

TAMING THE MONSTER BEHIND THE SCREEN: MAKING MEDIA WORK FOR OUR FAMILIES

by Holly Novick



There was nothing like a Saturday - unless it was the Saturday leading up to the last week of school and into summer vacation.

That of course was all the Saturdays of your life rolled into one big shiny ball.

*– Nora Roberts,
Rising Tides*

Can you feel it? This time of year, there's an extra hum of energy around our TCS kids – it's how we all know that summer is nearly here. For the kids, that means freedom and adventure. For the parents, however, it can mean the added stress of keeping our children happy, healthy, and engaged in safe ways with the world. For those of us who don't get the summer off, computer, television, and tablet screens can become monsters lurking in our homes, waiting to lure our kids into a screen-induced stupor. How do we keep them safe?

The good news is that parents are the primary point of contact between their children and the larger world of movies, TV, and internet

content, and therefore have a tremendous amount of not only control, but also influence on how their children choose to view content. What we hear, what we play, what we see happen, and what we watch all become our frames of reference and our go tos for explaining social behavior, relationships, and how we should behave and expect to be treated. If these experiences and exposures are healthy, positive, and developmentally appropriate, we are more likely to develop a realistic and positive worldview. On the other hand, if we are



As parents, we have an amazing window of opportunity to be the producer and director of these experiences, but that window won't stay open forever.

We must be engaged, be mindful, and be brave in choosing movies, games, and online platforms that promote the positive qualities that will help our kids grow up strong.

confused or frightened, left with incomplete ideas, or, worst of all, exposed to models which are negative, mean-spirited, or even violent, our worldview and our expectations can become equally negative.

While there are plenty of reasons to approach media use with a healthy dose of caution, there doesn't have to be a monster lurking behind the screen. Through solid research and an open and active ongoing dialogue with our kids, we can harness all the productive power of screens without the stress. If we walk the walk of healthy, moderate screen use, our children will listen and follow in our footsteps.



Here's to a happy, healthy, and balanced summer for all of us.

Holly

Holly Novick, Head of School

EDUTOPIA'S 5-MINUTE FILM FESTIVALS:

www.edutopia.org/blogs/beat/five-minute-film-festival

Edutopia is an extensive education resource for kids, parents and teachers, and the 5-Minute Film Festivals are bite-size inspirational videos full of great ideas. Here's a sampling of what's available:

For Parents:

- Building a Parent Toolkit
- Are We Addicted to Technology?
- Beat Standardized-Test Stress!
- Nine Boosts for Summer Learning

For Parents to Watch with Kids:

- Fun Summer DIY Projects
- Summer Fun with Food: 10 Sources to Learn About Healthy Eating
- Gratitude
- Learn with Rube Goldberg Machines

COMMONSENSE MEDIA:

www.commonsensemedia.org

This information powerhouse sorts and rates movies, games, apps, websites, TV shows, books and music by age level and topic, as well as more fine-gauge filters like character strength. This resource delivers substantial information that can help parents make informed decisions about what is appropriate for their child.



HEALTHY CHILDREN:

www.healthychildren.org

This family-forward resource has a media section on their "Family Life" page with timely and insightful articles on both positive and negative trends in media. Of particular interest are the guides on connecting with children

about media:

- How to bond with your child through media
- How to connect with your teen about smart & safe media use
- How to make a family media use plan
- Talking to children about tragedies & other news events
- Keeping technology in check: mindful technology use DOs for parents