

## Video Game and Technology Addiction

As parents we can find ourselves looking at our children and admiring their imagination. How they can take the most simple things and play with them for hours while the “coolest” toy you found at the store does not get touched. Children have a natural imagination and energy when they are younger, so why do we end up with teens that no longer have the ability to use that imagination and need to be stimulated with video games, online gaming, Facebook, texting or You Tube?

Don't get me wrong, we need technology and it is here to stay. Our young people need to be able to use the technology that is being created every day but parents get concerned when it turns into the only thing in life they care about anymore. Parents often times find themselves wanting that child with the imagination back or the kid that had energy to play soccer and baseball instead of staring at a television while playing Halo every free minute of the day.

Truth is children start to lose their imagination as school and growing up stresses them out. The easy relief from that stress is the virtual world. As children spend more time gaming they get hooked by the chemical stimulation that they games provide. This after time creates a confusion in youth as to what is real and for many the stimulation creates an alternate reality.

This is the reason we as parents have to look at ourselves and really think about the influences we have on our children. How many times have we just allowed our children to play on the IPAD or our cell phone because we were “too busy” to do something with them instead. Do we set boundaries and rules for the amount of time that our children are allowed to use the internet or play games? Do we enforce the rules when our children don't follow the rules that we set? Do we have conversations with our children about what they are passionate about in the REAL world? Do we make it a point to get our kids outside to get some sunlight on their faces?

Parents, we are all busy! Are we too busy to spend time with our kids? Can we honestly say that we make every effort to spend positive time with our children? The answer is “No”. Start as early as you can as a parent to empower your children to be excited about life so that they naturally choose to do something other than try to escape from reality. Talk with them about the healthy balance that is needed when it come to technology. The old “because I told you so” conversation may not work. EXPLAIN to your children the good you are trying to do when you set limits and show them how others are hurting their lives by being totally consumed by technology. Don't forget to role model the things that you talk about as well. If your kids see you on Facebook 46 times every day, why would they ever think that there is anything wrong with playing their game station for 12 hours a day?

Set rules, enforce them, find out what your kids are passionate about and lead by example to help them find pleasure in the REAL world. Give your children every chance to use the imagination and the energy that they naturally have. If you do not, it will not take long in today's world for your child to dissociate from their family to find pleasure in the virtual world.

November 2014