



Behavioral Health Effects of Prolonged Screen Time in Children

With increasing availability and affordability of electronic devices, many parents are starting to see negative effects of electronic screen time in their children. Dr. Victoria Dunckley describes the effects of excessive electronic screen media in her book titled *Reset Your Child's Brain*. Dr. Dunckley describes a collection of symptoms which arise from prolonged exposure to screen time. Interactive screen devices can interfere with a child's physiological systems and alter sleep patterns, brain chemistry, hormones and arousal levels.

Some common characteristics of prolonged screen time are symptoms related to anxiety, cognition, mood, behavior, or social interaction due to a hyper aroused nervous system. This can cause considerable dysfunction at home, in school, or with peers. The typical signs and symptoms imitate chronic effects of stress or sleep deprivation including:

- poor self-regulation

- rapidly changing moods
- excessive tantrums
- irritability
- disorganized behavior
- social immaturity
- poor eye contact
- learning difficulties
- poor short-term memory

If you are concerned about a patient who is exhibiting these characteristics, you can call Peace River Center's access to care line at 863-248-3311 for a behavioral health assessment. Our therapists, psychiatrists and case managers can assess the child and discuss ways to improve his or her behavioral health. If the child is in a mental health crisis, please call our 24-hour Mobile Crisis Response Team at 863-519-3744 for immediate intervention and linkage to services.

Dunckley, V. L. (2015). Reset your child's brain: a four-week plan to end meltdowns, raise grades, and boost social skills by reversing the effects of electronic screen-time. Novato: New World Library.

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