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Family Connections Newsletter

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4 Conversations to Have with Older Kids and Teens about their Screen Time Habits

By: Common Sense Media

Older kids and teens are spending more time using digital devices and social media than ever before. The increase in screen time causes many parents and caregivers to worry about how kids' online activities are affecting their physical, mental, and emotional health.

A healthy relationship with screens depends on the types of activities kids are doing online as well as balancing screen time with other activities like sleep, connecting with family and friends, exercise, and time outdoors. Screen time limits for older kids and teens can be helpful -- but how they are using screens (versus for how long) is even more important. Plus, family conflicts over screen time may be more harmful to children's mental health than the screen time itself.

Try the tips and questions below to have conversations with older kids and teens about their screen time habits.

1 Show interest in what they're doing online

Try not to be judgmental about what kids and teens do online. If they sense you're truly interested, they'll be more open to sharing. If your older child or teen is reluctant to talk about what they're doing online, try signing up for one of the popular platforms (TikTok, Snapchat, etc.), then ask them to teach you how to use it. Understanding what kids and teens are doing online is the first step in guiding them toward healthy experiences.

Ask:

- What's your favorite app or game right now?
- Can you show me how it works?
- What's something you like about it? Why?
- For social platforms - what are your favorite accounts or people to follow?

2 Help them recognize their screen time habits

Sometimes the habits kids have with their devices aren't the best for their health. The same goes for adults, too! Maybe screen time interferes with sleep, relationships, or learning. Talk about how we can use our devices in ways that feel in balance with other parts of life. Share your own habits as examples to get the conversation going.

Ask:

- What are some of our family's habits with devices like phones and TV? (i.e. checking your phones when you wake up, playing video games before bed, etc.)
- Do any of our habits get in the way of things like sleep, spending time with friends and family or getting outside?
- Are there any habits we should try to change? Why or why not?
- Can you think of any specific times we could take breaks from our devices?

3 Talk about their emotional health

Help older kids and teens recognize how online activities make them feel. Many teens turn to social media and online resources for mental health support and to connect with friends. However, social media can also have negative effects on some teens, especially girls and teens experiencing depression.

Ask:

- How do you feel when you're on Instagram (or another app)?
- Do you ever feel uncomfortable, worried, sad, anxious?
 - If yes, what makes you feel that way
- Do you every feel like you've spent too much time online?
 - If yes, when?
 - If no, why not?
- Do you ever feel pressured to be online?
 - If you, when do you feel pressured? Why?
 - If no, why not?

4 Help them recognize their screen time habits

Talk through different strategies kids can try when they notice themselves feeling uncomfortable, worried, sad, or anxious when they're online. And remind them that they can always come to you (or another trusted adult) if they need help.

Ask:

- Have you even set time limits for yourself when you're online?
 - If yes, how did that go?
 - If no, do you want to try it? I could help.
- Are there ways to connect with your friends in person more often to take the pressure off being online all the time?
- Do you know how to block someone of your favorite apps?
 - If no, can we look together and figure out how?

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WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK!

Let us know how you are liking the newsletter. Take this month's survey at:

<https://forms.gle/UGPvMk2CVjDPuuV96>



CRAFT CORNER: COOKIE CUTTER BIRD FEEDER

Materials Needed:

- 2 gelatin envelopes
- 2/3 cups boiling water
- 2+ cups birdseed
- Cookie cutters
- String
- Parchment paper
- Toothpicks
- Mixing bowl



Instructions:

1. Place parchment paper on baking sheet, put cookie cutters on top, set aside
2. Pour boiling water in large bowl, dump in gelatin, stir until dissolved.
3. Pour bird seed into mixture until completely coated (may need to add more birdseed to absorb liquid.) Mixture shouldn't be runny, it should be scoopable.
4. Scoop mixture into cookie cutters, pressing firmly to compact seeds
5. Use toothpick to make a hole for the string
6. Let "cookies" dry for a few hours, turn them over and let them dry a few more hours
7. Once completely dried and hardened, gently slide the birdseed out of the cookie cutter, add the string
8. Hang from a tree or a bush in your yard and enjoy the new visitors you will see!

Kids in the Kitchen: Chocolate Strawberry Frozen Yogurt Bites

Get ready for spring with this fun and easy treat!

Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh diced strawberries
- 1 cup strawberry yogurt
- 12 oz. dark chocolate chips
- 1 tsp. coconut oil (optional)

Directions:

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, set aside
2. In a mixing bowl, combine diced strawberries and yogurt
3. Scoop small spoonful's of mixture onto baking sheet
4. Place in freezer until frozen (about 30 minutes)
5. Just before taking bites out of freezer, melt chocolate chips
6. Dip bites in melted chocolate and place back on baking sheet
7. Allow chocolate to harden and ENJOY!



April Family Fun in the QCA

- 1 | *YOGA AND STORIES, BETTENDORF PUBLIC LIBRARY*
- 2 | *ROCK 'N BINGO, HIGHLAND PARK BOWL, MOLINE*
- 5-6 | *EASTER MAYHEM BY FACTORY OF FEAR, MOLINE*
- 6 | *FOOL HOUSE - THE ULTIMATE 90'S DANCE PARTY, THE RUST BELT, EAST MOLINE*
- 8-14 | *QC RESTAURANT WEEK*
- 13 | *DOROTHY GOES TO OZ & SNOW WHITE, ADLER THEATRE, DAVENPORT*
- 17 | *KIDS ANIME CLUB, MOLINE PUBLIC LIBRARY*
- 27 | *RI COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE & VENDOR FAIR, LONGVIEW PARK*
- 27 | *GENESEO ART WALK, DOWNTOWN GENESEO*



Spring Reading Challenge!

Put a fun spin on reading with this spring challenge...

Listen to a audio book

Book written before 1980

Book set in your home state

Read outside

Book about food

Book set during Spring

Read a comic or graphic novel

Award-winning book

Book published in 2024

Do you have young children?

Are you or your spouse an active military member?

Join us for *Discovery Time Playgroup!*

- Thursday's from 9:30-11:30 AM
- Community Christian Fellowship Church (Moline)

For more information, contact Jennifer Kerr at jennifer.a.kerr10.civ@army.mil



ATTENTION MILITARY PARENTS!

If you are an enlisted military parent – meaning you are active duty, retired, or a guard member – you are invited to be a part of our monthly CAMO & Kids activities! Each month we plan an activity specifically for children and their enlisted military parent. Twice a year we open these activities up to the whole family! All events are FREE and are at different community venues. Past outings have been fishing, ice skating, the fire station, Putnam Museum, and many more. To learn more about the next activity email Jennifer Kerr at jennifer.a.kerr10.civ@army.mil or Brooke Hendrickx at BrookeH@foreverychild.org.