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Comfort in a time of need

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THE GEN-Z (I-GEN/ALPHA) CHILDREN AND TECHNOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING THE SPIDERS' MO

PREPARED BY :

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TOPIC 1: Understanding the world of technology

Who is the Gen-Z (I-Gen/Alpha) children?
Why should we care about their tech use?
Dopamine: Happy then numb (Anhedonia)
ESS (Electronic Screen Syndrome): A disorder of dysregulation
Age-appropriate screen-time use for every age-group

Who is the Gen-Z (I-Gen/Alpha) children?

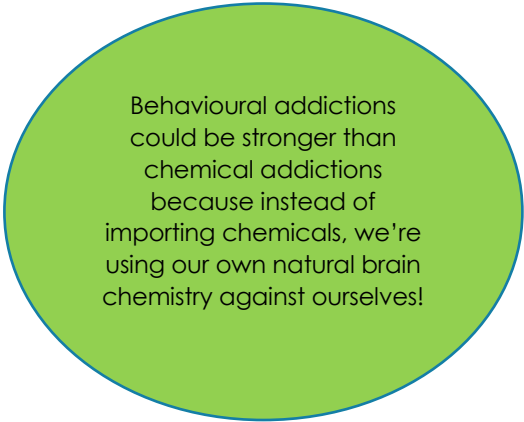
- Born between 1994 – 2024.
- They are permanently connected.
- Independent when it comes to making decisions and managing their digital identities.
- They expect their individual needs to be considered.

Why should we care about their tech use?

- **210 million** people over the world are estimated to suffer from Internet and Social media addiction.
- Teens who spend **5 hours a day** on their phones are twice more likely to show signs of depression.
- 50% girls and 33% boys engage in unhealthy weigh control behaviours.
- 5,4% adolescents suffer from eating disorders.
- South Africa is the top mobile device consumer in the world.
- **49% parents** never speak to their children about online safety or what to do if something online bother or upset them.
- A child's brain is underdeveloped and is particularly susceptible to technology's hyper-stimulating affect.
- The same is true for young adults (under the age of 25), as their pre-frontal cortex is still not fully developed. This is the are in the brain (amongst other things), that regulates impulse control.
- In other words, they struggle to put breaks on their urges, including screen time.
- These young people need non-addicted adults to put the brakes on for them! Yet here, we have another major problem – most adults are just as addicted to their technology as their children.
- We are now seeing **multiple layers of denial** in the typical nuclear home.
- Technology is addictive, but there are no warning labels on devices (yet – if ever!).
- The very addictive chemical in the brain, called **DOPAMINE** has been released during technology use, which is addictive.
- Technology abuse is thus a “medical condition”.

Difference between **CHEMICAL ADDICTION** and **BEHAVIOURAL ADDICTION**

CHEMICAL ADDICTION	BEHAVIOURAL ADDICTION
Intake of external substances, such as nicotine, alcohol, heroine, etc.	Non-substance addictions we become dependent upon such as gambling, video games, pornography, technology use, etc.



Behavioural addictions could be stronger than chemical addictions because instead of importing chemicals, we're using our own natural brain chemistry against ourselves!

Dopamine: Happy then numb (ANHEDONIA)

DEFINITION: Dopamine plays a role in **HOW** we feel pleasure. It plays a big part in our unique human ability to **THINK** and **PLAN**. It helps us to strive, focus and find things interesting (WebMD)

- Dopamine is a NEUROTRANSMITTER.

DEFINITION: Anhedonia (emotional numbness) reduces the ability to experience pleasure in simple things.

- A drug abuser (used to high stimulating activities) becomes emotionally numb to activities of lesser stimulation. *Examples:* video game playing; social media; listening to music excessively; gambling; ingesting cocaine; heroin; alcohol or marijuana).
<https://youtu.be/HUngLgGRJpo>
- **Non-addictive dopamine:** reading books (hard copy; face-to-face conversations; occasionally listening to your favourite music).

GOOD NEWS: the brain can reset 😊

Electronic screen syndrome (ESS)

A disorder of dysregulation (Dr Victoria Dunckley, 2015)

DEFINITION OF SCREENTIME: All time spent in front of any device with an electronic screen (e.g. Computer, TV; video games; smartphones; iPads; Tablets; laptops; digital cameras; e-readers, etc.)

Research suggests: ALL screen activities provide unnatural stimulation of the nervous system and cause adverse effects. However, content is not as important as the amount, and **interactive** causes more dysfunction than **passive**.

INTERACTIVE SCREEN TIME	PASSIVE SCREEN TIME
Screen activities in which the user regularly interfaces with devices, e.g. touch screen; keyboard; console; motion sensor, etc.	Watching movies/TV on a TV set from across the room.

Both interactive and passive screen time are associated with health concerns!

CHRONIC STRESS	SLEEP DEPRIVATION	IRRITABLE
Depressed; low frustration tolerance; oppositional-defiant behaviours; poor eye-contact; poor short-term memory; hallucinations.	Rapidly changing moods; poor self-regulation; insomnia/non-restorative sleep; poor sportsmanship; tics, etc.	Age-inappropriate tantrums; disorganized behaviour; social immaturity; learning difficulties; stuttering; poor executive functioning).

AGE APPROPRIATE SCREEN USE	
UNDER 3 YEARS OLD	NO SCREEN TIME
3 – 6 YEARS OLD	No personal device or access, and only a single brief (under 30 minutes) educational program once or twice a month , always with a parent present.
6 – 12 YEARS OLD	No personal device or access, increased frequency of a brief (under 30 minutes) educational program to multiple times weekly , with an occasional family movie night (G-rated, mostly animated, with educational/redeeming qualities).
12 – 14 YEARS OLD	STILL no personal device or access (they will fight you on this since all of their friends are now living 24/7 on their cell phones and social media), access granted for use of the family computer for academic work (up to 2 hours daily) , and when all homework/chores/sports completed may earn up to 1 hour daily of decompressing screen time (educational programming). Also offered more frequent family movie nights on the weekends (G and PG-rated).
14 – 16 YEARS OLD	Provided a cell phone with limited access to social media pending responsible use and with complete parental oversight/access. Permitted up to 4 hours daily on family computer for academic work, up to 1 hour of decompressing screen when all responsibilities completed, and more self-regulated weekend screen time with the potential of PG-13 content given parental approval.
16 – 18 YEARS OLD	Unlimited academic screen time . For a VERY responsible adolescent, more self-regulate daily screen use and even some privacy permitted, but still no screens in bedrooms overnight and parental oversight provided for show/movie content.
OVER 18 YEARS OLD	Loving advice offered but no expectations posed. Personal screen use and privacy honoured.

TOPIC 2: Social Media

Social media and anxiety

Validation addiction

Gender dysphoria (GD)

Social media APPS (info & management)

Gender dysphoria (GD)

DEFINITION: GENDER DYSPHORIA is a condition that causes distress and discomfort when the gender you identify with conflicts with the sex that you were assigned at birth, and often manifests at the onset of puberty”.

- The latter is then called **RAPID ONSET GENDER DYSPHORIA (ROGD)**.
- **ROGD** is being reported predominantly in teenagers born female. This variant of GD seems to be contagious.
- 1 out of 30 000 people struggle with GD.
- **How can this contagion be stopped?** Excellent place to begin is for parents to enforce proper social distancing as found in scripture: **1 Cor. 15:33** (NIV): “do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character”.

Social Media & Anxiety

- Although connecting with friends online has positive benefits for mental health, overdoing screen time can lead to a catastrophic emotional crash (Huddleston, 2022).
- Another issue related to social media: **VALIDATION ADDICTION.**
- For some, frequent reassurance seeking is addictive, almost like a drug. The likes and comments are a temporary fix. While they might feel better now, the positive effects are usually short-lived because they come from others and not from within themselves (Zucker, 2021).
- **Watch the following DOCUMENTARIES:**
 - **The Social Dilemma (2020):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaaC57tcci0>
 - **Social Animals (2018):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0X-XEcmF6>

Maximum time on social media per day = 30 minutes.

Social media APPS to control your child's use of social media:

- Family life APP
- Qustodio
- Bark
- Common Sense Media website (good website to keep handy)

TOPIC 3: Video gaming

Do video games **cause health problems?**

Inseparable: Video gaming and pornography

South African statistics on pornography

What do we do about video gaming?

PORNOGRAPHY

- South Africa is the 19th biggest consumer of porn.
- **11 YEARS OLD:** The average age of first exposure to pornography.
- **116 000 SEARCHES** for child pornography every day.
- **90% CHILDREN** between ages of **8 and 16** with access to the internet has viewed porn online (often by mistake).

World Health Organization (WHO) & video gaming:

“Gaming disorder” was added to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11), which went into effect in January 2022 (Huddleston, 2022, p. 150).

The **BRAIN** takes 18 years to GROW & DEVELOP and a LIFETIME to mature.

Inseparable – Video gaming and pornography

- Allowing technology to keep your children occupied can give you a false sense of security.
- As parent, you might think, “Well, I know they’re probably playing video games a little too much, but at least they’re in their room and not out somewhere dangerous”.
- Chances are, there’s more going on in that screen-lit bedroom than you ever thought possible.
- They’re in real danger!
- Not only will your video gaming children be susceptible to digital addiction and all the mental illnesses that come with it, but statistically, if they’re playing video games, they’re also watching PORN!

So, what do we do about video gaming?

ADVISE FOR PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN:

- Remove all video games, including education games from your home.
- First get rid of all the video game consoles, but don’t sell them; otherwise, you’ll be a drug pusher 😊.
- Next, delete all games from computers, phones, and tablets.
- Then immediately substitute those video games with many fun, non-digital activities!

TOPIC 4: Dopamine Detox/Stimulation Fast/Rehabilitation

Energies forsaken
Fasting and Feasting
Preventative tips
Additional tips and parental rights

Energies forsaken

- When kids get sucked into their screens (iPad games, TV shows, video game systems, cell phone social media scrolling, etc.) their minds become suspended in a dopamine high that puts every other energy on hold.
- The following energies become frozen in an IDLE STATE:
 - Physical energy
 - Emotional energy
 - Social energy
 - Intellectual energy
 - Cognitive energy
- **GLUED TO THE TUBE:** A child's mind is suspended in a dopamine high that puts every other energy on hold!

FASTING AND FEASTING

The FASTING schedule (when you DON'T engage with technology):

- Avoid digital activities that are problematic during periods of time associated with rest-nights, weekends, and vacations.
- These are times that will make compliance easier:

Dr Sepah's suggested schedule for fasting
1 – 2 hours at the end of the day (depending on work and family demands)
1 weekend day (spend outside on a Saturday/Sunday. Play ballgames; board games; picnic, etc.)
1 weekend per quarter (go on a local trip)
1 week per year (go on vacation)

Preventative TIPS

- Separate younger siblings from older siblings' screen use/content, or lower older siblings' use/content to be the acceptable level of younger siblings (which is the safer option).
- Brief (less than 10 minutes) viewing cell phone photos or enjoying video calls with family/friends acceptable at any age.
- NO video games for any age or reason.
- ALL screen time is PUBLIC use only: no screens behind closed doors (bathroom or bedroom), with personal devices charged in public spaces like the kitchen.
- No screen time in the last hour before bedtime (and/or use of BLUE UV LIGHT BLOCKING GLASSES for older children, needing to complete later evening academic work on screens).

Additional TIPS and parental rights:

- As parent you have every right to determine what is not allowed in your home.
- You (parent) are to raise your children.
- They are not to raise you.
- It is NOT your job to be your child's friend.
- It is your job to parent your children.
- 80% of what a child does is what he/she observes from the parent/primary caretaker.
- Parental love is the only love that is truly selfless, unconditional, and forgiving. We never know the love of a parent till we become parents ourselves. Parents are the only ones obligated to love a child; from the rest of the world, they must earn it.
- Now parent, it is your turn parents are just as addicted to technology as their children. It is your time for an honesty check on your own screen time use.
- Our children need more **VITAMIN N!**
- What is **VITAMIN N**? Learn to say **NO!**

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