


Childhood and Screens: Looking for Updates...

Eric D. Supply 

Área de Prevención y Promoción de Salud en Niñez y Adolescencia, Departamento de Pediatría. Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires. Buenos Aires, Argentina

Child access to technological devices is increasing; the pandemic has led us to review previous agreements on use and exposure. The new reality leads us to other questions about how we as adults can accompany them from the adult world to rethink limits, take advantage of their capabilities, and, most importantly, find meaning.

The pandemic brought many changes: the long 2020 modified routines and disrupted the world as we knew it. Limitations generated opportunities so that, in pursuit of survival and adjustment, technology built bridges that allowed the continuity of the life we were used to and preserve a sense of social and relational structure.

In the case of children, the screens allowed for the preservation of educational and recreational spaces and their interaction with the outside world, which is crucial during their development. The global context brought to the surface the contradictions that also exist in these tools, bringing to center stage the idea that the end justifies the means.

While previous mainstream perspectives on using screens and devices focused more on exposure and use limits, the new trends led us to focus more on another crucial point: meaning. In this way, we moved closer to assessing the usefulness, context, content, personality, and appeal and how these experiences, accompanied and mediated, can contribute to child development.

The qualitative study included in this issue and developed by Gavoto, Terceiro, and Volij (2023) reflects the impact of these years on children and their life between screens, concentrating on two vital aspects: the healthcare professionals' approach and viewpoint.

Considering what the authors have said, the challenge arises in its multiple edges, the perception of mothers, fathers, and caregivers, which requires updating since the need for digital skills is also on the agenda in our world. The timeline that crosses us as humanity shows those steps that became naturalized in our habits and interactions: e-mail, chat, video-call. Therein lies a difficulty we often face from the trajectory of the adult

world: linking our experience and relationship with technology to everything it entails.

From that place appear biases, confusions, and determinisms that tarnish the idea of finding digital well-being, of finding a balance that allows a healthy relationship with technology, contemplating the two sides of this coin: the positive aspects but also the limitations that may result in an indiscriminate or improper use.

On this point, there are no differences. As adults, we also need to find the balance in this contrast: that of the proper and non-problematic use, revise the consistency of our sayings and suggestions with our daily actions, where often the little ones watch us in a virtual crossroads of leisure, relationships, and obligations.

Recognizing the limitations can be a good starting point. What we do not know is logical to the fact that new technologies are moving at a dizzying pace; trying to keep up to date is an ideal that we can abandon to seize the opportunity that can give us the driving force of that premise: our curiosity and a need to approach the digital world, which today is all around children and teenagers, in our homes and the consulting room.

A friendly and open attitude can make a fundamental difference in the treatment of an approach to the subject, not only at the time of the intervention but also at future opportunities, enriching the growing process by mediating and observing it with a critical and constructive eye, as it happens in other areas. We could take food as an example: stimuli, content, exposure times, and digital environments should also pursue the concept of healthy and nutritious.

Devices automatically look for updates, sometimes incorporating tools while we sleep or before we notice it. Such action leads us to the frustrating maelstrom of a lost race, to the out of reach. Perhaps it is time to value what comes first: the search, the intention, and the need to understand the particularities of this ever-changing world that requires a greater willingness on our part. To accompany children in their exploration of the virtual world should also involve our learning, providing us with

Author for correspondence: eric.supply@hospitalitaliano.org.ar, Supply ED.

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more and better criteria to understand and approach new technologies, recovering the notion of the meaning of their use as a tool, as a bridge, as a means that can, in some way, justify their purposes.

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