



Tech Tuesday: Moderating Technology Every Day

Too Much Technology, Now What?

By Kendra McGuire

Throughout the month of March we explored the dangers that exist on today's devices. We also learned how these dangers, along with the amount of time spent on technology, may be negatively impacting our children.

We can no longer ignore the data or the negative changes happening before our eyes. This week, we provide additional tips, strategies, and resources to make changes that can help moderate the use of technology in our lives and the lives of our children.

Finding Balance

As parents, trying to determine "how much technology is too much" can be difficult. Each family is different and every child is unique too. Finding the right balance will take time and may need to be adjusted as your child grows or when your plans are no longer working.

As you strive to find the right balance with technology, it is important to consider areas that may impact a child's growth and development. The areas listed should be priorities in your child's life. If technology is negatively affecting these areas, it may be time to make some changes:

- Spending time with friends in-person, outside of school
- Getting involved in extra-curricular activities
- Keeping up with school responsibilities and homework
- Maintaining strong family relationships
- Getting enough sleep
- Daily physical activity - especially outdoors
- Attending Mass and spending time in prayer

A Virtuous Life

A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers: he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1803

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1809

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Alternatives to Technology

As you plan to use less technology, it is a good idea to decide how your family will fill this open time. One way to do this is to talk with your children about 2-3 passions they are most interested in. Then structure your schedule to assist them in pursuing these activities. Whether your child wants to volunteer, build something, learn to play an instrument, play a new sport or some other activity, setting aside time and making concrete plans will get your family off devices and into something new and enjoyable. The main idea behind this is to give our kids something else to get "lost in." Sometimes children just need a little motivation to get started.

-Ideas from www.yourmodernfamily.com



Partner With School & Other Parents

One of the biggest challenges for parents in regards to technology is that your child's friends may all use smart phones. The fear is your child may be left out and unable to engage with his or her peers. This is a very real challenge and hard to navigate, so let's look at ways to change this.

First, partnering with your child's school and getting involved in the Parent-Teacher Organization can be a great way to help. Bring this topic up and have the PTO plan monthly activities to bring children together for in-person activities where the devices can be collected or left at home. Our children need to engage in fun, in-person activities that are free from devices.

You could also bring the "Wait Until 8th" pledge program to your school community. Rallying parents around the idea of allowing our kids to be kids as long as possible should appeal to all of us. Visit www.waituntil8th.org to learn more.

Another thing you can do is be supportive of your school and other parents when they put healthy boundaries around technology. Whether it's school phone procedures, acceptable use policies, or parents asking children to put the phones away during student parties and sleepovers, all of these efforts will help keep our children focused on relationships with one another, not their devices.

A Planning Tool

The American Academy of Pediatrics has created a tool to help families create a "Family Media Plan." This online tool helps families determine the purpose of their plan, establish goals based on each child's age, and calculate screen time usage. To start creating your family's plan visit www.healthychildren.org and search the "Family Media Plan".

Other Ways to Protect Children

If this series on technology inspired you to do more, another area of action is to call upon your elected officials to enact legislation that protects children from online harm. One group, The Center for Humane Technology, is working toward this goal. You can find their work at www.humanetech.com.

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