

Growing up healthy in a world of digital media

With young children: As soon as the television and laptop are switched on the children are fascinated and quiet.

We can then

- complete our work
- breathe out and recuperate
- make long and stress-free car journeys with the family
- be together with friends without being continuously interrupted by the children's demands and wishes.

It is during the early years of life that screen media are particularly harmful and the more they are used, the more they inhibit development.

Toddlers can then already display the first indications of addictive behavior. It can furthermore frequently lead to a disturbed development of the brain.

When the children are older – they are always on their smart phones!

- When will you finally do your homework? - Later!
- Are you still awake, it is already 11 o'clock? - And..?
- Can't you for once eat your lunch without the smart phone? - Eh, what?

As parents we would like our children to be familiar with and be competent in the use of digital technology when they are adults.

But what do children require for healthy development?

The richer the childhood years are in terms of play, physical, communicative and artistic activities and the more both younger and older children can engage with the natural world – with plants and animals – the better will be the development of their brain and sense organs.

The key thing is:

The best possible way to stimulate and promote brain development is through the joy of exploration, direct activity and so-called self efficacy.

Since neither the brain nor the developing organisms of the children and young people are computers, it is not possible to further their development using intelligent machines.

It is rather the case that by replacing direct activity with screen time, abnormalities in terms of physical and soul development take on ever greater dimensions. They range from damaged posture, lack of movement, speech impairment and other fine motor skills through to psychological problems such as increased anxiety, aggression, sleep disturbances and an inability to tolerate frustration.

Particularly concerning however, are the studies which show a demonstrable loss of empathy and ability to concentrate. References can be found in the aforementioned guide.

The brain is a 'relationship organ' which develops in the most healthy way by perceiving the activity of its own body as well as through real-life contact and interaction with the surroundings.

It takes about 16 years before the control centers in the fore brain come to maturity, before the neurological basis for independent thinking, sense of responsibility and the autonomous capacity of conscience are developed.

Until this age is reached it must be a case of

Own initiative first – Digitalization second

This means that screens should only be used when specifically required – never to kill time!

Resources:

Virtual addiction – Center for internet and technology addiction

Environmental Health trust – resources

Family Online Safety Institute

Net addiction .com – internet addiction test

Screenagers movie

Books: Reset your Child's Brain – Victoria Dunckley MD