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Q   Alex Hetherington (researcher)
A   Man with son (aged 7)

A   I don't know where that went.

Q   Sorry, about that.

A   That's all right, that's fine.

Q   We're fine to continue, I think you were just talking about what kind of products LEGO should be developing.

A   Yes, they use the LEGO Life website, they go onto that a bit. He enjoys that one where you can do all the different aspects on that one, but other than that I don't really see where else they can go at the moment.

Q   That's the end of the first set of questions, moving onto the second set now, there's four more. This one's about your views on children's play and technology.

A   Okay.

Q   When it comes to playing with technology who decides what kinds of digital toys, games, apps, consoles that they get to use?

A   Me and the wife, we get to decided what they do. If they ask us for games, then obviously, like most parents, if it's one that we feel is appropriate for them then that's fine and then they can have it. So, yes, me and the wife decide what they do and don't get to play on.

Q   Does he ever come to you with new things that you've not necessarily heard of or seen before and ask if it's something that they can have or use?

A   Not really. With regards to what me and my wife do, I'm within social care and my wife's within education, so unfortunately due to that aspect we know what a lot of them are and nine times out of ten I find that they follow more than anything. So, what they do say is nine times out of ten what I'm possibly already aware of or what my wife's already aware of. So, there's not really been out that's been outside the ballpark in regards to what it is that they want from us.

Q   Has there been any kind of contents or devices where you or your wife have thought, no, that's not appropriate, you can't have that?

A   Yes, plenty of times that one. There was Roblox, there was Fortnite and the eldest has pushed a little bit for a few shooting games that he's seen that he quite likes. Again, it's like anything, we show him that there's an age on there and that's for a reason, so, no, you're not having it. Yes, like most of them, they've tried, but it's just for fun, it's just a straightforward, no, from us on that regards.

Q   You mentioned the age limit, is there any other things that's guided those choices, that's made you think no, that's not appropriate?

A   Just really around what you hear about them as well from outside. With regards to Roblox, what you hear in the media when you hear about what happens when they go into other people's worlds and that internet chat aspect of what's going

on. So, that's predominantly our main influence in regards to no, we know, although you think that you won't be, it just takes one second in regards to what you say or don't say to someone on those kinds of games.

Q   Do you speak to friends at all for some guidance on what you think is appropriate and things like that? If there was anything you don't know?

A   We do speak to other parents, we know that not all parents are the same and we know that some have said, do you know what, yes, my son just plays on this all the time and we have no problem with it. So, we do ask them how they found it, we try and see, do you know what, if they can manage it then really we should be able to manage it as well. So, we do try and figure out, okay, maybe we're just being OTT in regards to where we're coming as both parents and from job wise.

Q   Do you think there's different kinds of devices, digital toys, games, apps that can promote play?

A   Yes, I think that the consoles they promoted play. I'm not saying it's just because who we are talking about, but like the LEGO World's one and Minecraft both in that respect is that they show you that if you build these things and you create these worlds then it develops it just doesn't stay as it is. So, the more you build the more you go into that world and you try and improve it in that regard.

Technology is helpful in that regard, from when I was young, literally what we had was a ball bouncing off those things that were going up the left and right side of the screen. But nowadays they have all of these worlds where you can literally create a world that you want it to look like. So, that's where technology has really gone, it allows them to, this is what I would like it to be if I was to create a village as such.

Q   Do you think there's certain kinds of technologies or certain kinds of apps that can limit play?

A   There must be some out there. The roleplay games, I don't always feel that they let you explore as much because you know that if you don't do something then you're not going to achieve the end goal, which is what you really want to achieve. But I've never been a roleplay game fan anyway, so that's more down to me and I think my son's get more out of them, because that tends to be what the Pokemon games are about. Is you have to follow a set thing to get to the end to do whatever it is you need to do, so they do get it out of it.

So, maybe it isn't as restrictive as it seems to be to me, but I just found the whole roleplay games a little bit inhibiting. It's like, but I don't want to do that, but if I don't do that then I'm not going to achieve getting five gold coins that I need to go and do something else. So, in that regard some technology can be restrictive, but I think predominantly it just depends on what you as a person are trying to get out of it is how I feel technology's taken.

If you want to go to the very depths of it then that's fine, you can go to the very depths of it, but if you just want to achieve the end goal of completing said game then you just have to follow it through into the very end and get where you need to get to.

Q   In kind of the same vein, do you think that certain devices or certain apps can promote creativity?

A   Yes, like I said, the Minecraft and the LEGO World ones, that's what those games are about, is just go and create what you want to create. And you can't make a wrong building, if you don't like it you just take it down and you restart and you rebuild it in a different way. So, I think that's what those games are really helpful with and that.

Q   Do you think on the other side that certain kinds of perhaps devices, things like that, can they limit creativity?

A   Yes, I just think that if you know what you need to get to the very end then you're just going to do it. And I think if there's no scope for use, like to go, if I follow this different path I know that something else will happen. I don't build games, and I know it's not like they can put infinite scenarios into a game and it will be what it will be, I know that it doesn't work like that. But I just think that certain games restrict you in regards to where you can and cannot go in that game.

Q   When your child's using technology how far are they actively engaged? Are they really interested and focused on what they're doing?

A   God, yes. It's like they're the only people in this room at that particular moment. I know that if you're going to be calling them for dinner and usually, nine times out ten they just come running through. But you can just hear them talking to themselves as if they're talking to the character. They go all in in regards to what they're doing, so it's a lot of particular points within the game.

Q   Do you think their play with technology, do you think they find it meaningful? Is it relevant to their everyday interests?

A   Yes, there is a lot of relevance because they show such an interest in the Pokemon and I think he will truly believe that he has made that Pokemon into what it is. And I think that that gives him a sense of, this is what I've done, if it wasn't for me this Pokemon wouldn't be able to go and defeat said Pokemon with all this stuff. So, yes, they really do think this is a sense of this is what I need to do and if I don't do it I won't be able to do anything else.

Q   When your son's playing with technology do you think that he tries out new things a lot and tries to make improvements to what he's doing?

A   Yes, in LEGO World and Minecraft he always likes, if he's got a building that he's just created on Minecraft he'll also try and add a little bit more to it. He'll try and add a cave or something underneath it so that there's a secret passage out of it that only he'll know about. He'll build a rudimentary house but he will then make it into what he wants it to be, it won't just be, okay, there's my house I've built it now. He'll go, what else can I add on to this to make it a little bit more interesting and more fun for me to use?

Q   That's the end of the second set of questions, we're moving onto the third set now, this sets about children's emotions and wellbeing.

A   Okay.

Q   Do you think that technology can have an affect on children's emotions and wellbeing? And how do you think that takes shape if you so?

A   Unfortunately, yes, technology does. Not just within the home, but going further out in the field, like possibly when myself and you were growing up, it's like they do say, brilliant ended when you walked through your front door and those kinds of things. But unfortunately everyone knows now that's not the case because everyone's got everyone's number and once you know that if you turn on that phone you're still contactable no matter what.

Even if you know you haven't given that person your phone number, you know nine times out of ten it's got to them somehow and it just goes from there. It's great and it's helpful and it's helped make life easier in some respects, but in other respects it has put more of a burden on our lives as well. It is what it is, if you don't have the technology you don't really get to experience what everyone is experiencing.

Q   What kind of range of emotions do you see in your son when he's playing with technology?

A   You can see every emotion in the world, you can see anger, you can happiness all at the drop of a hat. It's like one minute he can be, I love this Pokemon, it's amazing, it's done me that. And the next minute it's, that Pokemon is so rubbish, why couldn't it help, why couldn't it do what I need it to do at this particular moment? And there has been times when things have been thrown because you know that they've either lost the battle or they've not found the right Pokemon in the right place or anything like that.

The emotions are good and bad, but I personally think that's a good thing, I don't see that as negative, I think that's something that will teach them what life is and it also sort of what it's going to be like in the real world. I know my life doesn't revolve around, oh, no, I didn't get [unclear], I got a whatever it is, but I know that perhaps that's going to teach them in life that although they've done what they need to do they're not always going to get out of it what it is that they want to get out of it.

Q   Does your son ever get bored when he's playing with technology?

A   I think that it depends on where he's at in regards to the game that he's playing. I don't ever really see him get as bored in regards to the games, but I think he does get bored with the videos when he's watching the videos. He'll quite happily flick in between one YouTuber and another YouTuber.

He won't incessantly go, right, I'm only going to be watching DanTDM instead of watching Unspeakable, is one of them, I don't know, I just get confused. But yes, so I think that he does get bored in some respect to the videos, but in regards to the games, they can keep him going for quite some time.

Q   Do you think when he does get bored it's different or kind of similar to when he's playing with physical toys? Do you think there's a distinction there?

A   I think there is a distinction, I think with regards to physical toys, from what I've perceived, he'll lose the interest a lot quicker than he would do if it was a console

game. And I don't know if that's just the technology thing of like, it's nothing that I've got to hold in my hand or anything like that? I know he won't think of it in this way, but it's not something that is tangible that he actually holds or he's just pressing some buttons on a control pad. So, I think that that's what that's about.

Q   When he's playing with technology that allows for some social interaction would you say that your son engages well with others?

A   Yes, when he's had friends over here and they're playing you can just hear them laughing at each other and almost having that pub banter where they're just mucking each other off. It's like when they're playing football it's, you'll play there, he done such a rubbish move and those kinds of things. I think he enjoys the social aspect of where he can talk to someone whilst he's playing the game and if it's not his brother then it's even better for him.

So, I think that he enjoys the social aspect of it and that's something that I think is helpful to him as well because it proves that although technology is predominantly there, he's still got a friend that will also be playing with him as well.

Q   Do you think that there's any kinds of particular technologies that can support social play?

A   It has its point, like in regards to this Pokemon Go, you're probably fed up with hearing about Pokemon Go in this respect. But I think it has its good point because I know that in my area there was two Pokemon Go clubs where they all got together and they'd all go looking for these Pokemon's together. And I think that had the positive side because he wouldn't have known the people, it's a different way of getting to know other people outside of the school gates group and all of those kinds of things.

Q   That's the end of the third set of questions, we're onto the fourth now, this is more about your role as a parent in technology [overtalking].

A   Okay.

Q   When your child's play involves technology do you ever play with him?

A   Yes, we love a good old race on Mario Kart, you can't beat Mario Kart and we like playing games on FIFA. I don't touch the Pokemon or any of those kinds, I just don't get it. But yes, we like to have a bit of play, I wouldn't say we do it as much as I'd like to, I don't know if that's due to me or just due to the fact that whenever I ask him he goes, no, I don't want to do that today. Yes, we do have races and just play with each other and I'd say that's at least twice a week, it's not like we only do it every fortnight or anything like that.

It's at least twice a week that whilst his mum's out doing some work or tutoring as I'm here with him I'll just go, come on then, who wants to have a game on Mario Kart? And that includes all three of us, because his brother will also join in with that as well.

Q   Are there any other kind of devices that you play on with your son and do you

think that any particular devices are better than others for playing with him?

A   The console's obviously the best device to play on. If I'm playing Paper.io and Crowd City on my phone, he quite likes to have a go after I've had a go and then he tries to see on Crowd City if he can get more people into his gang than what I did previously. So, we do play on that, we do play those two games together, and Paper.io he tries to obviously see if he can get a bigger island than what I can.

So, yes, there is other ones, but the console I find is better because it's something that you do together, you don't do it separately, it's not like I'm dead now so it's your turn. With the console you're literally doing it there and then together.

Q   When you're using your own devices, things like your phone, maybe a tablet that you have, does your child ever ask you if they can play with you?

A   Yes, he does. It's like I just said, he'll happily take over and want to do Crowd City, so I think at the moment Crowd City seems to be the game that if he sees me playing it, he will. I don't know how, but I think he's got a radar that says, Dad's playing Crowd City so I need to go over and watch him do it and see if I can go and beat him. So, he will try and he does like me to put a few games on my tablet for him so that if and when he wants to come and not be sitting in the front room he'll be, can I go and play on your tablet?

And then I'll go, yes, but again I think because that one's a lot easier to get on the internet than it is on the [unclear], I think that that's the one that I always sit with him whilst he's playing it. Just because I know that they can decide I want to go have a look at something else, I don't want to play Crowd City or Minion Rush or anything like that anymore.

Q   That's the fourth set of questions done, we've got one more set left and this is more about general perceptions of technologies.

A   Yes.

Q   Do you think that certain technologies offer more positive or more negative experiences for your son?

A   I personally think that that is something that it's about how you interpret it, that's what I think. I think there's always going to be good and bad sides, but at the moment I think that they technology proves to be more of a positive for him. It's an outlet for him and his brother in regards to Minecraft and that, where if they want to go and do something that they don't necessarily always do in every day lives.

I'm not saying that they've got Pokemon upstairs in their bedroom, but I think that the technology is proving to be a lot more beneficial in regards to it lets them develop motor skills and all of those things. But also it lets them do more creative things than what was previously available to us.

Q   Do you have any concerns about the safety aspects of internet enabled toys?

A   Loads of safety concerns about internet enabled toys. Like anything, it depends on how much you want to restrict them, we are very good in that regard where know what games we will and won't let them play. The internet is wonderful, but

it's also probably the scariest thing that's available to anyone at this particular moment.

Q   Do you have any specific concerns about data privacy?

A   For the boys, I've never let them use their names in regards to anything that they're signed up for. If they're going to do anything I always say, no, we won't create a profile for you, but we'll create a profile for me, so in that regard that data privacy for identifying them, that doesn't happen, it always comes back to me. So, that's one thing we've always said, we don't need to set them up, I'm happy to be associated with playing a stupid game like that because I don't really mind. So, that's all in data privacy.

Q   Do you think that your son's use of technology has influenced his family life in a positive way? You've kind of already talked a little bit about this, so I won't ask you to say too much.

A   It has, I wouldn't it always has, there is times when you know that you want them to do something, but all they'll ever say to you is, I just need to finish doing this or I just need to finish doing that. I don't quite think that they understand the concept that if you just put the controller down it won't move until to you get back to it, it's not like it's going to go anywhere.

So, I think that's one thing that they don't quite get just yet, although they think there's things that need to be done right there and then I always say to them there is a pause button, you can just stop it, it doesn't matter. I think it's created a there and then ethos in them in that I need to get this done now and nothing else matters at this particular moment, but that's slowly got a little bit better in regards to like if I say there's a pause button they go, oh, yes. So, that's getting there.

Q   Sorry, I'm just skipping a couple of questions.

A   No, that's fine, I'm assuming you've got a very nice script in front of you what you do and don't need to ask.

Q   There's a lot that you've already talked about because your answers have been really, really fantastic to some of the other questions. So, I'm just seeing what's worthwhile asking because I don't want to take too much of your time. Last question then, what advice or guidance would you offer to new parents on issues relating to technology use with your child?

A   I'd always say to them let them do what you're comfortable with them doing, don't automatically just say, no, you can't do that. Because it's like anything, when I was growing up and I went out, God, I've done so many stupid things during my life, but if I hadn't of done that you wouldn't have had that fear factor. That fear factor would still be inside you, you wouldn't know that, you know what, if I do that I will come out of it okay, it's not going to lead to anything that's majorly bad.

I always say this to the people that work with us well, I always say to them, have you pressed that button? And they go, no. And I go, you're not going to set off a nuclear bomb, all the computer will do is it will ping at you and go, you can't do that. So, I think that that's where with technology, give it a go, if it works and you

get a result you're happy with then you know that in the future you can go down that route and it will be what you expect it to be.

It will change some aspects, but it's not going to change all aspects of your life, it depends on how much you want it to influence or to take control of what you do and don't want to do.

Q   Is there anything else you'd like to say at all?

A   No, just a general question, obviously I know the study's about with regards to technology and everything like that. It's got nothing to do with it, can you just say to them, in regards to LEGO can they stop developing packs. So, if you get a pack you can only build for arguments sake, ironically we've got our children Millennium Falcon and a Harry Potter. But I remember when I was a child I had a tub that was chocker full of LEGO and I could build whatever I wanted to do.

That doesn't seem to be available as much anymore and I think that that's what I remember of LEGO. Is that I could build what I wanted to build, I wasn't restricted to having all of these pieces that only build me said building or said something like that.

That's something that I feel that they've more or less gone away from and as a company itself it's reinvented itself amazing well over the last few years. And then you look at the idea like the LEGO Masters programme that was on Channel 4, but you can't seem to recreate that because you don't have all of this abundance of LEGO bricks available to you anymore.

Unless you're lucky and your uncle has still got his one that's out in the shed, and you just go around his and play on his all the time. That's just one thing, because I remember my childhood was just spending time in my bedroom with this massive great big box of LEGO and just building houses and all sorts.