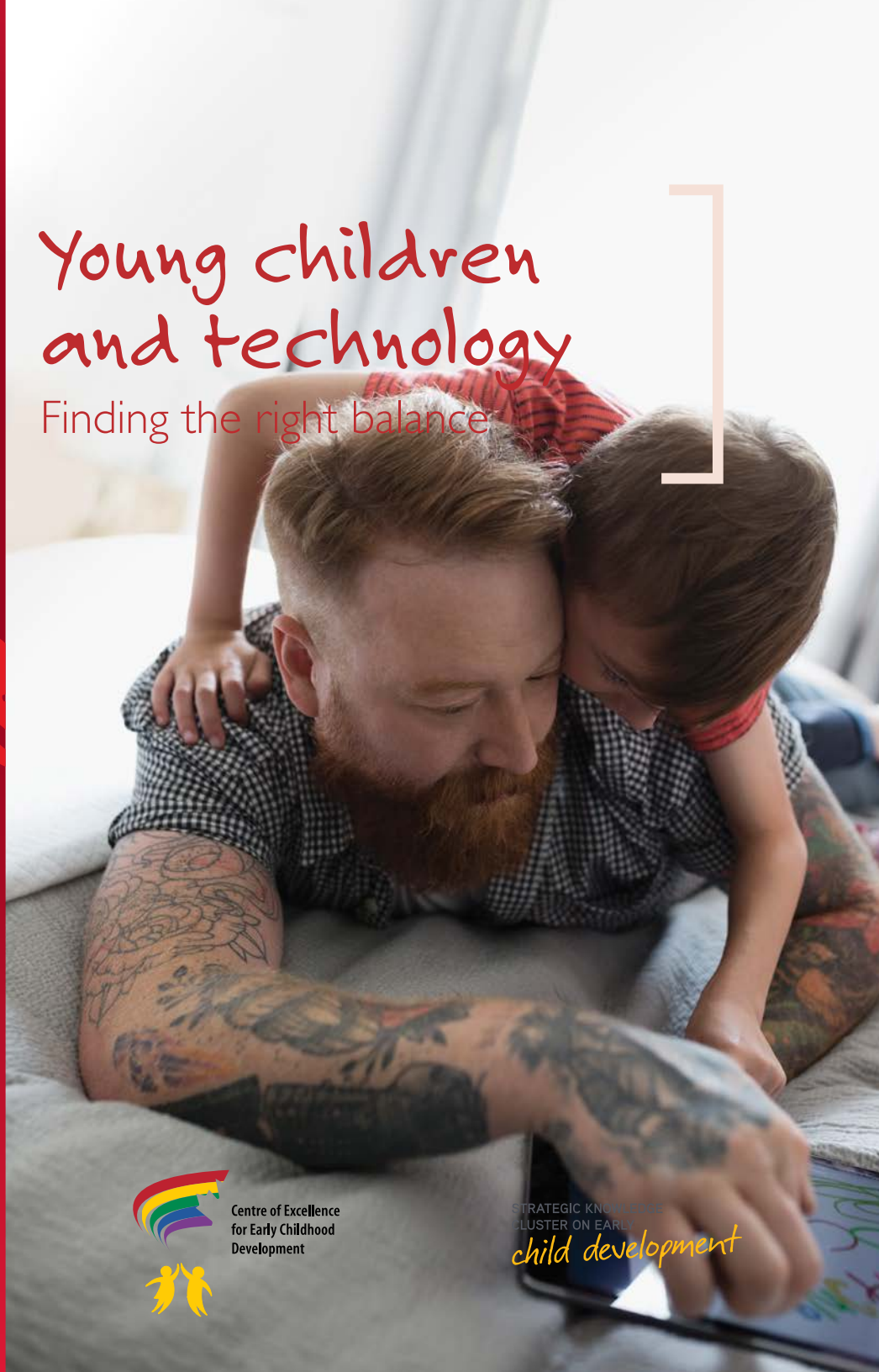
Eyes on

Young children and technology

Finding the right balance

PARENTS



Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE CLUSTER ON EARLY child development

"The impact of technologies on young children depends on their age and characteristics."

What do we know?

- Children have access to technologies from a very young age. About 83% of children ages 6 months to 6 years use screens every day to play, learn or read. Often, they use digital media, like e-books, tablets, smartphones and their apps.
- The impact of technologies on young children depends on their age and characteristics. For instance, infants younger than age 2 do not learn well from digital media. At that age, they have a limited understanding of what they see and hear on a screen.
- Some apps and e-books can help children older than 2 to learn language and numbers, if their parents guide them. Parents can help by pointing out the important parts of the video, story or problems.
- Children are more likely to learn from digital media when the content is age appropriate, engaging and educational. Educational apps have a clear learning goal and they encourage the child's active participation rather than rote learning.
- Apps and e-books with *many* interactive features can have a negative impact on children's learning. For example, pop-ups, embedded games and hotspots may make it difficult for children to focus on important details.
- Children who are constantly exposed to digital media during the preschool years have a greater risk of having problems with attention and emotional control.

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Paying attention to...	What can be done?
... your child's use of digital media.	■ Support your child's learning when he is using apps or e-books. – Read e-books together with your child. – Ask him questions about what he is seeing, reading or playing. – Draw his attention to important parts of the video or text when needed. – Help him make the connection between what's happening in the e-book or apps, and real-life situations.
... how much distraction your child is exposed to.	■ Limit your child's access to digital media before age 2. ■ Set rules to be sure children 2-5 years aren't getting too much "screen time." – A good guideline is to limit your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of TV, computers and other electronics. – Turn off the television when nobody is watching it. ■ Use digital media that has fewer distracting, interactive features (e.g., pop-ups, hotspots). ■ Choose digital media with multimedia features that support understanding (e.g., animations).
... the educational content of apps.	■ Research the content of apps before purchasing them. ■ Choose apps that are age-appropriate and that have clear learning goals. ■ Use apps that engage your child and stimulate his thinking, creativity and problem-solving abilities. ■ For more information, see "Resources" under the topic Technology in Early Childhood Education.

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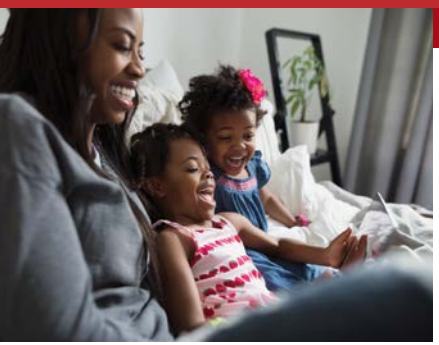

Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development

Information

This information sheet is a publication of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) and the Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development (SKC-ECD). These organizations identify and summarize the best scientific work on early childhood development. They disseminate this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of Technology in Early Childhood Education, consult our synthesis and experts' articles on this topic in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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In this document, the masculine form is used merely to simplify the text. No discrimination is intended.

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