

Getting a high speed family connection:

Associations between family media use and family connection.

THE GIST: Family use of media has increased over the last decade. We observed the relationship between family use of media (phones, TV, video games, email, and social apps) and feelings of family connection in 453 youth and their parents. Among the different media types, families most commonly used cell phones and TV. For the most part, families who felt very connected had more family cell phone use, family movie/TV nights, and co-playing with video games. However, results were mixed with some families (or at least youth) feeling less connected when they engaged with family more on social sites.

THE TAKEAWAY: The relationship between media use and family connection was unclear, but one thought is that media use and family bonds might influence each other. To understand the mixed findings of our study, we should examine family interactions through their motivations, behaviors, and what they say to each other. Maybe positive messages have positive effects, and negative messages have negative effects. Parents and children may use media either as a tool to maintain status quos or to build relationships for the future. We should reflect on how media use affects the quality of our relationships and try to meet each other where we're at.