

Social media and the internet have an immense role in and for our communities. For example, when you go anywhere, such as a park, you see parents and teenagers on a screen while the kids play. Or even, the kids and toddlers also have a screen, right next to their face! And then at home, on a computer, X-Box, phone, or other screen.

Now, sometimes social media and the internet are for a good reason- like studying for a test, doing math or learning a new language. It also can be extremely helpful! (if used right) It can be used to help our communities be more inclusive and engaging! For example, if you want to talk to a far-away friend, or ask someone if they want to come over without going to their house, the internet can make it very easy. Plus, it can build relationships, and find things you need to now quick!

But usually it's not for a good reason. You're just scrolling through Snapchat and Facebook, and playing Fortnite for hours, and hours. Being on a screen can also seriously damage your brain.

For instance, according to *Psychology Today*, "One of the fundamental consequences that a large amount of screen time has on adults is a restructuring of the matter that makes up your brain." and **Bustle says:**

"Using bright devices before bed can cause poor quality sleep, but that appears to be only the beginning of the real effect." "You may not be as able to process emotions, and can give up more easily, even to the extreme of you could be more likely to die earlier! Ending with: "If you want to live longer, get fitter, have a healthier heart and be able to talk to your friends properly, it seems that logging off social media immediately and going for a long, long walk might be your best option."



Now, some are rooting for screen time, like ChillDad saying: "The hammer has come down so hard on screen time, I feel like I'm causing them physical and emotional damage when saying 'yes'. Are there any positives at all to screen time? Turns out, there are quite a few: A study found that a curriculum that involved digital media help improve early literacy skills when coupled with strong parental and teacher involvement. Kids between the ages of 4-5 who participated showed increases in letter recognition, sounds association with letters and understanding basic concepts about stories and print." Also, "As parents, we made the biggest sacrifice any person in their 20's can make when we choose to have children: we gave up sleeping in. And now we're taking it back. When kids are old enough to wake up and turn on the TV on a Saturday morning, and let mommy and daddy sleep, it's great."

Also, with friends. I personally do not have a phone, and sometimes I don't feel connected to the group because of it. Friend texting each other, Tic Toc, the newest video, or app, or *whatever* it is. Nevertheless, I still don't think kids should be getting phones/ipads/ipods and so on this early! Kids will not be mature enough to use them properly, and will go on things they shouldn't, be on a screen for more than they should, and not be interacting face to face. Yeah, phones are helpful when you can't reach someone, but what if you can? What if instead of a deep and strong bonding experience, all you have is: "hey, so how's it going?" "good. you?" "doing fine." "nice" "well, gotta go. see you soon." when really all they 'needed' to go was to snapchat, and their friend wanted to talk about something important, but it didn't seem right to do it in a 'conversation' of five text messages.

Oh, and the ads. They just pop up, and if you click on them, you can go to somewhere you didn't want to, and neither did your parents.

Plus, there is cyberbullying, where you can get teased by anyone, and you don't even know who it is! There is as well bullying between friends-sometimes unintentional, sometimes on purpose. A hurtful emoji, mean words, all in one click-send.

Like I said, the internet and social media can be good, but weighing the good verses bad, I think it is more harmful than helpful.