

APRIL 2011

Kindred *Spirits*

TV cuts down on family interaction

Turn Off Your Television!

Screen Time

- ◆ Set guidelines on when TV can be viewed and when it has to be turned off.
- ◆ Take TVs and computers out of the bedroom. Kids with TVs in their bedrooms score lower in math, language arts and reading.
- ◆ Have family meal times with the TV off.
- ◆ Plan for daily, physical activities that the entire family can enjoy, such as a walk, a bicycle ride, yard work or gardening.

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Did you know that you can celebrate national "Screen Free" week from April 18 - 24?

"Why," you ask, "would I want to do that?"

Consider the fact that the average American household has three televisions; not to mention computers or other electronic devices with screens. Would you believe that 68% of American kids have TVs in their bedrooms, and that kids with TVs in their bedroom are three times more likely to smoke cigarettes? Does it surprise you that 53% of households have absolutely no rules for children when it comes to watching TV, playing video games, viewing movies, texting or spending time on the computer?

"All these activities can be fun, relaxing and sometimes educational," says Diana Milne, MU Extension human development specialist. "However," she adds, "there is also a down side to screen time." It can have a negative impact on our physical health and often means that we spend more

time alone rather than interacting with others. On average, we spend three to four hours a day in front of a screen with many folks spending much more time!

According to Dr. Sara Gable, associate professor, University of Missouri-Columbia, adults and children are more likely to snack on high-calorie foods while watching TV or playing video games. Adults who watch three or more hours of TV each day are far more likely to be obese. The same is true for children and the risk for becoming and remaining overweight before age nine increases with the amount of TV watching.

Be honest with yourself—how many hours a day are you in front of the TV or other screens, such as a computer? What about the children in your home? What guidelines have you established to limit their screen time so that they will have ample time for important activities such as physical exercise, reading, school work, hobbies, volunteering, household chores and social interaction with friends?

Time-outs are a powerful tool

Be consistent with your use of time-outs

Many parents and grandparents use “time-outs” to remove a misbehaving child to a quiet setting before a no-win situation escalates.

“Although a time-out may seem trivial to an adult, it’s remarkably powerful for a child,” says Saralee Jamieson, MU Extension human development specialist. Time-out is “taking a break” and provides the child time to get emotions under control and calm down. It also helps the child learn to handle difficult situations. Time-outs are not used as a way to punish.

Here are some guidelines:

- ◆ Time-outs should be used sparingly, not when a child is having a tantrum and not for everything a child does wrong.
- ◆ The rule of thumb is to use one minute per year of a child’s life as an appropriate length for a time-out.
- ◆ Be kind but firm. Tell the child briefly what he did wrong and what the preferred behavior is but save further discussion until after the time-out. Take the child to a quiet place away from the mainstream of activity; he could sit on the floor, on a chair or on his bed.
- ◆ Because a young child’s attention span is so short, time-out should be implemented as soon as the behavior occurs. Be willing to follow through on your warnings, even if you’re inconvenienced.
- ◆ Use a timer. This gives the child a concept of how long the time-out will be. You can tell the child that when the buzzer goes off, then the time-out is over.
- ◆ When the time-out is finished, give your child a hug and let him know it’s over. Time-outs, when used appropriately, can be an effective way to teach children self-control.

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Grilled Vegetable Tips

Springtime is the time to grill and have picnics! According to Susan Mills-Gray, MU Extension nutrition and health specialist, “It’s easy to cook vegetables on the grill because you don’t have to worry about overcooking them. And grilling vegetables brings out their flavors.”

- ◆ Marinating vegetables will help them caramelize and that brings out their best flavors. Just submerge the vegetables in marinade for about an hour before you put them on the grill.
- ◆ If you don’t marinate vegetables, just brush them with a little vegetable oil prior to grilling.
- ◆ Adding a little bit of salt to them also intensifies the flavor.
- ◆ Cut grilling vegetables into shapes that make it easier for them to cook.
- ◆ Vegetables are usually done in 8-10 minutes. Thick vegetable pieces may take longer.