Yellow is Formidable Opponent
Red is Justin
Dashed lines indicates newly added node ---

Screen time self-dialogue #1 -- Justin Mallone -- September 26 2020

FORMIDABLE OPPONENT'S INITIAL STATEMENT OF POSITION: Too much screen time bad

- Higher obesity
  - STATEMENT OF ONE FORM OF IDEA UNDER DISCUSSION: If kids spend lots of time watching TV, then that could displace time for physical activity.
    - ARGUMENT: This is a **not a particular issue with screens**. It applies to e.g. reading books, playing chess.

      This is a very generic criticism. Spending lots of time on X might crowd out Y. True, but if you applied that idea consistently, you'd reject doing anything since everything has a cost in time. But what people do is apply this criticism in a biased way to reject doing stuff they don't like.
      - QUESTION/STATEMENT OF POSITION: Well but surely some physical activity is good, and obesity is bad, so assuming that isn't really a big deal?
        - ARGUMENT: Maybe the point about bias just means parent should restrict more of their kids' activities than they do if they are causing the kid to not have time to be active, even if they are activities the parent likes.
        - Broadly, I agree that some physical activity is good and obesity is bad. But:
          - Obesity is the result of a whole context which includes eating habits. Screens are being scapegoated and selective attention is being paid to them. Why jump to screen restrictions and not try to figure out how to help kid be a more mindful eater or something, if the concern is obesity? The reason is that parents are approaching the issue with an attitude of looking for a reason to restrict screens. They are not trying to seek the truth.
            - It seems much easier to address obesity by restricting screen time than by teaching a child how to be a "mindful eater."
              - Have you done both and compared the difficulty?
                - I think people tend to underestimate the costs involved in fighting with and trying to thwart their children because they think fighting is so inevitable and unavoidable that they don't really count it or something.
                - I also think that people underestimate the benefit they'd get from actually engaging with their child seriously and trying to explain things to them.
          - Parent may misidentify things as zoning out because they don't understand the activity or what the kid is doing.
            - How many parents take much interest in the activities their children spend lots of time on? I mean real interest, to where the parent spends serious effort learning about the activity and how to help the kid do better at it - not making a few condescending approval comments here or there while also thwarting and fighting with the child.
              - You think parents should take a serious interest in stuff like the video games or movies or TV shows their kids like?
                - Sure.
                - One reason is so that the parent can effectively help the child pursue the interest (such as getting more similar TV shows or getting better at the game or whatever).
                - Another is to be able share the parent's perspective on the thing. The parent can't share much useful perspective on something they don't understand and are unfamiliar with.
          - "Screens" could actually enhance physical activity in certain contexts. - e.g. learning karate or parkour or beat saber
            - Okay but kids typically aren't learning parkour. like they might be zoning out on WoW vids or something
              - Even if the parent accurately identifies the kid as engaging in zoning out type behavior, that doesn't mean the parent should coercively restrict child from doing it.
                - Why do people zone out on stuff? Because they don't have a better idea for something to do. Like if someone "Netflix binges" mindlessly that's because that's the best thing they can think of doing given various constraints like their tiredness level from work, lack of energy and enthusiasm for other activities that seem better, etc.
                - That is a problematic situation, but I don't think it calls for forcibly thwarting people. Like I don't think the government should limit people's Netflix access to a certain amount of hours per day. That'd be silly. And that's not a ridiculous thing to imagine - for instance, the Chinese government restricts playtime in World of Warcraft and other games.
                  - Well I don't think the government should get involved and I think China is bad. But one of the reasons that parents might want to restrict things like screen time is to help their kids develop better habits so they don't wind up a mindless Netflix binger.
                    - How will parents thwarting their kids' preferences with screen time restrictions help avoid the outcome of mindless Netflix binging as an adult?
                      - Well hopefully it interrupts the bad habits/cycle some and then the kid has a chance to try out better things to do. It's kind of like taking an addict's drugs away.
                        - The kid does stuff like play games because they think that is the best option for them at the time.
                          - If the parent had a clearly better option that the kid strongly preferred - like going to Disneyland, say, assuming that the kid thinks that sounds way better than playing games - then the kid would drop the game playing and do the thing the parent proposed.

                            This is true in general: if the parent proposes an activity that the kid clearly regards as superior, then the kid will switch to the
                          - If the parent had some killer argument that could convince the kid regarding an activity being bad, then the kid would stop doing the activity.

                            For example, if a kid wanted to do something really dangerous like juggle chainsaws and the parent explained how risky that was in a way the kid could understand, the kid would give up the idea.
                          - Let's presume the parent would use one of these first two options if they could - as in, they'd prefer persuading the kid to just forcing the kid to do or not do what the parent wants. So if the parent is forcing the kid to stop playing a game for "screen time" reasons, that would mean that 1) the parent did not have an idea or suggestion for what to do that the kid clearly found better, and 2) the parent did not have an argument for why the kid's activity was bad that could persuade the kid.
                          - Given that situation, why is the parent so confident in their judgment regarding what the kid should or shouldn't be doing that they feel willing to force the kid regarding this issue? Why not just leave the kid free to do what they want?
                            - Should we leave drug addicts free to do what they want?
                              - I mean we often do in many cases. It's not like we're enforcing drug laws against individual users super strongly these days, and some stuff like marijuana has been decriminalized even though people know that stuff like the stoner lifestyle is bad.

                                In society I general favor letting people be. You can take an interest in some people and try to help them, but it needs to be on a voluntary basis.

                                The parent-child relationship is different than lots of other relationships in society. Parents have lots of obligations towards their kids, and the amount of time that parents spend with their children is very high compared to other interactions. Parents often feel very invested in their children in a sense and that is understandable. But I don't think you get from these facts to a justification for using coercive force against a child to thwart the child's will, with the alleged basis for doing so being the child's well-being. I think if anything these facts mean that the parent should really be going the extra mile to try to help the child with the child's projects and persuade the child about things the parent thinks are important.
                I bet plenty of adult Netflix bingers had to deal with things like screen time restrictions and other forms of parental harassment and coercion growing up, since those things are part of the typical situation that one has to deal with when growing up, so the restriction method seems ineffective for producing the desired result.
          - Lack of activity could be fixed by helping kid figure out how to be active while doing some screen-related activities (like how lots of people work out while watching TV) - did parent even try that? Is that an option they were provided before trying to restrict screens due to health reasons?
          - Bigger picture, we have to think about the kid's life, the kid's happiness, what their life is like, and not overly focus on one health-related criterion as some kind of proxy for what's good.

            suppose a kid watch screens in ways parents object to because the kid thinks that is the best way to spend their time. suppose the kid gets screen time restricted and therefore loses a few pounds because he spends more time aimlessly wandering outside instead of what he'd prefer to be doing. he didn't figure out an effective way to spend his time given the screen restriction, is his life better? does parent care about kid's happiness? weight is a poor proxy for happiness.
                Often it would be possible to engage with some activity that one is "zoning out on" in a more fruitful and productive way. E.g. one could play a game seriously instead of casually. Or one could get more into the lore and story of some fictional universe rather than just rewatching the same few movies over and over. Is that something that the parent is trying to help the kid pursue and figure out?
  - CONCLUSION: So this idea about displacing time for physical activity not a reason to restrict screens in particular and not restrict those other things.
  - STATEMENT OF POSITION: I wouldn't go to extremes and say that kids shouldn't watch any TV or have other screen times, just that it should be more in moderation.
- Less sleep
- Being indoors/not engaging with world
- IRL socialization important