



Kids, Technology & Who's Mediating

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As a millennial, I was thrilled to write about this topic. Not only does my smartphone play a large role in my life, but technology also contributes to the growth of the children I work with. When I began researching this topic, I immediately regretted my decision. I was looking for a simple answer and I couldn't find one. There is no simple answer to the question, "Are smartphones and technology hindering children's development?" Many people, particularly people born before this technological revolution, like to believe the answer to that question is an easy yes. Today, I'll share with you what I've learned and you can decide for yourself how smartphones are affecting children.

There are many sources online with information about this topic. To keep this simple and readable, I'll be referencing one article from the Independent. This article mentions case studies and if you're interested in reviewing them, the link is at the end of this article. Let's begin on a

good and true note. There are educational apps that can help kids learn. Technology can help kids learn, but when the interaction between children and technology is not balanced, the effects can be harmful.

Research shows that passive screen time, the time when kids are simply watching tv, won't be a fulfilling learning experience; entertaining, but not educational. When the tv is on in the background, this is known as background tv time. If this occurs while children are playing or learning, the tv distracts them from what's right in front of them. Hours of background tv time can reduce interaction between parents and kids and in turn affects children's language development. Constant distractions will also affect a child's attention span. Researchers believe children, especially under age 3, need a balance of activities between instructed play, exploring the natural environment and socializing with other kids and adults.

Smartphones and tablets provide the perfect pacifier making them quick fixes to silence children, but often difficult to take away. Most apps are stimulus driven and offer rewards for completing tasks. This triggers the reward pathway in the brain. While this can be helpful in the short term, perhaps to keep kids occupied on a long trip, it's important for young children to be able to develop internal mechanisms of self-regulation. Basically, kids should be able to learn without constant rewards and sit patiently without constant digital stimulation. Just as adults can use their phones and tablets too much, so can kids, and researchers are beginning to see this dependency at a younger age.

If you haven't already picked up on an underlying theme here, I'm going to put it bluntly before you decide if technology is harming children. There is no concrete evidence that smartphones and technology are outright bad for kids. But there is evidence to suggest too much of it can be

harmful. It is important for parents to accept responsibility for how their children interact with technology. There are ways to keep technology fun, educational and creative without kids becoming too dependent. Unfortunately, most parents today are not as involved with their children and will do anything to keep them quiet and occupied. If you feel your child is becoming too dependent on technology, it's not too late to monitor the situation. Here's an example. The bright lights from screens can have a negative effect on sleep. Parents can monitor this by lowering the brightness and making sure kids are away from technology at least an hour before bed. When making decisions about technology in your kids' lives, just remember, you are the parent and you have the ability to keep the situation healthy. Good luck!

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/does-spending-too-much-time-on-smartphones-and-tablets-damage-kids-development-a7067261.html>