What You Need to Know About the Relationship Between Screen Time and ADHD

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INTRODUCTION

Many features of modern electronic devices offer a particular appeal to people with ADHD. Social media feeds provide endless hours of entertainment and video games offer hundreds of tasks to complete, jumping from one quest to the next. Due to the increase in use, many wonder if such amounts of screen time may cause ADHD. Given that so much of our lives are now lived online, it is important to understand the relationship between screen time and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It is important for parents to keep an eye on their children's digital activities in order to identify potential problems and create an environment where they are able to work and play without being overwhelmed or distracted. But it is not just parents who should be concerned — teachers, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and mentors must also understand how technology usage affects those living with ADHD in order to properly support them throughout different stages of life.

Myth: Excessive screen time *causes* ADHD

Truth: Excessive screen time can cause symptoms similar to ADHD, even though it does not cause ADHD itself. It can also worsen symptoms. However, technology can also be used as a supportive tool for those with ADHD.

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCREEN TIME AND ADHD SYMPTOMS: The Downsides of Technology for those with ADHD

With the rise of technology, many are wondering if computer use could be a contributing factor to this disorder. Studies conducted over the years have shown that frequent use of screens can either worsen existing ADHD symptoms or increase a person's vulnerability to developing them. For instance, it has been found that using computers excessively can lead to impulsivity, hyperactivity, disorganization, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating and completing tasks - all signs of ADHD. Recent studies have also shown that there may be a link between screen time and the intensity of ADHD symptoms. Additionally, unlimited access to seemingly endless information can lead to distractions, disrupted sleep patterns, or difficulty staying focused on tasks that do not involve screens. However, this connection does not necessarily mean that excessive screen time causes ADHD symptoms. The issue may simply be that existing impulsive behaviors drive people to turn to screens and technology (which are better at grabbing and holding their attention) instead of engaging in activities that help calm them down.

Those struggling with ADHD should be aware of these negative aspects of technology. As noted, too much screen time can lead to greater distractions which can worsen symptoms instead of helping them manage them better. Spending too much time on the internet can make it difficult for people to focus on tasks or remember information accurately since they are

constantly being bombarded with new information. Furthermore, spending a lot of time on the computer can result in unhealthy habits such as gaming addictions and social media addictions, which can negatively affect productivity levels and worsen symptoms. Also, spending long periods of time in front of a screen or a computer can lead to a lack of physical activity, which can have serious health consequences. Such consequences can include increased depression and anxiety. For this reason, individuals with ADHD, as well as their caregivers, need to set boundaries around computer use and screen time in order to maximize its positive effects and prevent its negative consequences.

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCREEN TIME AND ADHD SYMPTOMS: The Benefits of Technology for those with ADHD

In comparison, some argue that technology can be helpful, and even comforting, to those with ADHD because it allows them to organize their tasks better, complete assignments more efficiently, distract them from negative thoughts, and focus more effectively. For instance:

- Easier organizational methods that help to facilitate time management skills and help students stay ahead of tasks (E.g., calendars, reminders, color-coded lists, and virtual checklists). Being organized is a key factor in managing ADHD symptoms because it helps students maximize their time spent learning.
- A number of educational materials are available online such as video tutorials and helpful software programs, which helps those with ADHD learn more efficiently and can lead to success both inside and outside the classroom. They can make it easier for someone to develop specific skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking.
- Computer-based activities such as gaming can be used as outlets for satisfying creativity and serve as an important social link that allows people to connect with others more easily

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MANAGE THE EFFECTS OF SCREEN TIME ON ADHD

There is no doubt that how people interact with their computer-based activities can either worsen or improve their symptoms. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to not only how much time your child spends looking at screens but also in how they are using the technology safely and responsibly. To manage the effects of screen time, it is important to find strategies that promote healthy usage without compromising educational opportunities or quality of life. For instance:

- Schedule regular breaks in-between tasks to allow for a mental reset and to regain focus when needed.
- Work or study periods should be allocated enough time so that distractions, such as social media, can be avoided and concentration is maintained
- Balance screen time with physical exercise and social interaction to promote the best stimulation and productivity
- Lastly, parents should create an environment where minimal distractions can interfere with learning activities. This may include setting boundaries on screen

time and having designated areas to use computers. Other resources to support parents with this can be found here: https://www.screenagersmovie.com/resources

By proactively implementing these strategies, it is possible to manage the impact of screen time efficiently and effectively on ADHD by creating an environment that improves attention and productivity rather than detracts from it.

LET'S RECAP

The use of screens and technology has become a large part of our culture and society. This is why it is important to understand the impact they can have on us. When it comes to managing ADHD, technology adds both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, computers offer numerous organizational tools which can help those affected to improve their focus and learn more effectively. On the other hand, too much screen time poses the risk of increasing distractions which could make managing symptoms more difficult than before. The relationship between screen time and ADHD is a complex and multifaceted one. With this in mind, individuals with ADHD should make every effort to be aware of their screen time use. It is important to strive to maintain a balance when using technology so that its benefits outweigh its drawbacks.

Resources:

https://health.clevelandclinic.org/can-too-much-tech-cause-adhd-symptoms-in-your-child/

https://psychcentral.com/adhd/screen-time-and-children-with-adhd

https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/digital-world-real-world/201906/does-excessive-screen-time-cause-adhd

https://www.understood.org/en/articles/at-a-glance-helping-kids-with-adhd-manage-screen-time