THE DEBATE AROUND USE OF SCREEN TIME

BY CLARE ERASMUS

About me
• Teacher, leader, designated mental health lead & Advisor, Author

About you
• You’re Interested in what schools and teachers can do to support sleep hygiene and balanced use of screen time with our YP

What to expect today
• Informing vs telling
• Key questions and strategies

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Is screen time use solely responsible for poor sleep hygiene?
According to research in 2018, Children's screen time has little effect on sleep, says study

The findings indicate that the tech-abstaining teenagers slept only slightly longer than their counterparts who had spent much of their day in front of a screen.

But the study, published in the Journal of Pediatrics, said every hour of screen time was linked to between three to eight fewer minutes of sleep a night.

**Conclusion**

Digital screen time, on its own, has little practical effect on pediatric sleep. Contextual factors surrounding screen time exert a more pronounced influence on pediatric sleep compared to screen time itself.

1. Andrew K. Przybylski

Digital Screen Time and Pediatric Sleep: Evidence from a Preregistered Cohort Study [Internet]. 2018

Screentime and excessive use.....

Who should we be talking to?

What are we role modelling?
Schools have an important role to play in raising students and teachers' awareness about the importance of sleep and the impact of screen time on students' wellbeing and their academic achievement.

Pupils should know:
- the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and that a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn;
- about the benefits of rationing time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices.

(DFE statutory guidance: Physical health and mental wellbeing (Primary and secondary) updated 13 September 2021)

As teachers and school leaders, it can sometimes feel hard to make an impact on these areas, as many decisions around sleep and screen-time routines are taken outside the school and within families.

The success of any school mental health and wellbeing program is dependent on many key factors:

- The school in providing curriculum time and space to talk about mental health and to develop a culture in promoting positive mental health.
- The individual students’ level of engagement and seeing relevance to take part
- The role of the staff and their own mental health
- The role of the parents in engaging in mental health conversations and promoting lifestyle choices which encourage positive mental health
- The extent to which the local community gets involved and engaging the services of local external agencies
Unless you tackle all aspects simultaneously there will always be a ‘weak link’ which will prevent you from fully embedding your program. You need all areas to be ‘activated’ so there is a kind of fluidity and acceptance of the ideology.

Practical approaches schools can take
Provide Curriculum time and space to talk

- Talk about establishing a good routine and habits around bedtime and sleeping.
- **Stimulus Control** and making sure that a young person’s bedroom is associated with sleeping, not with being awake and active. This might mean changing some arrangements in the home.
- **Relaxing** before bedtime can be helpful for those struggling

Start at the top: Ask staff to reflect on their own sleep hygiene and screen time

- Promote a staff wellbeing culture of 'Unplug and have a digital detox'
- Get staff to openly talk about what they did and the positive impact or not
Engage the student in seeing relevance to take part

Engage
- Engage the students in a project to unplug

Survey
- Survey the cohort to see what they are anxious about; where they feel they need support at school, time spent on social media and what time they get off their screens; what time they actually fall asleep

Links
- Students will see the links between their performance, levels of anxiety and sleep

See
- Teachers & parents will see the links between screen time, sleep and performance

Parents and schools

If both parties work together then there is consistency for the child and the life skills we are teaching, are more likely to be legitimised.

- It is vital that schools focus on a range of different approaches to work productively with parents ensuring clear communication and a positive dialogue around sleep hygiene, screen time and links to mental wellbeing and academic performance.
- In first year cohort hold important meeting about the parent/school partnership
- Under 13 year olds there are Apps which parents can use to control screen time - Screen Time; unglue; Norton Family; netnanny
  7 Best Parental Control Apps to Monitor and Limit Screen Time (parents.com)
- Ask Parents to reflect on their relationship with screen time and role modelling
- To follow through with Bedtime routine, coming off screens at least an hour before sleep
Push a program of digital detox and unplug

• Source: Reasons to Do a Digital Detox (verywellmind.com)

Screen Time Detox Tips for students in schools

• Let your friends and family know that you are on a digital detox and ask for their help and support
• Agree to all switch off your phones when focusing on other activities
• REMOVE ACCESS - Delete social media apps from your phone to reduce temptation and easy access
• Have meals without screens
• Keep screens out of the bedroom and agree a time to unplug before bed
• Challenge yourself to Read or listen to ‘white noise’ instead of being on screen before bed
• Keep a journal to track your progress and write down your thoughts about the experience
Summary

The success of any school mental health and wellbeing program is dependent on many key factors:

- Curriculum time and space to talk about screen time and to develop a culture in promoting positive mental health.
- Staff role model and have the conversations about a digital detox
- Engage the students in the data about their own performance, wellbeing and the culture in the school
- Engage the parents in conversations about screen time from raising awareness to reflecting on their own use
- Engage the local community and the services of local external agencies

References

1. DFE statutory guidance: Physical health and mental wellbeing: Primary and secondary; Updated 13 September 2021
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   Date: November 02, 2018 Date accessed: June 2022
4. Clare Erasmus; The Mental Health and Wellbeing handbook; transforming mental health on a budget; JKP (2019)
5. Professor Alice Gregory & Dr. Faith Orchard; ACAMH Sleep – ACAMH
6. Source: Reasons to Do a Digital Detox (verywellmind.com)