

Is Screen Time What You Really Want For Your Child?

P. Donohue Shortridge

Ask yourself:

“Why am I putting a screen in the hands of my young child?”

Be honest, why are you doing this? There is plenty of research out there that urges you to reconsider this choice, yet many parents still not only allow it, it's encouraged.

Are you that parent? Do you hand over your device when your child asks for it? Do you give it to your child even when she doesn't ask for it? Is there a device in the back seat of the family vehicle? In your child's bedroom? Does your child have his own tablet? Does it have lots of apps?

Who is it serving when your young child is in front of a screen?

You might be thinking: He likes it. He asks for it. He is learning something. Is this *really* true? What *is* he learning?

Do you give your child other things/foods/drinks/activities/privileges because your child asks for it, cries for it, likes it, whines for it? How have you made those decisions?

Is giving your child a screen any different? I would argue that it is different in this one essential way: when you restrict soda from your child's life, for example, the impact on you is minor. However, what happens to you when you restrict using your screen in front of your child and/or you choose to not give your child a screen?

Think about that.

Might there be something else involved in your decision to give your child a screen?

Is it in your interest that your child be occupied/quiet/docile in front of a screen?

Be honest. You have your reasons: you can get some chores done, the siblings will stop fighting, and it gets everybody quiet. And then *YOU* can then be on your screen. The whole family can be on screens.

This is what your children see you do anyway. How often is your screen there on the table or in the car or elsewhere visible to your child when you are together? How often are you checked out when you are with your child because you are on your phone, tablet or other screen?
(see my article, *Your Cell Phone or Your Life*)

Is that an active choice, to be on your screen when with your child or merely a default, not really much thinking about it? It just turns out that way. And thus, how easy it is to give one to your child too.

Your children watch what you do, want to do what you do, will learn to value what you value. Take responsibility for the fact that screen time is the value they are learning from you so naturally your child wants one too. You teach him by what you do yourself and what you allow him to do.

So be sure to answer for yourself, "What is my purpose in giving my child a screen?" as you make your family decisions about them.

P. Donohue Shortridge

fostering the authentic life of children and their families in the American culture

P.O. Box 2888 • Littleton, CO 80161-2888 • 303.378.0253 • pds@pdonohueshortridge.com • www.pdonohueshortridge.com