

Time 4 Me Counselling & Support

Information for Parents & Carers

Screen Entertainment

- Screen entertainment – TV and console games – can be great fun for children to enjoy on their own & with friends.
- However, it's important to limit the amount of TV and console entertainment per day. Research with 10 and 11 year olds showed that having more than 2 hours overall screen entertainment a day increases the risk of psychological difficulties¹.
- Allowing your child a *maximum of 2 hours' screen entertainment per day* is a positive goal to aim for.
- It's really important to pay attention to the content of any console games your kids play too. Like movies, games are given a certificate rating for a reason.
- An 18 certificate is given when there is abusive language, explicit violence or adult sex. Would you be happy for your child to be exposed to this while playing an 18-rated game?
- Young boys are at particular risk here. They often model themselves on fantasy characters in adult games who are fighters, killers and abusers.
- Young children's brains can't always tell the difference between fantasy and reality. This makes things confusing. Children can think what happens on screen is how they should behave in real life.
- The confusion can lead to all sorts of difficulties with sleep, mood, behaviour and attention.



¹ Page, A.S. et al. *Children's Screen viewing is related to psychological difficulties irrespective of physical activity*. Paediatrics, 2010

Parents can feel powerless about what to do. It can feel like *everyone* is letting their children have as much screen entertainment as they want each day. It can seem like everyone's kids play adult screen games too. It's hard to come up with alternatives. Why not try some of the following:

- ✓ Sit down with your child and agree a limit of 2 hours screen entertainment per day.
- ✓ Decide to only buy games with an age-appropriate rating.
- ✓ Sit and watch what your child is playing on screen – talk to them about it, or join in for a while!
- ✓ Agree a list of alternative non-screen activities with your child, including some they can do with you.
- ✓ Think about limiting screen time – or having a 'no screen day' each week - try out one of the non-screen activities instead.



- ✓ Plan regular times out of the house, especially at weekends – go to the park, kick a football, have an ice-cream!
- ✓ Encourage your child to join a local club to have non-screen fun time with friends.

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