



Kids now spend more time sitting in front of electronic screens than any other activity besides sleeping — even more time than they spend in school. It's up to all of us to make sure that kids have safe alternatives to sitting in front of a television or computer.

(File)

# Children who are raised in vacuums will not be ready for adulthood

We have all heard the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." Yet, according to parenting expert Kathy Lynn, some children seem to be living in a vacuum. Many children are becoming increasingly isolated as they spend many hours alone with a computer or television screen for company.

Lynn goes on to say, "I can remember rushing home as a child and changing from school clothes to play clothes and heading back out to skate on the local rink, play a game of pick-up softball at the schoolyard or to engage in a game of some sort up and down the block." One of the reasons today's children don't choose play clothes is because they are spending more time sitting in front of electronic screens than any other activity besides sleeping — even more time than they spend in school.

Children who spend a great deal of time in front of a screen have less time for playing and talking with other children and adults. Language skills are best fostered through reading and active two-way participation in conversation. Excessive screen time can interfere with growth in this area.

Perhaps the most alarming effect of too much screen time is the effect it has on children's bodies. Most children do not get the recommended amount of physical activity each day. Children who watch more TV tend to be heavier than children

**Lori McMechan**

## PARENTING POINTS

Lori McMechan is a parenting group facilitator at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre, a facility of Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba.  
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who watch less TV. Furthermore, children who live in families in which television viewing is a normal part of the meal routine eat fewer fruits and vegetables and more pizza, snack foods and sodas. Lynn says that children are actually not interested in more screen time. Research clearly shows that kids really crave connections with their parents, with supportive adults in their community and with their peers. That is where the "village that raises the child" has to step in. The community has to make sure children have safe alternatives to screen time. Children benefit from activities that are supervised and structured, like team sports. They learn how to play the game, work as a group, to follow orders, and how to take turns. But many children today lack time for free, unstructured play. This is the creative, spontaneous play, controlled by the children, that happens in

## Get involved in parenting

- When: Wednesday, April 22
- Where: New Era school library  
527 Louise Ave., Brandon
- Time: 6:30 - 7 p.m., coffee and cake  
7-9 p.m., presentation  
(free on-site child care available)

For more information, call 726-6280.

neighbourhood back yards and parks.

According to Lynn, "In order to be capable adults they need to learn community values, develop a work ethic and have a sense of integrity. Kids who spend their free time isolated, sitting in front of a screen will not know the community values, because they won't know their community members. They will work at their own pace because they aren't working as a group and they will have no sense of right or wrong from their peers if they aren't connected."

Our children and youth are telling us that they prefer activities and connections with the important people in their lives. We have the opportunity to learn from Lynn ways we can work together to help our children become social beings with plenty of happy childhood memories.

The Brandon Healthy Families Team, along with

Raising Tomorrow's Leaders is presenting "Vacuums Suck! If It Takes a Village to Raise a Child, Why Are We Raising Today's Children In Vacuums?"

This evening features Kathy Lynn of Parenting Today Productions in Vancouver. Lynn is Canada's leading speaker on parenting issues.

Attend this free presentation and learn how to connect our children to a supportive and child friendly community. Today's children are increasingly isolated, over-protected and coddled. But they are our future and we need them ready to take over our reins of power. Children need to be creative, good problem solvers in a quickly changing world, able to assess reasonable risk taking ventures and have a good sense of their strengths and weaknesses.

» Source: Lynn, Kathy, "Vacuums Suck: Parenting Newsletter," March 16, 2007. (parentingtoday.ca)