

# The Health Impacts of too much Screen Time Why Connecting Kids to Nature Matters



**Jill Sturdy**

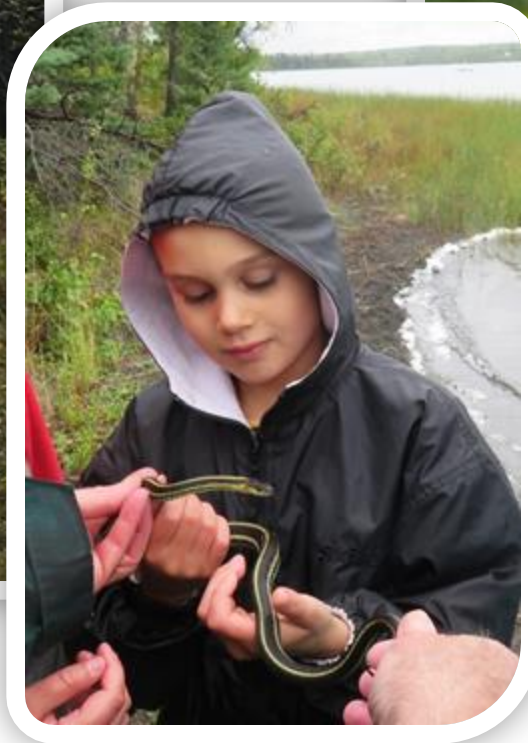
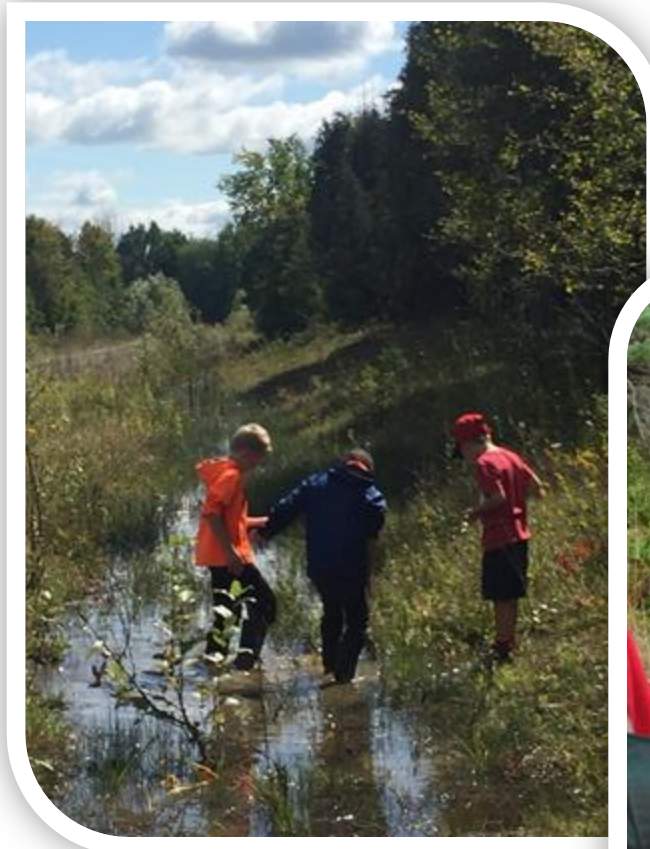
NatureHood Program Manager

CPHA Conference

May 1, 2019



Goal: To connect Canadians to *nearby* nature





# What we're doing



Celebration  
Awareness  
Observation  
Stewardship




# Screen time amongst kids







# Screen Time vs Green Time

 **Nature**  
CANADA

The Health Impacts of too  
much Screen Time



SCREEN TIME  
VS  
GREEN TIME



## How much is too much?

### Recreational screen time Recommendations:

- Under 2 years: no screen time
- 2 - 4 year olds: 1 - hour daily max
- 5 - 17 year olds: 2 - hour daily max

<https://csepguidelines.ca/>



# Too much screen time

- More than half (55%) of Canadian children exceed the recommended screen time guidelines;
- Ontario Student Drug and Health Survey found that students Grade 7-12 are spending up to 7 hours a day on recreational screen time;

More time on screens means *less time* for other activities.



# Too much screen time

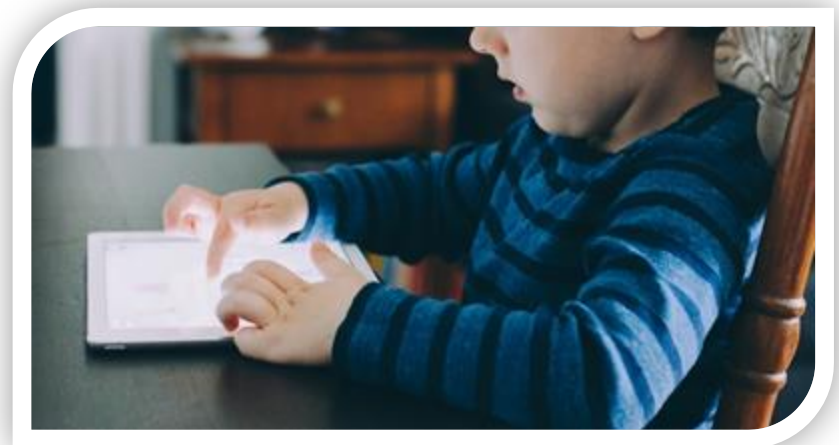
- Lack of physical activity
- Sedentary behaviour
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Disruption of sleep patterns
- Myopia





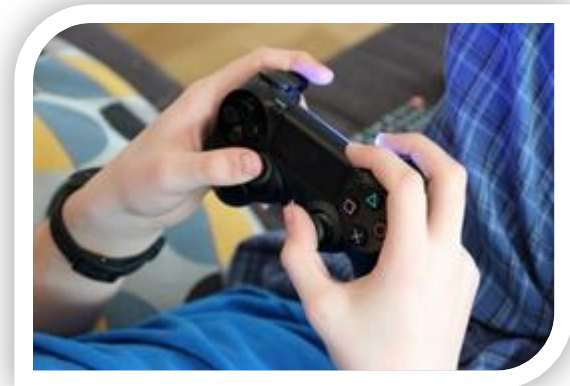
## Anxiety and Mental Health Issues

- Direct correlation between the amount of time spent on electronics and unhappiness;
- More screen time is linked with poorer behavioural conduct and lower self-esteem;
- Happiness highest among kids in sports and in-person socializing;



## Gaming, addiction, cyber-bullying and online predation

- 1 in 5 Ontario students report being bullied online
- WHO added “Gaming Disorder” to its Classification of Diseases as a mental disorder due to its addictive behaviours
- Exposure to violence – violent imagery on screens is linked with increase in violent behaviour
- 543 cases of online predation reported to police (2012)





# Time in Nature





## Important for children's health and overall wellbeing:

- Promotes physical activity;
- Stimulates creativity, encourages co-operation;
- Improved moods and reduction of stress and anxiety;
- Improved memory, focus and concentration;
- Life-long interest in learning and creating a sense of wonder and natural curiosity.



## Spending time in nature can be an important contributor to:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Resiliency
- Healthy Development and cognitive function
- Social development



## Time

- Both parents working and busy (plan a playdate)
- Extra-curricular activities
- Lack of free-range (unrestricted) play

## Fear

- Stranger danger
- Risk aversion to activities (climbing trees)
- Safer indoors on screens

## Inconvenient

- Insects, clothing, access to nature



## Ways to connect with children and limit screen time at home:

- Model behaviour and limit your own screen time
- Write a predictable family screen schedule
- Promote healthy screen habits (screen-free zones)
- Build outdoor play into your day
- Plan time in nature together
- Connect with family and friends in nature



## Ways to spend more time in nature:

- Schedule time in your calendar
- Explore your local NatureHood
- Take your activities outside
- Plan playdates outdoors
- Join a nature club
- Volunteer stewardship
- Nature Camp/Forest School



## How can agencies respond to this challenge?

- Promote ways to reduce screen time
- Encourage ways families can connect with each other in nature





Free day-use at all Ontario Provincial Parks on Parks Day (July 19, 2019).

*...to promote and understand the link between a healthy environment and healthy society.*



## Healthy Infants and Children

Goal: *Infants, children and their parents are physically active and limit sedentary and screen time.*

*Encourage age-appropriate physical activity, including unstructured play and time in nature;*

## Healthy Communities

Goal: *Opportunities exist in every community for people to spend time in natural settings e.g., trails and parks.*







**Childhood:**  
For best results,  
use outdoors.



# Thank you!

Download the report  
and tip sheet:

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