![e-safety adviser logo]

e-Safety Newsletter

Helping to keep your children safe online

Sleep deprivation.

Is this an e-safety risk and is it a

concern for our children, their health and well being?

![e-safety adviser logo]

Welcome to the new-look newsletter

Alan is a consultant who has worked in the education sector for many years, specifically within ICT and internet safety (commonly known as e-safety).

Originally working for a county council, he now works for himself as a specialist consultant across the country helping and advising schools and others with a particular focus on e-safety.

Contact Alan

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Hello and welcome to the new internet safety newsletter which is specifically written for parents of younger and older children.

Over the Christmas period I decided to spend a little bit of money and get a professional to re-design the newsletter for me. I'm really pleased with it, I think it's a really fresh look.

By the way, in case you weren't aware you can subscribe to this newsletter and t's free. By subscribing you simply get a notification email when a new edition is out. Don't worry, there's no advertising or anything like that. You can either go to my website and subscribe (www. esafety-adviser.com) or just follow me on Facebook (www.facebook.com/esafetyadviser).

This month I want to shift the focus a little from the normal risks that are spoken about, to the potential health and well-being risks to our children from the over-use of devices. In the past research hasn't been particularly great, but more and more information is starting to come out which gives us a greater understanding in these areas.

Sleeping and dreaming
An e-safety concern?

The over-use of digital devices.

Is there such a thing? I'm not sure yet, but the evidence is leading me to think yes. Much like children and violent/sexually explicit games I think we're only just beginning to understand these areas, however for that very reason I think we need to be more risk aware and err on the side of caution..

A few weeks ago I read a very interesting article online (link at the end) which was written by Dr. Richard Graham who is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. In it he speaks about the potential for the greatest impact on health and well-being which is sleep disruption. He writes that this is one of the main symptoms reported by young people who are seeking help to control their use of technology such as games, tablets, laptops etc.

Should this be a concern for us?

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> ## The greatest impact on health and wellbeing

Those who know me know that I love technolgy. Despite some shortfalls and frustrations I truly believe that technology is a force for good, particularly when used appropriately for education. But I am becoming concerned with device over-use. Despite the advice and guidance I give to others, I still lie in my bed last thing at night (sorry to put that vision in your head) catching up on the latest innovations, risks, initiatives, research etc. and every single time it takes me ages to get off to sleep, my mind is racing, yet I have to do this, it's the only way I can keep up. I'll wake up tired, irritable, grumpy, unable to concentrate. I'm sure this resonates with many readers of this newsletter. I know the effects this has on me, but what about children and young people?

In his article, Dr. Graham ponders whether it is the distraction of using devices (social networks, games etc.) or a chemical effect (melatonin) that their use has on our brain? I'm inclined to think it may be both; for many children and young people, their friends and interests are online and that's where they want to be. At the extreme end of this you have what is commonly termed the 'fear of missing out' or FOMO, in other words what or who are their friends talking about? Clearly there has to be a chemical effect too, and this is where Dr. Graham cites research carried out at Harvard University in which they compared the sleep of persons who read an ordinary paper book to those who read from an e-reader. Those who read from the e-reader led to a 55% reduction of the sleep hormone melatonin. The individuals struggled to get to sleep and then struggled with wakefulness and alertness the following day. There was also a reduction in REM sleep.

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Blue light has a significant effect on our circadian rythmn

A lot of the focus in the studies is revealing that the light which is emitted from the devices is the prime factor, commonly known as the 'blue light', and this has a significant effect on our body's circadian rythmn. The circadian rythmn is roughly a 24 hour cycle where our body responds to light and dark physically and mentally..

Many of the schools I visit mention that they are seeing this effect on a minority of the children. There may be behavioural issues such as a decline in good behaviour, refusal to eat, lack of concentration. Of course this can't be wholly attributed to using technology, but it does need to be a consideration.

There isn't a great deal of advice yet to tell us how long is 'long enough', or even what sort of timeframe we should allow between using devices and going to sleep, but it is generally accepted that 2 hours before bed is reasonable. Equally, we need a greater understanding of whether this extends to the television as well.

I probably haven't done Dr. Graham's article any justice within this short text, so take a look for yourself, it's a fascinating read.

To view the full article in the Huffington Post follow this link:

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-richard-graham/digital-detox-resolution_b_6454734.htm

There is nothing more important than the health and wellbeing of our children.

Many of the children I speak to in schools all across the country tell me that their parents don't know what social networks the children are using, or even if they're on social networks at all.

It's impossible for me to say whether that is true or not, but what is true is that many parents are overwhelmed by all the social networks, apps, websites, games etc. that are out there.

I know this probably sounds a little demeaning, I don't mean it that way, but a small conversation goes a long way. If you've never had that conversation with your children, or don't have it regularly, I can't stress to you enough how beneficial it is.

Talk to them about what they do, what they use, where they go, who they talk to. Once you know, get them to talk to you about the various security, privacy and reporting functions to give you the assurance that they know what they're doing. Ask if there are any age restrictions, and if they don't know (or you don't), find out. Keep the conversation light-hearted, they need to be able to come to you if something is wrong.

Bits n Bytes

Safer Internet Day 2015

Have a look at some of the fantastic initiatives from this year.

"Let's create a better internet together"

http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/2015

Do tablets and smartphones affect social emotional development?

An interesting article in The Guardian newspaper

http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/01/toddler-brains-research-smartphones-damage-social-development

Do you know how the game age-rating system works in the UK?

Find out one person's perspective and his concerns.

http://www.lifehacker.co.uk/2015/01/24/uk-video-game-age-rating-system-works-doesnt

The NSPCC have recently launched a fantastic new initiative called SHARE-AWARE. Lots of practical tips and advice for parents.

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/
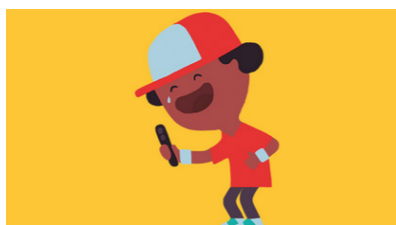
Download Share Aware guide

If you're not sure where to start, download our guide for top tips on how to be share aware and talk to your child about staying safe online.

Contact Alan Mackenzie

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