

Do Dads Make a Difference? You Bet They Do!

IT'S A FACT: Research shows that access to computers does help kids learn. Help your child view quality screen programs in small quantities.

Kids and Screen Time

A CHILD'S FAMILY IS THE MOST POWERFUL FORCE INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR.

In many households, second in command is – The Mighty Screen. Be cautious! Children spending a lot of time in front of the screen tend to be overweight, have fewer social skills, and have trouble sleeping because they are over-stimulated.

- **Limit total screen time.** Consider how much time your child is spending watching TV and playing computer games combined. Even if you only allow educational games and programs, this is still time spent sitting, often in isolation. Think about what they're not doing – like running outside, talking with family, and using their imaginations freely. Most researchers don't recommend computer time for children under age three. Very young children need to move, touch and interact with their environment.

- **But don't feel guilty when the screen is on!** When you're tired, stressed, or need to get dinner on the table, screen time can feel like a lifesaver. It's much better to make use of these options than to take your frustrations out on your child. However, if you do this often, there may be a bigger problem you need to address. Consider a Dad's program like the VNA FACT or 24/7 Dads group to connect with other dads, and learn strategies you can add to your parenting "bag of tricks." (See back of this sheet for more information.)

- **Make TV time, warm and relaxing family time.** Watch shows with positive role models who solve problems by thinking and talking them through. Avoid programs that show animals or people in great danger or that portray force and name-calling as acceptable and funny. Let your child choose between acceptable shows and snuggle up together while you watch. Avoid power struggles by



setting a timer as a signal for turning off the TV.

- **All computer use is not equal.** Read reviews and check ratings of computer games before you purchase them. Appropriate games invite the child to enter the realm of imagination and adventure while developing critical thinking skills. Make computers a shared experience so your son or daughter maintains a connection to man over machine.

- **Get ready for what's ahead.** In

no time, your child will be surfing the internet. That's potentially the most dangerous neighborhood your child can wander into. A recent Youth Internet Survey of 10-17 year olds found that one in four children had an unwanted exposure to pictures of naked people. One in five received a sexual solicitation but only 25% told a parent. Many of these households had filtering or blocking software at the time.

- **Use the internet to support your fathering.** Some good websites for dads include: www.fatherhood.gov; www.fathers.com; www.fathersworld.com; www.fatherhood.org; www.fathering.org; www.iparenting.com.

REMEMBER – Used wisely, screen activities can enrich family life. However, nothing replaces a parent's involvement and supervision.

Join us for the VNA Fathers and Children Together (FACT) group

*Bring your child for a fun night with dad!
Give your child's mom a night off!*

FACT brings dads and children together in groups. FACT is a fun place for dads to 'tune up' their parenting skills and connect with their kids through play and learning. All expectant dads and dads with children ages birth to 6 welcome. VNA FACT has been supporting dads and kids since 1993.

Find a VNA FACT group in your area:

TOWN	LOCATION	DAY AND TIME
Winooski	Winooski Community Center 32 Malletts Bay Avenue	Mondays 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Burlington	VNA Family Room 20 Allen Street	Tuesdays 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm
St. Albans	The Family Center 27 Lower Newton Street	Wednesdays 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Milton	Milton Family Community Center 23 Villemaire Lane	Thursdays 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

- ✓ **Free!**
- ✓ **Don't cook – eat dinner at FACT**
- ✓ **Learn more ways to be a great dad**
- ✓ **For dads and kids, or just dad:**
 - * **Activities**
 - * **Playgroup**
 - * **Fieldtrips**

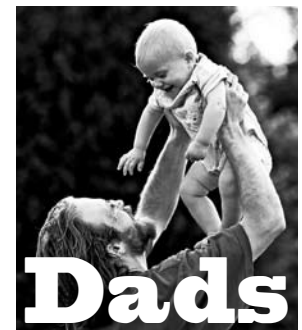
For more information about FACT and other programs for dads, call the VNA at 800 427-1908 or 860-4420, check out www.vnacares.org or email Steve Mojica at mojica@vnacares.org.



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All of these services are available to all eligible persons, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or religion.

It's a
FACT



*Make a
difference!*