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Media and your child

Our children's connection to media is everywhere, coming from more sources and more screens than we probably remember when we were kids: TV, movies, video games, handheld games, computers, cell phones, I-pads, I-pods, watches, etc.

There are many wonderful uses for media that provide conveniences and education for us and our families. There are also dangers in media use that as parents and educators, we are tasked to protect our children from. With all the amazing advances in technology, we cannot forget to make advances in how we protect our children from media that is not age-appropriate.

It's important to remember that children's brains are not fully developed, specifically the part of the brain (pre-frontal cortex) responsible for critical thinking, judgment, problem-solving, and impulse control. When a child or adolescent views media showing violence, sexual content, or harmful stereotypes, their own ideas, feelings, and behaviors are impacted. Without some guidance from a trusted grown-up, repeated exposure to these kinds of media may lead to an increase in aggression and a decrease in empathy.

Quick tips for setting media guidelines:

Limit the amount of screen time to 1-2 hours a day (or less if you notice it is negatively impacting your child).

Model screen-free times/activities (like dinner time, for example).

Keep children's bedrooms free of screen media (no TV, game systems, laptops, I-pads, cell phones, etc).

Preview media that your child is interested in before you allow them to view/play it.

Co-view media (if appropriate) with your child and discuss the content-this will help them develop critical thinking skills.

Do your research about social media websites (like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and closely monitor their usage. Remember, these sites are typically for ages 13 and up.

Stick to rating recommendations. They exist for a reason.

Use your parental judgment. Your children are counting on you to set their limits!

For more information and research about media use and children, please visit:

<http://www.common sense media.org/research>

Ms. Katie