

BECAUSE YOU LOVE THEM

MAKE ALL BEDROOMS SCREEN-FREE ZONES

Every day it seems there is another warning about how the use of internet-connected electronic screens (ICES) is affecting our health. The list is getting so long that many people are feeling overwhelmed and giving up. But, before you throw your hands up completely, consider making one change that has the potential to improve the mental, emotional and physical health of everyone in your family.

What is it? **Make every bedroom a SCREEN-FREE ZONE**
Why? **Because having screens in bedrooms can have the following effects:**

1. decreases the amount of healthy sleep people are getting
2. puts children at increased risk of accessing harmful material
3. puts children at risk of engaging with an online predator
4. decreases physical activity thereby increasing weight gain
5. increases the risk of online bullying
6. negatively affects relationships (between couples and families.)
7. increases the likelihood of internet addictions
8. increases the risk of mental illness like anxiety and depression
9. decreases your time in real life to develop healthy social skills
10. social isolation has been linked to suicide

The reality is....

1. **Screens are addictive:** Researchers and product creators know that the human brain is easily “hooked” so don’t be surprised when you find that it’s 4:00 a.m. and you’re still binge-watching Netflix or playing your favorite video game - whether you’re 14 or 40!
2. **Screens are tempting:** Even if you plan to NOT look at your phone, if you hear (or think you heard) a buzz, beep, or tweet, how likely are you to wait until morning to look?
 - a. Your child might really mean it when he says he won’t get on his device but a lot of socializing is done in the wee hours of the virtual world and kids who don’t keep up may fear walking into school unprepared. Even a quick peek means lack of important sleep.

3. **Screens stir up emotions:** There is a lot of harmful and hurtful information on the net which can cause the viewer to feel hopeless and helpless. Whether it’s watching newsfeeds or scrolling through social media, putting bad stuff in your mind affects you.
4. **Screens make our brains think it’s daytime:** By now you’ve likely heard about the blue light syndrome that makes it more difficult for people to fall asleep at night. Rather than using drugs to counter the affect, why not simply address the cause?
5. **Using a screen to fall asleep can make you dependent** on a screen to be able to fall asleep which opens you up to the problems above.

Lack of sleep is a national public health crisis.

1. Lack of sleep can cause abnormal brain development.
2. Lack of sleep can cause people to become overweight
3. Lack of sleep can increase risk of illness
4. Lack of sleep can increase risk of injury
5. Lack of sleep can make kids more impulsive and distractible (possibly being misdiagnosed with a mental health disorder like ADHD or an impulse control disorder)
6. Lack of sleep can decrease a person’s ability to learn or regulate emotions

How to make bedrooms SCREEN FREE ZONES

1. Have a family meeting where everyone discusses the importance of keeping screens in public rooms.
2. Implement a parental control system on your wi-fi and devices so you can monitor and limit use (aka turn it off).
3. Have a device check-in time for all family members (i.e. 9:00 p.m) and keep devices on a charging station in kitchen or parent bedroom.
4. Get kids an old-fashioned clock radio to eliminate the “it’s my alarm clock” excuse.
5. Visit a library or bookstore to collect books or magazines to read at bedtime.
6. Keep a consistent bedtime routine (i.e. shower, brush teeth, conversation, read, lights out).



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