

How Far Would a Good Dad Go to Limit His Child's Media Access?

Have you seen the drastic measures a couple of dads have taken to address their kids' media habits?

Recently, it was reported that a man in China hired virtual "assassins" to hunt down his son in an online video game and kill off his player ... over and over. The father, identified as Mr. Feng was concerned that his 23-year-old son was spending too much time playing the game. Putting a virtual hit out on your son probably isn't great for the relationship, but it seems the two have reconciled.

Earlier, a story came out about Paul Baier, a dad in Massachusetts who agreed to pay his 14-year-old daughter \$200 if she would give up Facebook for six months. They drew up an agreement, and Paul will pay her in installments along the way. She plans to use the money to "buy stuff," and will go back to Facebook when the six months are over.

Honestly, sometimes it makes me long for the days of cap guns. Did you play with those?

I remember when we got them for Christmas, with their own holster! We played with them for hours on end—running around the neighborhood, climbing trees, hiding from each other, setting up ambushes, pulling the trigger over and over and hearing that *bap!* sound. And if you got shot, you had to fall over and act dead for a minute. Then we'd run back to load up another roll of caps and keep going.

Today's a bit different for kids, wouldn't you say? They can get a lot of that same fun and excitement—chasing other people, running across a roof and leaping to another roof and

crawling down the side of a building, and yes, shooting at other “people” in the virtual world—all while sitting in a chair or lying on a bed.

Today’s kids are often missing out on the benefits of physical activity, real-life interaction and the lessons that come with them. We could say similar things about people who overdo it on social media.

When I speak to kids, I try to point out some of these dangers and encourage them to focus more on their education. I tell them many times:

“You can’t sit around all day watching all that TV and playing all that Nintendo, and then watching that video, and then your mind turns to Play-Doh, and when they pass out the real dough, you can’t get any because you’re nothing but a dodo.”

It’s a little bit outdated, but it seems to get kids’ attention, and I hope they’re getting the message. Many dads need to get the message, too.

Of course, it isn’t all bad. The other day I came in the house and said, “What’s all the noise?” My bride and my son were doing a dancing workout using the gaming system.

There’s a balance we all have to find, and for me, it comes down to coaching our kids ... being involved and aware of what they are getting into. As I think about these specifics and how you can apply them with your kids, I don’t think I can say it any better than the blog I wrote nearly a year ago, when the *Hunger Games* movie had just come out.

Let me encourage you, dad. Short of hiring a virtual assassin or bribing your child to give up time online, you can—and should—plug in and tune in to this area of your child’s life, and place appropriate limits where necessary.

And even more than you reinforce those healthy boundaries with

your kids, be proactive about scheduling and carrying out fun, interactive family activities that emphasize the importance of time together. Make them interesting enough that your kids will be drawn to those times even more than video games, Facebook or whatever else he or she likes to do.

(Here are some very similar thoughts from a pastor on this issue, which appeared in *The Washington Post*. Check it out [here](#).)

Help other dads by sharing. What works for you when it comes to limiting your kids' media time? Please join the discussion below or on our Facebook page (but don't spend too much time there).

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Really investigate what your child likes—without interrogating him. Ask questions like, “So, what is the game about?” “Why do you like it so much?” “Can I see where you like to spend time online?”
- Pull out an old toy that you played with as a kid. Show it to your kids and talk about memories you have related to it.
- Make a commitment to eat dinner as a family at least 2-3 times each week (with no email, Facebook or phone interruptions).
- Take advantage of parental tools that help regulate media time. Have a digital “code of conduct” that you revisit regularly.

Carey Casey is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers to make the Championship Fathering Commitment. NCF believes that every child needs a dad they can count on, and uses its resources to inspire and equip men to be the involved fathers, grandfathers and father figures their children need. Subscribe to his

weekly email tip by clicking here: I want tips on how to be a great dad who loves, coaches, mentors and inspires my children.

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