

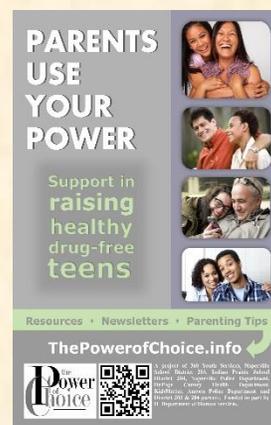
# PARENTS USE YOUR POWER

April 2015

## Taking Control of Media Influences

Our adolescents are inundated with messages every day. Television, billboards, print ads, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, FaceTime, texting---the communication is constant. While they have the intellectual ability to navigate the technology that brings these messages into their lives, their developing brains are not yet prepared to process the emotions that accompany these messages. This leads to overstimulation of their brain receptors and elevated anxiety and stress.

Research shows that adolescents are experiencing record high levels of anxiety. Much of this anxiety can be attributed to information their brains aren't developmentally prepared to process. We can help alleviate some of those stressors by helping our children to develop the skills and strategies they need to make decisions about the messages they are receiving. This can empower them to take control of the media influences in their lives.



### Parenting Power Tips:

- **Talk about media message you observe-** We all see ads, commercials, news stories and social media posts that we find unsettling. Use these opportunities to talk with your child about why you feel that way. This will help them to begin to identify those feelings when they experience them. Have a family chat about media messages and what they mean. You can use this month's [PowerTalk](#) to help you start the conversation.
- **Be a safe resource-** Adolescents sometimes receive messages that are unsettling or overwhelming. Make sure your child knows that they can talk to you about the situations that might be difficult for them to understand or process. Don't rush to fix all of their problems. Use these opportunities to help them strategize solutions.
- **Limit screen time-** This is not likely to be the most popular decision you make, but it can be vital to your child's developing brain. When they are looking at screens, they are missing important interaction and social development. [Recent research](#) shows that too much screen time can actually cause damage to the developing brain.
- **Know where your children are going to be...physically and in the "virtual" world-** Parents need to know where their children are at all times. But now, thanks to technology WE provide for them, they are able to travel to places we would never allow them to walk into. Know the virtual places your child visits.
- **Check the history of messages your adolescent is receiving-**This includes messages on their phones as well as computers. It is NOT an invasion of their privacy. It is your responsibility to keep them safe. Check text messages and know *every* website they visit and *every* app they use. Use parental control software to protect them. Don't be afraid to have conversations about anything you see that concerns you.
- **Participate in activities with your child that don't require screens-** We want our children to participate in "real life" activities that don't include screens. The best way to encourage them to do that is to demonstrate that it's important to you. Find activities that you both find interesting and enjoyable. Check out [Family Activities that Make Memories](#) for ideas.
- **Make meal time "screen free" time-** Family meals are a great opportunity to share the important events of our day. We can celebrate successes and work through difficulties. Phones and tablets can cause distractions to this very important time.
- **No media input for 30 minutes before sleep-** [Studies](#) show that exposure to the artificial light from phones, tablets and computers can disrupt sleep patterns. Lack of sleep puts adolescents at increased risk of developing anxiety disorders, depressive illness and substance abuse issues.
- **Limit exposure to PG-13 and R-rated movies-**your child might be very "mature" but their brain sensors are only ready to receive messages designed for their developmental stage. Messages they receive from the media intended for older viewers can be overwhelming to their developing brain sensors. ([National Institute of Health Study](#))
- **Be a good role model-** This is the most important Power Tip. Your children get their cues about how to live a healthy, positive life by watching you. If you are making screen time and media a central focus in your life, they will do the same.

### [PowerTalk](#) [Activity](#) [for Families](#)

Advertising is EVERYWHERE! Use this activity to help your child to become more aware of the influence media can have and to take control of the decisions they make.

**NEXT MONTH:**  
**Social Media-What Can Parents Do to Protect Their Preteens**



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