Social Media's Impact on Mental Health in Children & Adolescents

Digital Hygiene: Guidelines for Smartphone & Social Media Use in Children & Adolescents

Background Information

Smartphones such as the iPhone as well as social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat are relatively new technologies that allow people to gain access to the world of internet and can connect us with people from across the globe. The saying, "anything in excess is harmful" is particularly true for technology. Studies have shown that overuse of smartphones and social media in children and adolescents can cause anxiety, depression, poor-sleep, and lower self-esteem. The guidelines below are meant to help parents prevent negative outcomes associated with their children's use of these new technologies.

7 Smartphone/Social Media Recommendations

- No electronics 1 hour before bedtime
- Reinforce school cell phone rules
- No electronics during family time
- No picture messaging apps (Snapchat)
- Check phone contacts for strangers
- Avoid using electronics as the only way to calm a child
- Use parental control features on smartphones to set time limits on phone/app usage

Screen Time Recommendations by Age

- 0 – 2 yo: Absolutely no screen time
- 2 – 6 yo: 0 to less than 1 hour per day
- 6 – 12 yo: 0 to 2 hours per day

Children learn from what they see and hear, especially from their parents. The way parents use their smartphones and social media, strongly predicts how their children will use it. Be the role model for your children.