

How to Learn More About Your Child's Screen Time Use: Participate in the Aura study

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Parents in the twenty-first century are increasingly worried about their children's use of technology. With cell phones becoming nearly universal—95% of teens now have access to one, [according to the Pew Research Center](#)—parents find it more challenging to manage what their children encounter in the real and online world. Over the past decade, concerns about setting limits on screen time have risen significantly among parents. A [2015 study of Australian parents](#) found excessive screen time to be the number one child health problem, more than obesity, drug use, and poor nutrition. A more recent study conducted by the [American family survey in 2018](#) indicated that parents believe that the overuse of technology is the most important issue facing teenagers. The study of 498 parents indicated that overuse of technology was their single most important concern. In the study, 53% of parents described it as one of the most important issues facing teens, followed by 45% for bullying, 36% for mental health issues, 35% for family breakdown/divorce, and 34% for the pressure to use drugs or alcohol.

In our practice at South County Child and Family Consultants, I have observed that the parents of my patients (who are most often diagnosed with ADHD, autism, learning disabilities, executive-functioning problems, anxiety, and depression) are

even more concerned about the impact of excessive screen-time limits on their children. For these neurodiverse children, the challenge of moderating their screen time and not being overwhelmed by the social and cognitive demands of the online world can be overwhelming. Parents of neurodiverse children need to be routinely involved in their children's screen time.

I remain an advocate of leveraging screen time activities to promote the development of executive functioning and social-emotional learning skills. However, I have become increasingly concerned about what kids encounter online and how much control they have over the amount of time and energy they spend on their phones and other technologies. One crystal clear strategy to address these concerns is to get parents more actively involved in their children's use of technology and screens. Our team at South County Child and Family Consultants and at LearningWorks for Kids encourages parents to become active participants with their children in their technology use and to engage in discussions and introspection about how screens can positively and negatively impact our lives.



While parents are expressing these serious concerns about children's overuse of technology, they frequently appear to be doing very little to address it. Parental efforts at engaging children about their use of technology is primarily restrictive. Most parents prefer to set screen time limits

from afar rather than being directly involved with their children's technology use. Parents generally don't participate in children's media use: they don't play games with them and rarely use social media together or engage in joint media engagement.

We have conducted [research in our office](#) about the use of video games in children diagnosed with ADHD and are creating a new study. I recently had the opportunity to speak with Scott Kollins, Ph.D., the Chief Medical Officer at Aura, a company specializing in digital safety and security products. They have partnered with TECHWISE (Technology Exposure and Child Health: Wellness Impact and Social Effects) to study the digital impact of screen time on children and adolescents. The study aims "to conclusively determine how technology usage is related to mental wellness and associated outcomes."

I want to support this research, so I encourage our readers to visit <https://get.aura.com/techwise> to sign up or learn more. Parents' participation will provide them with a clearer understanding of their child's screen time habits, including what they are engaging in and how much time they spend. One of the study's goals is to help us better understand the long-term effects of screen time on children's well-being.

The South County Child and Family Consultants team is happy to provide you with further information about screen time issues and assist you in participating in the Aura study.

References

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