



ARIZONA parenting

ARIZONA'S COMMUNITY FAMILY RESOURCE



Reclaiming
Romance

Dental
101

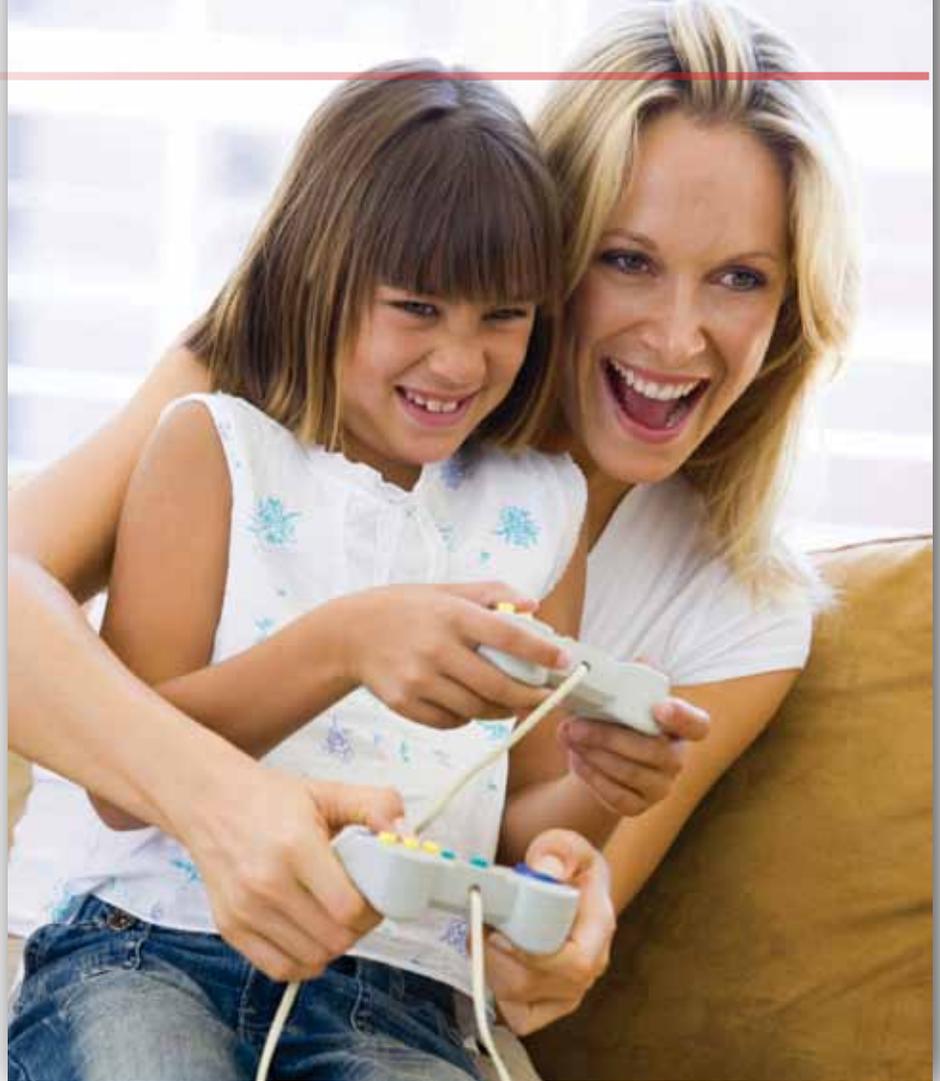
Coping
with
Bullies

Each month, *Arizona Parenting* contacts experts to respond to readers' questions with helpful suggestions and information.

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Q: We have so many electronics and video games in the house. How much time should I let my kids use them without it taking over the whole day? It is a huge battle when I ask them to stop. How can I get them to stop without the whining and fighting every day?

A: This is a 21st century dilemma for most parents I see in counseling. "Screen-time" rules for kids are not just about limiting television anymore. We have television, smart phones, Wii, PS3, Xbox, DSi, ipads, itouch, itunes, and that is without even getting on the computer! Each parent needs to determine how much screen time is okay for their child, but placing some limit and creating structure for the use of these items is extremely important. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours of quality television or games per day and no screen time for those under two years old. I usually recommend one hour of screen time per day, which can be one chosen television show and 30 video game minutes. The more time a child plays,



the more difficult it may be to turn things off. When this limit is maintained, it works.

Behavioral management can be easy if you follow through. Specifically define the rules, in writing, limiting time and type of play per day, how it will be monitored and how the child is to respond when time is up. Practice the new rules before anything is actually turned on. Role playing leads to success! Screen time is a privilege, not a right. Kids should earn their time after daily obligations are completed (e.g.: chores, music practice, homework). Parents have the right to withhold privileges if they are not successfully earned. If they are earned, give a five minute warning before time is up. This advanced warning helps them prepare for the "off button". When time is up, the child is to stop playing with no whining and no resistance. Compliance earns screen time for the next day. If not, that time is lost. The key to your success is assuring that screen time is never given if it is not earned. Quickly, kids learn that you mean business

and they will behave in a way that allows them to play the next day. If they think you will give in, however, they will challenge you until you convince them, through your actions, that you are going to stick to the rules. No arguments necessary; your actions will speak for you.

How much screen time do you experience each day? Put down the phone, stop the apps, pause the television and play with the living, breathing kids in your house. Children learn most when they have unstructured, hands on play time. Parents learn most about their children when they join in. Consistent play time with your kids is as important to their health as limiting screen time. The more you make time for your kids, the more easily they will respond to the limits that you set. Give them the chance to earn their fun and you will teach them more than any electronic game ever could!

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