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Interviewee: mother of 4 children ages 2, 4, 7, 9

Interviewer: First tell me, and here's a list of the questions, how many children you have and what their ages are.

Anna: I have four children ages nine, seven, four, and two.

Interviewer: Okay. I'll ask you to think about the nine and seven-year-old because that's the age range we're studying.

Anna: Okay.

Interviewer: Tell me about all the devices your family owns.

Anna: One TV, a laptop, an iPad, and my husband and I each have a cell phone.

Interviewer: Okay. Do your kids use devices anywhere else, like friends, or relatives, or school?

Anna: No. School, I think, both girls have some computer time, iPad time, but nowhere else.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you ever come to the library to use the computers?

Anna: No, we don't.

Interviewer: Okay. Talk me through each of those four devices, and tell me how they're used in your family, starting with the television.

Anna: In relation to the seven and nine-year-old?

Interviewer: Yeah, the seven and nine ... Yep.

Anna: They watch Wheel of Fortune at night before bed.

Interviewer: Someone else mentioned that. They just started getting in to that.

Anna: Yeah. They've liked that for a while. Usually we get ready for bed, finish homework, and they watch Wheel of Fortune before bedtime. Maybe once or twice a month, they might play a game on the iPad. But, other than that, really nothing else. TV or movie, maybe, on a weekend that it's raining or something, but we don't really have time set aside for any of it for the kids.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Do they use the laptop yet for any research or watching YouTube videos?

Anna: Nope. Not at home. My nine-year-old just finished a state project, and they did use the iPads in class to research that. But, that was all done in class.

Interviewer: Okay. Do they have access to your cell phones for anything?

Anna: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Good. That's very clearcut. Okay. Think about your seven and nine-year-old yesterday, or a typical day, and walk me through the minute they wake up to the minute they go to bed. Any access they have. Any time they might be using screens.

Anna: No. Really just, maybe, the half-an-hour or so at the end of the day before bed. Once in a while, like after school ... They're usually outside playing or doing homework. If it happens to be not a nice day to play outside, they might ask to watch something. Usually we let them, but it's ... They don't ask a lot. We don't make it part of our day, so it doesn't usually happen.

Interviewer: Great. Okay. The next question is about how the uses of devices has changed as the ... Are they girls?

Anna: Girls. Yep, both girls.

Interviewer: ... as the girls have grown older. Did you always have a very limited screen ... Would you describe your household as limited screen time?

Anna: Yeah. These two [referring to her 2- and 4-year olds who are at the interview] might watch more than the girls, just because they're home with me during the day. Well, not so much her, but he will ... when she goes down for a nap after lunch ... he might watch half-an-hour, an hour of a show or a movie. That was probably pretty close to what I did when the school-age girls were that age. As they got older, it got to be less, because they're at school most of the day. Then when they're home, we try to have them go outside and do other things as a family. But, yeah, for the most part, we've been pretty conservative about screen usage.

Interviewer: When did the Wheel of Fortune start?

Anna: Probably two years ago.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that's built in to your routine, now, as kind of like-

Anna: Yeah. It was my nine-year-old, actually. I don't know if we just happened to turn it on once, or they might have watched it at Grandma and Grandpa's house once, and she really, really got a kick out of trying to solve the puzzles and guess the letters, and stuff. Yeah. Just turned in to our routine.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is that their wind down time?

Anna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: And, you're [inaudible 00:05:09] doing other things at that ... How does that fit in?

Anna: Yeah. I usually am cleaning the table from dinner, getting the kids ready for bed. If we need baths or showers, we just take turns doing that. Then it's on, they'll watch it. Check to make sure any last minute homework is done, then read a couple books, and then they're all in bed between 7:00, 7:15-ish.

Interviewer: That gives you some space. It gives them some down time. Your school-age girls, have they had friends or relatives that have made suggestions on things that they might be doing with screen media, like what to watch on television?

Anna: They definitely hear about it. My older daughter she'll talk about movies or shows that her friends watch. She'll talk about her friends having cell phones. Then we've had conversations, and we continue just to remind her like, "Our family is not going to do that. You don't need to have cell phones. You're kids." I think it opens up a lot of conversation. I think with some of the kids, it's a way to communicate with their parents. But, I stay home with the kids, and we live two blocks from school, so I'm minutes away if anything happens. That's part of the reason why I'm home with them. When they're a little bit older and they're in sports, I'll be able to be there to come and pick them up, or whatever. So, we just don't see the need for cell phones.

Yeah, they've talked about things that their friends watch. Again, we just say, "Well, different families have different rules. In our family, we don't watch those things." Or, if it is okay, then we'll let them. It hasn't really been so much, "Well, my friends do this, so can I?" It just comes up in conversation that their friends do it.

Interviewer: On those cold or rainy days, when you might watch a movie, how do you decide what to watch, or is that-

Anna: The kids will decide. We usually check out videos from here [library], or we have a couple of their favorites, like Moana, which they have watched 20 times and nobody is sick of it. So, depending on what we have, if we have library videos or if we ... they'll just decide amongst themselves, the two older girls, and they'll decide what they want to put on.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you say they sometimes play games on the iPad?

Anna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: How do you decide about that? Or, how are you guiding their choices of games?

Anna: If they ask, we'll let them. I don't think we have very many options that are ... What's that game that the girls sometimes play on the iPad? Do you remember?

Anna's son: [inaudible 00:08:53] game.

Anna: I don't even know what they're called. They're just kid games, but we're right there with them. We're either sitting-

Anna's son: Talking Tom.

Anna: Talking Tom? That might be-

Anna's son: Crayons.

Anna: What?

Anna's son: Crayons.

Anna: Crayons, yeah. The crayons one.

Interviewer: Crayons? I'll have to look that one up.

Anna: Oh, it's like a ... I guess it's probably not really a game. If you touch it, the color will come out, then you pick the color crayons and you can fill in drawings, and stuff. It's kind of fun.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Anna: Yeah, so we're always there. They don't really know ... I don't think they do, anyway. Or, they know not to go into YouTube or find things that, maybe, aren't appropriate. We don't just leave them in the room, and go somewhere else, and let them have full access.

Interviewer: Right. You're not looking to download new games or apps, or anything? You're just using what's on there, right?

Anna: Right. What, babe?

Interviewer: What are the kinds of things that you worry about in terms of the choices they're making in the films? Let's start with movies, because you said you check out videos from the library. What are you looking for in a film?

Anna: Something that's age appropriate. I can pretty much anything checked out from down here is fine for the kids. If we get something from upstairs, it's a family movie that I've seen or that I know, but they like the animated ones, still. I worry about things like mature themes, things like ... especially with my older girls, just that relationship piece between boyfriend/girlfriend, because I feel like that can cross the line into something that's a little too advanced for their ages pretty quickly. I guess if I've never seen it or hadn't heard of it, then we don't let them watch it.

Ratings I pay attention to, like obviously, G is fine, PG is mostly fine. I think sometimes with PG, there is some violence a little bit. Nothing bad. We just talk about like, "Oh, it's not nice when someone talks that way or acts that way to someone." They've never watched anything above PG.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you're looking on the box or lid, because that [inaudible 00:11:40] Do you ever look at anything else? Do you ever go online to look at [crosstalk 00:11:45]

Anna: I have, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me about that.

Anna: I have just Googled the movie and found the ... I don't know what the website is called where it talks about the movie and why it's rated what it is.

Interviewer: Is it Common Sense Media?

Anna: Yeah, maybe that is it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Anna: Then just make a decision based on that.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you ever think about whether something is educational or not? Or, is it their down time, so that's not the top priority?

Anna: Yeah, I do. I guess I feel like if it's education, it's a bonus, but we've never really used any kind of screen time as something educational. Because, I don't feel like it needs to replace hands-on learning and educational aspects. I'm not super worried about it, because they don't really have a lot of screen time, so I feel like it doesn't ... If they like it, they can just enjoy it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Have you received advice from anywhere else that's been helpful?

Anna: No. I can't think of anything.

Interviewer: Does the pediatrician ask you about screen time?

Anna: Oh, yeah. They go through, like, "How much screen time does your kid get?" Then they'll give you the generic handout about what's appropriate, but ...

Interviewer: Okay. Has anything come home from the school about what they're doing on screens?

Anna: No. I know they have computer time a couple times a week. I don't know. I feel kind of torn sometimes, like, "Well, they're still so little." But, I don't know. My husband and I talk about it. There's a balance between getting with the times. I don't know if that's ... We are in an age of technology, and I know that it's important for them to learn that. But, how much do they need?

Interviewer: Yeah that balance, like you say, of getting skilled up, but also valuing the kinds of other experiences.

Anna: I know ... I don't know, so much, if the third grader does, but the first grader, they'll do educational games. It's not often, and it's probably at a time where ... My first grader is in a kindergarten/first grade combination class. Sometimes, when part of the group is working on something, I think the other part will have this ... she calls it iPod and iPad time, so they'll have some device ... Careful, please. [speaking to child]: Don't [inaudible 00:14:47] Why don't you get one of the toys you want, and bring it in here?

Anna's child: Okay.

Anna: Whatever, just pick one thing off the shelf and bring it in here and do it. Where was I? Sorry.

Interviewer: The K1 combo, so they're on screens. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Anna: They do it sometimes. It's educational. I don't know. They probably have a ... they're trying to do something else. They're trying to meet the needs of all the kids. I'm sure it's not for a long time, but if ... I don't know. I just, like, "Do they really need to do that?" It is what it is.

Interviewer: That's fine. When you were making decisions from the start, really, about how your family media time, do you know why you decided to have your family rules that are limited screen time? Were you thinking about your own experiences? Can you talk me through that decision?

Anna: Yeah. It was probably the way I was raised. I'm pretty sure I was the last family that had a VCR. I was in high school, and everyone of my friends had a VCR. Then I was probably the last person to have a cell phone. I was like 22 in college, like third year of college. It was how I was raised, which was minimal TV. We never had video games. Didn't watch a lot of movies. Didn't go to the theater. Things like the theater, watching a movie in the movie theater, that was a really special time. I can just think of a handful of times where we had gone out to do that as a family. Yeah, that was probably the big thing.

My husband was raised similar, although he probably had more access. But, I think for him, it was partly ... He agreed with my perspective, but I think for him, it was partly seeing other ... When we first had kids, seeing other people who were buying their two-year-olds tablets and letting them play educational games. Well, they're two. Do they need that at all? That really made him feel strongly about not allowing that for our children.

Interviewer: It sounds like you've really decided on your own, so haven't needed a lot of outside advice.

Anna: Yeah, it's been a strong conviction from the beginning.

Interviewer: You've kept it really, in a way, easy enforce that decision. Keep coming back to your guidelines.

Anna: Right. It's been pretty much the same. My older girls would tell anyone that's how they've always known it. It's not that they were allowed access, and then suddenly we cut back. It's just always been that way, so they just know.

Interviewer: Are there any things that you think you might need in the future? Any advice that you might need in the future as the girls get older?

Anna: I think we will probably have to let the reigns a little bit looser at some point. I don't want it to be because we feel pressure, because other people are, but because ... back to what I was saying ... they need to know some things to be able to navigate their own way technology-wise. I think there will probably come a point when they are adolescents when they will really think they need a cell phone because their friends have one. That's one thing that I really feel strongly about. Just hearing the stories of kids who have their own Facebook accounts and the sexual predators that find them. Parents who are really involved and think everything is okay, and this all happens without them knowing, just really, really freaks me out, having two girls.

I really think the only way to not let that happen is to have absolutely no access, as far as having social media accounts. I know we're probably in the minority thinking that, because I know some of her classmates, third graders, who already have social media accounts. I think I need to know, or would need advice, on just

how to maintain our relationship with our kids, even though they are seeing us as not being fair and not letting them have things that other people have. It's kind of a tricky age, anyway.

Interviewer: It's not inevitable. They might say, "Yeah, I agree. We don't really need to be in 24/7 contact with our friends. We see them every day at school." So, it's not inevitable, but I can see how it's a worry.

Anna: Yeah. I don't know. I think adolescence, especially for girls, is just hard. It seems to be harder now than it was when I was a kid. I don't know.

Interviewer: Yeah, and technology is a huge change between these generations.

Anna: Right, right.

Interviewer: Okay. The last questions are just for me to understand you and your husband's demographics and experiences with technology. Do you use technology very much yourself?

Anna: I watch TV. I have a cell phone, have a Facebook account. I'm on it several times throughout the day. I don't really understand Twitter, Instagram, any of that, so really just Facebook. I have an email account.

Interviewer: Do you ever get advice through Facebook? Do friends send you any advice about media, or anything? Do you ever see anything on there?

Anna: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Would you describe yourself as a beginner in relation to technology, or an expert, or somewhere in between?

Anna: Probably somewhere in between.

Interviewer: Okay. And, your husband?

Anna: He doesn't really watch TV, but he'll watch videos on YouTube. Also has a cell phone, Facebook account. He's probably more towards the expert than I am, but not ... maybe a little bit further than I am.

Interviewer: Okay. The next questions are just demographics, and they're optional. [inaudible 00:22:26] your husband, what is his profession?

Anna: He works for the railroad. He is a ... What's his ... Regional Safety Manager. The railroad that he works for owns several railroads across the United States, and he is in charge of each of those. Making sure they comply with safety rules and ...

Interviewer: What is your highest level of education and your husband's?

Anna: I have a master's degree?

Interviewer: In what field?

Anna: Art Therapy.

Interviewer: Okay. And, your husband?

Anna: He has bachelor's.

Interviewer: Are you doing paid work at the moment?

Anna: No. I just stay home with the kids.

Interviewer: How would you describe your ethnic background and your husband's ethnic background?

Anna: Caucasian.

Interviewer: Yep. Good. Anything else that you think we should know about advice that you got [crosstalk 00:23:31] or how you navigate?

Anna: No, I don't think so.