



Cutting Back on Screen Time and Getting your Family Moving

It's hard to be the "bad guy" and turn off the tv, video games, or computers but we know kids are getting too much screen time and not moving enough. These tips will help you take the first steps towards helping your kids develop healthier habits:

Step 1: Know how much screen time your family is getting.

Step 2: Before you make any changes, talk to your kids and explain why it is so important that they get enough activity during the day.

Step 3: Try not to enforce rules without giving your kids the heads-up that you are going to cut back on their screen time and explaining why. Also, make sure they know that you will give them other fun alternatives that you can do together such as shooting hoops, walking the dog, playing in the backyard etc.

Step 4: Set clear limits on screen time each day. Experts recommend that children should get no more than two hours a day of screen time. More importantly, enforce the rule once it's made.

Here are some other top tips from experts:

1. **Have a Plan:** If you're going to turn off the tv, be ready to offer alternatives. Plan activities that you can do with your kids.
2. **Rearrange the Furniture:** Move the furniture so that the television is not focal point of the room.
3. **Take the TV out of the Bedroom:** Research shows that kids who have TVs in their room tend to spend almost 1 ½ hours more in a typical day watching TV than their peers without a set in their room.
4. **Plan TV-watching in Advance:** Have your kids pick their favorite shows each week. Turn the TV on for those shows and turn it off afterwards. That way you and your kids won't end up watching whatever comes on next.
5. **Turn Meal Time into Family Time:** Turn off the TV during family meal time and start chatting.
6. **Don't Make TV a Reward:** Don't use television, video games, and computer time as a reward or a punishment as it can encourage bad habits and make all the gadgets seem more important than they are.
7. **Make Gradual Changes:** Try cutting back on screen time a little bit each week, and make sure you're replacing it with other fun activities.
8. **Be a Great Role Model:** Your kids won't like being restricted to two hours of tv watching if you can veg out for four hours. The best way to influence kids' behavior is to set a good example.

Most importantly remember to use a lot of praise to encourage your kids to make these changes and explain why it is important. Be positive!