



The best alternative we have to screen time is called outside.

The screen tsunami is sweeping through our living rooms and bedrooms, and it is affecting our children's resilience. Too much time on screens is associated with reduced cognitive skills, reduced physical health, reduced social wellbeing (through poorer relationships and lowered emotional intelligence), and a decrease in wellbeing.

Around two-thirds of our early adolescents are exceeding two hours per day on all screens, and in some cases children are spending as much as one-third of their day glued to the screen. To be clear, research shows that a moderate amount of screen time, whether gaming, exploring or on social media, is positively correlated with wellbeing, but the evidence does not support the possibility that screens make our children 'happy', help them achieve anything particularly productive, or help them live well-balanced lives. And the current data indicates that our children are not utilising screens at a moderate level. They're over and above the reasonable recommendations. So it's up to us to actively monitor our children's screen usage and, where necessary, set limits on the extent to which they have access to them. Failure to do so will increase the likelihood of any number of issues including those outlined above and ultimately reducing resilience in our children.

The best alternative we have to screen time is called outside. Play, particularly outside play, brings with it elements that powerfully promote resilience: risk, ambiguity and uncertainty. For young children, climbing a fortress or sliding down a slippery dip are exhilarating confidence builders. Older children might follow a parent along a scary precipice, or abseil down an escarpment on a school camp. And because most play is social, the role-playing, identity-building processes that emerge through interactions with others provide additional scaffolding that builds and develops a child's resilience.

ACTIVITY 1: Set Limits

Discuss and establish appropriate screen-time limits with your children. (Note, I did not say to do it for them... but with them.) This means having conversations in an autonomy-supportive way and collaborating on time-limits, content to be allowed, and places where screens are ok and where they're not. If you think it will work for your family, use the "Technology Tickets" included in this book! If you need more you can always download them for free at happyfamilies.com.au

ACTIVITY 2: Choose Green

Discuss with your child the extent to which they are outside enjoying "green time" rather than screen time. Create opportunities for them to be outside each day.

ACTIVITY 3: Self-Evaluation

Evaluate your own screen-time vs green-time ratio and explore how you can be a better example to your child.



