

## Lesson 2.6: Turn off the TV

**Background (Read before you teach):** Media, including television and newer screen devices, grab the attention of today's youth. Though computers and the internet play an important role in learning and sharing ideas, health professionals, teachers, and parents have also expressed concerns about too much exposure among children to screen devices and social media. Pediatricians make the following [recommendations](#) for parents (Strasburger et al., 2013):

- Avoid screen media exposure for children under 2 years of age;
- Limit the total amount of entertainment screen time to 2 hours or less per day;
- Move televisions and other screen devices out of children's bedrooms. Turn off screen devices an hour before bedtime to avoid interrupting sleep;
- Monitor the media (including web and social media) that children are using;
- View television, movies, and videos with your children. Use this opportunity to discuss your family values; and
- Model good parenting by setting a family plan for using media. Reinforce mealtimes, bedtimes, and other healthy routines with reasonable but firm rules.

When children and teens spend more than 7 hours a day engaged with media, less time is available for playing outside, reading, and talking to family and friends (Strasburger, Jordan & Donnerstein, 2012). Exposure to violence in the media is a factor linked to real-life violence and aggressive behavior. Sexual content in the media also influences attitudes and behaviors about sex in teens.

More time viewing TV increases the risk of obesity among children (Strasburger et al., 2012). Some possible reasons include: 1) less time for physical activity; 2) effect of food ads on children's food and beverage choices; 3) eating unhealthy snacks while viewing TV; and 4) interference with sleep.

Fig. Parents role-play a bedtime problem



**Teaching tip:** The role play exercise is entertaining and also gives participant practice in setting limits. Use this lesson to reinforce earlier messages about the benefits of active play or how to develop fine motor skills through drawing/crafts.

**Target Audience:** Mexican-origin families with young children, ages 3 to 8 years

**Key Message:** Use good parenting practices to limit leisure time in all screen devices

**Objectives:** By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Explain how too much screen time can lead to poor health/social/academic outcomes in youth
- Practice good parenting strategies to limit screen time in children
- Identify at least one other indoor activity (board games, art, reading) to replace television and videogame time

**Materials:**

- Pens
- Picture of a TV screen
- Tape
- Supplies for food demonstration (suggested Fruity Parfait)

**Handouts:** recipes and screen time worksheets

**Set-up:** For role-playing activity, tape the picture of the TV screen to back of chair or wall and put another chair in front of the TV.

**Opening (Anchor):** (10 min) Welcome! Review what was covered last time and ask if participants have made changes, based on their goals. Congratulate and encourage them to keep on making changes.

**Say:** Today, we will be talking about how to use good parenting practices to reduce the amount of time your children spend watching television and using other screen devices for fun.

To begin the class, start with game to find out who can list the most screen devices (like TV, smartphone). In pairs, participants will list on the screen time worksheet as many screen devices as they can in 2 minutes. Ask them first to think about what they have in their homes and then what they have seen advertised. Some examples that may be mentioned are: TV, DVD portable player, handheld game, phone with screen, computer/laptop, tablet, netbook, movie theatre, car DVD system, arcade games, video game system, and ipad.

**Ask:** Think about when you were the same age as your child. How many of these devices existed? How did you spend your time?

**Lesson (Add):** (15 min) Discuss the following points:

**Say:** Today, our children spend more time than their parents did watching television or engaged in using other types of screen devices. While computers and social media devices help children learn and share ideas, health professionals and teachers are concerned about too much exposure to screen devices. Doctors recommend no more than 2 hours a day of total entertainment time spent in using social media or screen devices for children 2 or older. For children under 2 years, screen exposure is not recommended at all.

**Ask:** Why do doctors make this recommendation? What are some of the risks to our children of too much screen time? What are your concerns about your child spending too much time using screen devices? (Some answers might include aggressive behaviors, less physical activity and sleep, unhealthy snacking, less time for other activities that support child development like reading books or interacting with family).

**Say:** Children ages 8-18 years spend more than 7 hours a day using a variety of media. Establishing good habits at an early age is easier than changing bad habits in a teenager. Have children use interactive videogames that encourage physical activity rather than sedentary ones. **Ask:** What can parents do to support good habits that limit screen time? What are other quiet time activities that you can do with your children? When children are playing videogames what are examples of interactive videogames that encourage physical activity?

- Move televisions out of bedrooms or sleeping areas.

- Make and reinforce a family plan to limit leisure time spent on screen devices to less than 2 hours a day.
- Choose interactive videogames that encourage physical activity and can improve coordination such as WiiFit, Xbox Kinect, and Dance Dance Revolution.
- Plan other quiet time activities with your child, like reading, playing a board game, drawing, making crafts.

**Activity (Apply):** (25 min) While the assistant starts the food demonstration, the educator leads the activity.

- Recruit 2 volunteers for a role playing activity in turning off the TV. Apart from the group, instruct them in the role play. One volunteer will play the child and the other, the parent. The “child” will sit on the chair in front of the TV picture. The “adult” will remind the child that it is time to turn-off the TV to get ready for bed. Run 2 scenarios. First, the child fusses, throws a tantrum, and the parent backs down. Second, the child begins to protest but parent does not back down. Instead, parent reminds child of the family rule and lovingly suggests a favorite book they will have time to read after turning off the TV. Child agrees.
- **Ask:** What did you notice about the 2 role plays? How did the parent approach the problem differently in scenario 1 and 2? What are other positive parenting practices that you might try? (praise child for agreeing to turn off the television; be consistent—avoid threats that you will not carry out; give a 5 minute reminder to let child know when screen time will end; set curfews for computers and phones after which devices should be turned off).
- Food demonstration, tasting and sharing. Pass around the containers, showing the participants any foods that might be new or unfamiliar (for example, low-fat products, whole grain alternatives). Explain step-by-step how the food is prepared. Serve samples for tasting. **Ask:** What are some ways that your children can help prepare this recipe? How can you use it at home? What do you like about the recipe? What would you change?

**Closing (Away):** (10 min) Parents can help children limit leisure time spent watching television or using all screen devices. Pair-up and set specific goals

What did you learn? Why is this information important to you? Choose a goal to work on this month. For example: “ I will limit my child’s screen time to 2 hours or less a day”. Ask a friend or family member to help support you in reaching your goal. Invite families to share their goals.

## References and Resources:

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