

Children's use of screens

Facts:

- Auditory and visual stimuli modulate brain function and generate stress that will have automatic consequences beyond the child's control.
- All spheres of development are affected: sleep quality, language acquisition, attention and concentration, self-perception and empathy.
- Impacts can also be observed on the child's visual system, motor development and fine motor skills.
- Over-stimulation can lead to hyperactive behavior.
- Children who "freeze" in front of screens have a false sense of "calm". This can lead to attention deficits.
- The high accumulation of stress experienced by children during their day will cause their heart to beat faster.
- To bring down the stress curve, the child will either sleep or throw a fit to relieve the stress.
- Crises often erupt at the end of the day. These crises may have been "accumulating" in the previous 24 to 72 hours.
- Children may refuse to sleep because they don't want to face the ball of stress accumulated in their bodies and hearts. This feeling is more prevalent in boys.
- The child will have his tantrums with someone he trusts because he knows that this person will take care of him during this emotional upheaval.

Recommendations:

- Rules must be clear to children and consistent between adults from the earliest age.
- It is advisable to accompany a child when using a screen to minimize the impact on the child's brain.
- Adults should not use screens to "escape" the family and/or as a babysitter and/or to channel a child's energy or behavior.
- There is a distinction to be made between "mental image" and "imposed image". When an image is imposed (screen), it can desensitize a young child if he sees certain things and is not ready to receive this information.
- It's best to keep screens as far away from children's eyes as possible. Ex: Television.
- Using screens because you're "bored" has an impact. It's important that children don't lose the ability to be bored. It develops their creativity and resourcefulness and encourages them to THINK for themselves. Children who aren't given the chance to be bored are often the ones who don't know what to do in life, because they haven't been bored enough to know what they want...

To follow up on the previous statements, here is the guideline for the use of screens at our ECC:

Television:

- Film on Friday after group lunch (try to tie in with a theme).
- Friday movie = maximum 20 minutes to allow for group lunch clean-up. For rocket, planet and rainbow groups.
- Video viewing of children's shows: Ex: Carnival show.in Luskville.
- Listening to educational episodes: Bye Bye les microbes (hygiene), Cornemuse (language), Pédayoga (motor skills).

Computer:

- All presentations must first be viewed by the adult without the children, to ensure good content and/or advertising.
- Short rhymes or songs, special educational photos/videos. (allow the adult to learn a nursery rhyme at the same time)
- Presentation of explanatory videos. Ex: Bear coming out of hibernation, caterpillar/butterfly coming out of cocoon, moose love calls, etc...

Telephone:

- Whenever possible, use discreetly and out of sight of children.
- Use to answer children's questions. Ex: bugs, what is a flower?
- Use insect, plant or flower applications for identification.
- When more rhythmic music is needed, with a special playlist and Bluetooth speaker. E.i. At parties (Quebec, Canada, sugar shack, etc.) or "Pound" activities with pool noodles.
- Show children photos taken during an adult's special activity. Ex: animals while hunting or fishing, horses while riding, etc.
- Check the time and weather.
- Look at temperature (% rain), to organize outdoor or indoor "departures", theme days for the following day or days after... e.g. Mother's/Father's Day, graduation, etc...
- For research and/or planning during "team of 2" or "team of 3" meetings, share ideas on Pinterest and/or show a photo as it simplifies explanations to others.
- Do some research.
- Audio storybooks
- Use in the forest or on outings outside the day-care center in case of emergency.

Radios are best used in an educational context:

- In French, to help young children develop their language skills.
- English-language pop music can be used for more psychomotor activities, e.g. to get the children moving, having a party, etc.