

Technology and Our Children's Health

Sandra Mendoza

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Read about dopamine in the boxes below and on the next page. What do you do in your life that releases dopamine?
2. What is the difference between "cheap" dopamine and "real" dopamine? Why does it matter?

Parenting is Harder Today

My son is two years old, and he loves to borrow my phone. He looks for videos on YouTube. Sometimes when I let him borrow my phone, he does not want to give it back. When this happens, he cries and insists the phone is his. This makes me feel angry and frustrated. When he cries, I try to distract him with other activities, but it is not always easy.

I know I am not alone; a lot of parents feel the same way. According to the Pew Research Center, "A majority of parents in the United States (66%) [...] say that parenting is harder today than

it was 20 years ago, with many in this group citing technology as a reason why" (Auxier et al., 2020). Parents have many concerns about how technology affects their children, especially how it affects their health.

Children Can't Focus

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, "Children who simply spend large amounts of time with their electronics have trained their brain to receive heightened stimulation and the accompanying dopamine boosts. They are therefore susceptible to similar symptoms as a child with ADHD" (Bhat, 2024).

Dopamine is known as the "feel-good" hormone. It makes you feel a sense of pleasure and motivation to do something. However, when you have too much you can have trouble sleeping, have poor impulse control, and become more aggressive. When children don't get dopamine from technology, they can feel tired, unmotivated, and can have issues with concentration and sleep (Dopamine: What it is, Function & Symptoms 2022). When they have a lot of technology, they will want to use the technology all the time, and they will lose interest in playing outside or with other toys.

Screens Hurt Their Eyes

My child's pediatrician says that exposing kids to screens causes eye damage. According to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, too much screen time can cause eye fatigue, irritated eyes, loss of focus, and even nearsightedness. Children who use technology too much usually stay inside. The doctors say that going outside is important for eye development, and their health. "The rate of nearsightedness in children has increased dramatically in the past 30 years" (How too much screen time affects kids' eyes: Tips to prevent

What Is Dopamine?

Dopamine is a hormone and a type of neurotransmitter, or chemical messenger, made in your brain. ... [It] plays a big role in your reward system. When you do something that feels good, your brain releases a rush of dopamine. You naturally seek more of that good feeling by repeating the behavior that made you feel good.

From: <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/what-is-dopamine>

eye strain 2021). Knowing this information, I am nervous to use technology too often with my young child.

Internet Safety

If you don't pay attention to what your children are watching online, they can see videos that aren't appropriate for them. If they see these videos, they can imitate what they see. This could mean they learn bad words or aggressive behavior. As parents, we need to be aware of what they see. Make sure to be near your child when they are using technology so you can listen to what they watch. You also need to check the internet history to see what they are looking for.

As parents we need to know at least some computer skills so we can monitor our children. We also need to know how to teach them to use technology correctly. They will need to know how to stay safe online.

Go Outside!

To conclude, I think technology is good in moderation. Technology is not the answer to everything, but it's necessary. You need to make your own choices about how you want to parent

with technology. Personally, I try to take my child to the park, the zoo or just be outside at least once a week. We go out to the yard to play with his toys. He feels happy when we go outside to play, and I also feel happy to be spending time with him making memories. Even if it is boring as a parent, it is your job to entertain your children without technology sometimes.




AFTER YOU READ:


1. According to the author, how does technology affect children's health?
2. For more on technology and children's health, see the articles on pp. 12-13 and p. 15.

Sandra Mendoza is from Puebla, Mexico. She has been at Guadalupe School for three years. She wants to learn English so when her baby grows older, she can help with his homework.


CHEAP DOPAMINE




SERIES / TV




ALCOHOL




JUNK FOOD



DRUGS




SOCIAL MEDIA




CASINO


REAL DOPAMINE




NEW EXPERIENCES




SUN & OUTDOORS




WORK ON YOUR GOALS



REST



GOOD SLEEP



EXERCISE

Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mastering-dopamine-game-turn-your-brains-chemistry-plesnik-schicker/>