis of him.
 - In this case, she was the narcissist. In an effort to make herself look better than him, she projected her own disorder onto her husband.
- Another client portrayed her partner as on the brink of a mental breakdown and having Borderline Personality Disorder. She showed erratic text messages, recounted stories of physical violence, and periods of isolation. Everything seemed just a bit too calculated. So the stories were intentionally interrupted with unimportant questions. This frustrated the client who was on an agenda of trying to commit her partner. A quick scroll on the phone to the previous conversation before the erratic text message revealed verbal and mental abuse from the client.

- It turned out that the client was a sociopath who was trying to drive her partner crazy. Her plan was to drain the bank accounts while her partner was hospitalized.
- The parent of a failure to launch twenty-something year old labeled her child as Narcissistic Personality Disorder. She described him as entitled and unwilling to do simple tasks around the house. He was shut down and quarantined himself in his room. His attitude towards the other family members reeked of superiority and a lack of empathy.
 - At first glance, he did appear to be narcissistic. But several sessions later, it turned out that he was the victim of sexual abuse and in his attempt to hide it from the world, he presented as narcissistic.

The Greek philosopher Plato wrote in Phaedrus, "Things are not always as they seem; the first appearance deceives many." This is very true when working with personality disorders. What is frequently presented initially is not necessarily accurate later. Some have ulterior motives such as hiding their addiction by exaggerating problems, projecting self onto a spouse to avoid accountability, using counseling to commit further criminal acts, or concealing trauma through disengagement. A brief look beyond what is offered might just divulge some hidden truth.

~By Christine Hammond, MS, LMHC

<https://pro.psychcentral.com/exhausted-woman/2017/06/warning-misdiagnosis-of-personality-disorders-can-be-damaging/>



Pick Me Ups

I like to make lists...I also like to leave them laying on the kitchen counter and then guess what's on the list while at the store...fun game.

If your eyes hurt after you drink coffee, you need to remove the spoon from the cup.

You know you have "Mom" voice when even your neighbours brush their teeth, get dressed and get to school on time.

If every day is a gift, how do I return Mondays.

Teddy bears never get hungry because they're always stuffed.

Parenting Corner:

Want to Raise Your Child to Love Reading? Read These Secrets

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/29/insider/want-to-raise-your-child-to-love-reading-read-these-secrets.html>

Strict Bedtime Rules Can Help Kids Get Enough Sleep

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-parenting-child-sleep-idUSKBN18S6F8>

Self- Help Corner:

Alcoholics Anonymous:	780-424-5900
	www.alcoholics-anonymous.org
Al-Anon/Alateen:	780-433-1818
Support Network / Referral Line:	211
Distress Line:	780-482-4357
Cocaine Anonymous:	780-425-2715

Informative Links:

The National Women's Health Information Center:

<http://4woman.gov>

How to Discipline Toddlers

<https://childmind.org/article/how-discipline-toddlers/>