

Living Life Unplugged

Action Guide

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My Three Essential Questions:

- How does our interdependence on this human created super structure of internet technology affect our humanity?
- How does technology affect our children's natural and normal development, development that has been closely connected to nature since the beginning of time?
- How can we use our technology wisely to help us maximize what it means to be human?

I pose these questions to help us *act instead of react* to the electron stimuli that surround us.

I can't answer these three questions:

They are really for all of us to answer as we work with children.

Five Major Developmental Periods Between Birth and Age Seven:

- Language
- Movement
- Understanding the order within one's environment
- Refinement of sensory perceptions
- The development of social relationships and social skills

Children during this age have an *absorbent mind* meaning they are absorbing the details of life from their environment that consists of people, objects and tools, ideas and nature.

Children have a natural propensity to *connect positively* to everything in their environments.

Even in utero, children are absorbing language and are beginning to make social connections.

Brain researchers believe that a newborn's brain creates neurons at a rate of over *a quarter of a million per minute*.

The child's brain seeks to control stress and begins to create a brain structure based on acceptance or avoidance of the stimuli in the child's environment.

When the environment is such that the brain perceives the child's surroundings as hurtful, brain structure begins to reflect that perception by pruning down neuron development for hearing, touch, hunger, etc., to compensate for the stressful sensory overload.

Likewise, if the environment is calm and nurturing, the brain develops in response to that life-affirming presence. Feeling safe calms the emotional part of the brain. That calm allows essential learning to occur.

A calm and safe environment supports the child's natural tendencies to be curious and to seek out new, challenging and meaningful experiences, the core of true learning.

If you have a television or a computer in your home:

- Step outside sometime today and look through a window at the screens.
- Imagine being a newborn, a two-year-old, a three-year-old. And if you can do this at night, looking into a dark house with only the screens lit, the impact of the screen becomes more clear.
- What are the lighting, the changes in images and the type of images conveying to a child's mind?

Think about how your child's brain is reacting to these stressors, and how you can minimize these stressors.

Remember, a child's brain grows in response to its environment.

A Story About Bobby

Bobby's sensitive periods for absorbing language, movement, social relationships, understanding the order of one's environment, and refining sensory perceptions...had led him to sounding and acting like _____.

Bobby's young brain was used to responding to the constant stimuli of sound, light and color. That environment was Bobby's normal. It was difficult and uncomfortable for him to learn to focus on other activities.

I tell this story about Bobby, because we don't have a map of how all this technology is affecting child development.

We do have a good map and substantial evidence of how child development has unfolded over the past two hundred years.

The almost incessant use of technology has changed
the landscape of childhood.

BUT...

child development has not changed.

Children Need...

- Opportunities to make meaningful connections with people and learn vital skills to care for themselves and others.
- To use their hands to learn. About 25 percent of the sensory/motor cortex in the brain is devoted to input from the hands. And about half of the sensory motor cortex is dedicated to input from the eyes. The hand and the mind working together support essential learning in fundamental ways.
- Opportunities for movement, lots of movement, as the brain grows best with movement, large and small.
- Language rich environments with clear and accurate language. 90 percent of our adult spoken vocabulary is in place by the time we are six years old.

- Opportunities to explore their environments filled with people, objects and tools, ideas and nature, places much richer in sensory input than electronic screens.

For every activity we see a child doing, we should ask:

Is this promoting independence and concentration in my child?

If we answer no to either one of those things, we need to redirect the child to a different activity and change the environment to allow for the development of independence and concentration.

Living life unplugged, providing for natural child development...

It's up to you.

It's up to all of us.

Resources

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