

Impact of the Digital Environment on Children and Working Parents



A handbook by:

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A Handbook for the Parents

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This handbook contains various strategies one could use with regards to their children. Due to various environmental changes, including the pandemic, children have been confined to the four walls of the house. This has led to many issues in children in itself.

Common issues faced by children:

1. Hyperactivity
2. Lethargy/ low on enthusiasm
3. Increased screen time
4. Behavioural issues
5. Increased screen time
6. Poor social interaction

This has affected not only the kids, but also the parents. Let us see how it has affected this particular population:

1. Juggling between the personal and professional life
2. Are not getting enough time for themselves
3. Disturbed sleep
4. Work pressures
5. Self-doubts
6. Stress, anxieties

Looking for strategies that could help us overcome these issues, with not just the children but with yourselves as well?
Let us have a look!

1. Prepare a daily routine



Make a schedule for your kids right from the time the child wakes up till the time he goes to sleep. A daily schedule makes one not only independent in terms of doing their tasks by themselves, but also helps with a child's visual learning and reading skills.

Learning and getting used to the schedule might take some time for the kids. Parents are requested to be patient during the whole process and help the children learn the schedule. The initial days might require a lot of the parent's involvement, where they would assist the child with achieving the next activity after getting done with the first. Once the child learns the association, they are good to go. In case of very small children, make sure we use a visual schedule.

While preparing a schedule, make sure to segregate their activity times, e.g., breakfast time, physical activity time, free time, screen time and so on.

It is important to give the kids free time and playtime as it encourages them to follow the schedule. Including different time for screen will help them resort to the screen, only during those hours and not otherwise.

Making a schedule for yourself will also help you manage your work, family and social life balance.

2. Promote physical activities

When we talk about physical activities, it says something that essentially is goal directed. We often hear about kids running all around the house throughout the day, without any motive as such. This would not be considered a physical activity.

We could modify it by simply making some sort of a game out of it, e.g., pick (an object) up and keep it in the next room. This can be coupled with running/ jumping, etc. Another activity could be designing an obstacle course/ circuit training for the kids (Refer to the picture below.)



With the help of basic things available at home, one can design an obstacle course. This can be coupled with some toys. Keep the toys in one corner, and a basket in the other

corner, arranging all the obstacles in between them. Ask the child to pick up one toy, cross the obstacles successfully and drop the toy in the basket. We repeat this until all of the toys have been placed in the basket. Make sure to use a lot of verbal reinforcers like “Wow, you did it”, “good job”, and physical reinforcers like clapping for them, asking them for high fives, in order to yield better results and more involvement from the children. This strategy helps with their hyperactivity, lethargy, and inactiveness.

Physical activity is something that is extremely important for not just the children but for us parents as well. Make sure you take out at least 30 minutes from your schedule where you engage in some form of physical activity. It can be as simple as going for a walk, climbing up and down the stairs, exercising, yoga and so on, on a daily basis. This will help you sail through the day effectively, release the happy hormones in your body and will serve as a great refreshment from your hectic routines.

3. Introduce the concept of “Timeout”



Timeout is a wonderful strategy that helps us modify a child's behaviour. Many times we see children depicting aggressive or irritable behaviors like hitting people, jumping/ biting/ throwing things when angry. Timeout helps us with tackling these behaviors. It helps when timeout is given immediately after the child performs those specific behaviours. One tells the child that they are getting a timeout for performing or engaging in a particular behavior. No further discussion or explanation needs to be given. A chair is kept in any corner of any room (Always a fixed spot, preferably) and the child is asked to go and sit on it for 5-10 minutes (achievable time). During the entire duration of a timeout, the child is not allowed to speak to anyone and vice-versa. Any violation results in increasing the time limit. Refrain from using any kind of physical/ corporal punishments on children. Use response cost. Take any toy or something they are playing with away from them and let them know that they would only get this back on completion of the timeout.

In case of children with special needs, start with a smaller time duration and couple this strategy with a reward system. Make a chart with squares on it, and tick mark one-by-one whenever a child completes the timeout given. Give them a reward when all the boxes get ticked.

4. Group Play



Make sure to take out as much time as you can from your busy schedules and spend that time with the kids. Engage yourselves (every member in the family) in indoor or outdoor, sitting or physical activities, but make sure that you do make time for the same. This helps strengthen your bonds with the kids, promotes social interaction, and much more. Examples for these family games would be playing board games, musical chairs, playing with the balls, treasure hunt, hide and seek, and so on. Make these activities as interesting and enjoyable as possible. You could also couple these with some kind of music in the background.

5. Communication

No matter how busy or caught up you are, keep communicating with your children. This helps them understand that you are available for them, you are here to hear them out, and always accessible.

6. Meditation



This mindfulness technique helps us in a variety of ways. We are often worried and stressed about a number of things in our lives and keep lingering either in the past or the future, and to such an extent that we forget to live in the present.



Meditation keeps us grounded and helps us to stay in the here and now, and in turn helps us cope with our anxieties and reduce our stress levels.

Takeaways

While we practice all the aforementioned strategies, we ought to make sure that we do so on a regular basis in order to see better results. Consistency is the key.

Please do not hesitate to ask for help whenever needed. Understanding what we need and asking for help in itself is a step towards achieving the goal and reaching where you want to.

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