

Screen Time; Family Time

By Jolene Roehlkepartain

Children spend almost eight hours every day using computers, the TV, cell phones, video games, and other digital media, reports the Kaiser Family Foundation. Find ways for family members to thrive when using the media while creating a balanced approach to the way family members spend their time.

For

Young Family

Season

Fall



Needed

Bible, Talking about Media Use worksheet, pens or pencils, Common Sense Media video: http://www.common sense media.org/advice-for-parents/tips-healthy-media-diet?utm_source=newsletter01.05.12&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=feature1, media learning guide for the age of your kids at <http://www.common sense media.org/summer-learning-guide>

Prepare in Advance

- Mark your Bible to Ephesians 4:29-32 (or see text below)
- Print one copy of the Talking about Media Use worksheet for each family member
- Get a pen or pencil for each family member
- Have the adults in the family watch the Common Sense Media video (see URL above) before you do this activity as a family.
- Download the free media learning guide for the age of your kids (see URL above).

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God, help us to talk about the media in ways that bring out the best in each family member. Amen.

2. Ask someone to read aloud Ephesians 4:29-32.

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Discuss these questions:

- Why does it matter how we talk to each other?
 - When family members get upset, what’s the best way to talk about what’s bothering them? Why?
 - When have we worked through difficult issues well as a family?
3. Make sure the adults have watched the Common Sense Media video (see URL above) before you proceed with the rest of the activity.

4. Give each family member a pen or pencil and a copy of the Talking about Media Use worksheet. Have each person complete the worksheet separately. For young children, have an adult or an older child read each question aloud. (First have the adult or older child complete the worksheet before helping the young child do this.) Then have the young child pick which answer fits the question best while the adult or older child circles the answer. It may be helpful to take the young child into a separate room so that family members don't hear each other's answers.
5. After family members have finished the worksheet, get together and compare answers. Talk about these questions:
 - Which questions did most of us agree on?
 - Which questions did we answer most differently?
 - How can we work through our disagreements about media in better ways?
 - How can we work together so that our family agrees more about the way we talk about media?
6. Look at the free media-learning guide for the age of your kids (see URL above). Even though the focus is on doing these activities during the summer, the learning guides have helpful, age-appropriate recommendations for educational, fun media. See if there are any that interest your child and explore the possibility of getting a new, educational digital game.
7. Talk about how your family can spend time doing media activities together. In too many families, the media segregates family members from each other. Plan a family night to play video games together or watch a TV show or movie. Afterward talk about the values you saw in it and how much you enjoyed being together as a family.



Talking about Media Use

Your name: _____

Checkmark one answer for each question.

1. How often does your family use media together (such as watching TV together or playing video games)?

- _____ All the time
- _____ Most of the time
- _____ Some of the time
- _____ Once in awhile
- _____ Never

2. How often does your family talk about media use?

- _____ All the time
- _____ Most of the time
- _____ Some of the time
- _____ Once in awhile
- _____ Never

3. How often does your family fight (or disagree) about media use?

- _____ All the time
- _____ Most of the time
- _____ Some of the time
- _____ Once in awhile
- _____ Never

4. How often do parents punish kids by taking away the use of media?

- _____ All the time
- _____ Most of the time
- _____ Some of the time
- _____ Once in awhile
- _____ Never

5. How often do you think that media use makes your family stronger?

- _____ All the time
- _____ Most of the time
- _____ Some of the time
- _____ Once in awhile
- _____ Never

