

4 ways to limit gadget use

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Having fun has a totally different meaning for today's kids. With the dawn of the digital age, our children are constantly exposed to rapid visual stimulation and have easy access to online games. As a parent, I am very vigilant in limiting the use of gadgets.



Not only does technology affect physical health, it has negative repercussions on mental health as well.

One way of channeling their energy to something productive is to introduce new activities. Recently, my seven year old put on her Maya Kitchen apron and made colorful Christmas pancake art. I wanted to help her with her Christmas tree design but she firmly told me, "I can do this Mom!" while deftly squeezing and drawing – and she did. For her second edible masterpiece, she cooked a cute rainbow. Next, with a chef instructor by her side, my junior chef whipped up a Happy Mug chocolate cake and topped it with caramel sauce in less than three minutes. I made a mental note to purchase the microwavable mug cakes. They'll make cute Yuletide gifts to her classmates and can be a fun activity for R's next play date with her friends.

Have you heard of Engineering For Kids (EFK)? In my Mommy viber group, one shared photos of her girl's party where guests took part in building motorized mini boats and making small rockets shoot up in the air. Aha! What a smart way to play. So I immediately signed up at the Bellevue Kids' Club where EFK was hosting four Saturdays of different activities.

The LEGO Education sponsored activity was impressive. Kids were asked to sit in groups of four per table. Everybody took turns in building a drummer monkey. Brick by brick, the Christmas primate took shape. Then, the teacher attached a

small motor to the monkey, put a small cup as a drum, and hooked it up to a laptop. The kids had a fun time programming the beats and songs of the drummer. The activity tested comprehension, skill in brick building, and musical creativity. Obedience and teamwork were also promoted. Definitely worth the P900 pesos we paid.

We started decorating gingerbread tiles when my daughter was born and now it's something the whole family looks forward to when the holiday season begins. It makes me sentimental to see my 15-year-old son laboring on his square patch. I used to help him with his designs but now he just asks me to pass the sweet treats. This year, Mr. F helped outline Vanellope von Schweetz (from Wreck-It Ralph) on R's tile. The result after an hour of decorating is truly a sweet art!

This Christmas, instead of the usual store-bought things, why not ask your kids to bake cookies, make cards, or write notes? My kids' handwritten notes are my treasures! I always tell the children that the best gifts are made by one's own hands. Because the time and effort you spend crafting your present is your real gift. The busiest time of the year must also be the most meaningful. Spend time with your dearest ones and show kindness to those who need it most. Also open your hearts and your hands.