

File: NavScreensParent1Transcript2018

Interviewee: Mother two daughters, 2 and 5

Interviewer: Let's see. Why don't you tell us a bit about your daughters' use of digital devices, laptop, ipads, phones, anything with a screen.

Interviewee: Yeah. [inaudible]

Interviewer: And as a parent, how do these issues resonate for you? To what extent is there... are you informed by your professional position on how do you work with the kids, or to what extent does that end up being a conflict?

Interviewee: It's tough because I can say one thing as a physician about limiting kids' screen time, but when it comes to being a parent and my kid is having a meltdown and I know that if I show them my phone, they probably will stop, and I still have a level of appreciation for what people around me are experiencing and thinking of my children. So, it's a challenge. That becomes a discord.

What I like to remind myself is that it's okay. It's okay to say, "Here, do you want to play this game on my phone? Let's sit and play this game on my phone." That isn't the poison. The poison is when I walk away and I let them play forever and I let that be the only thing that can console them and so I will try five other things before I bring out the phone. The next time I will try five other different things. That is how I try to keep that in the context of a real world parenting.

My kids have tablets. We have Kindle Fires for the kids but they don't see them. They're not around the house on a regular basis unless we're going somewhere or doing something, they're not even out. They're in a cabinet and they're not asked for because nobody sees them. So there's no time where we're like, "Let's sit down on the couch and be on our devices," because the kids don't even know they're there unless we're getting in the car or going on a trip or we're sitting on an airplane or something.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: That is one way that I try to mediate that, now that doesn't take my phone away. That's something I struggle with. I make a rule not to bring my phone to the table. My husband is not so good at it. He's very bad at it, actually.

Interviewer: That's funny.

Interviewee: But, the kids know that, and so the five year old will routinely say, "No phones at the table, Daddy."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: The other way I find is being really upfront about it. I'm fortunate to have two verbally precocious young women. They grasp these things easily. I said to the five year old, "I have to turn this television off." "Well, why do you have to turn it off?" "So, let me tell you why it is that I'm turning it off."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewee: Explaining myself helps them see I'm not just trying to ruin your fun. I think that whether they're on that level or not I always talk to kids like they're adults and say,

"Look, I'm turning this off because I know that you are going to be super smart and that you are super smart and I want you to be as smart as you can be. I know that you learn more when you play with your hands and think with your brain. I think it's really good and I like to watch TV too, but we're going to watch it for this amount of time, and then we're going to turn it off. After we turn it off it can go back on sometime down the road, but for right now we're going to play." I also say, "Some of the things you watch are really smart. Some of the things you watch, not so smart. Doesn't mean you can't watch the smart things ever, but it just means that when you are watching, I want you to watch more of the smart things." "What does it mean to be smart?" "The things that are going to teach you numbers and letters and that talk back to you. Those are the smart things."

My daughter said to me a few months ago, "I like to watch The Lion Guard." "Alright, well, mommy thinks that The Lion Guard is not so smart because it really doesn't try to teach you anything," and she says, "Yes, it does. It teaches me how to be a leader. The Lion Guards, they're all leaders. They take charge and so it teaches me how to be a leader." "Alright, I'm done."

Interviewer: That's impressive.

Interviewee: Since then we've had a few of these conversations because that triggered in my head, "Oh..."

Interviewer: Teaching her how to debate.

Interviewee: Right?

Interviewer: Which is important.

Interviewee: We've had a few conversations both for the good and bad of some of these shows. There's a show that's called PJ Masks, and it's all about these kids who are little super heroes, but they're really antagonistic and so I said to her the other day, "I really like that show because my brain likes to watch it. I think it's interesting, right?" She's like, "Yeah, I do too." I said, "You know what bothers me about that show? The fact that they're always saying like, "Na, na, na, na, na." I was like, "We talk about how that's not a cool thing to say." We had this conversation about how we wish they didn't do that.

Now, even if she does watch it as a treat, she knows that it's still not a cool thing to do and mommy wishes that they didn't have that in there.

I think my tactic is to be really up front with your kids. This is what's good, this is what's bad. This is what bothers me. This is why I'm doing it. I'm not doing it because I'm mean or I think you shouldn't have any fun. That's the approach I take, and I'm as knee deep...

I don't have five kids so I manage with the two that I have, but I think that putting anything in the context of whatever your real life is, is the best way to approach it.

Interviewer: Just one more thing. When you were giving your kids advice, what type of resources do you use?

Interviewee:

I always try to think back about how I like to hear something, and to talk to kids at a very top level and I expect that coming back. I don't have a resource for that other than that's just my core dogma as a parent, is to respect my kids' opinions and beliefs, and to talk to them as if they are small people with opinions and beliefs. Your opinion is that I should be able to enjoy myself and chillax and watch television, then I'm going to talk to you and explain to you why I'm making these decisions, and be concrete in them. At the end of the day I make the decisions because I'm Mom.

Interviewer: Just curious if there's a three year age difference, roughly, between your kids?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is it too much or do they interact with devices together at all?

Interviewee: They actually do a lot because my two year old does not... she can navigate an app, but she's not great at it. The five year old has the skills to figure out most of these at this point. She'll intervene and help. We struggle because I like when they do it together, because that empowers the big one to be the teacher and the little one to learn patience.