

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

Q A little bit of background first, how many children do you have?

A Two children.

Q What are their ages?

A One is five and one is seven.

Q For the study we're focusing on children three to 11, so both are eligible, but we would like to ask you when answering the questions, could you keep one child in mind if that's possible?

A Any particular age you'd rather me keep in mind?

Q The focus of a lot of the questions is mostly about technology use, so it might be the elder if that's more appropriate do you think?

A Yes, that will make more sense, that's fine that is.

Q I'm going to talk about technology in a lot of the questions, when I say that I mean the obvious stuff like devices, things like mobile phones, tablets, cameras, any kind of game consoles. But also things like media, apps, websites [unclear] games, things like that.

A Okay.

Q Do you have any questions before we begin?

A No, that's fine that is.

Q There are five groups of questions, this first group is about your child's play in technology.

A Okay.

Q What are some of the ways that technology features in your child's play?

A He plays a lot with games consoles, primarily the Nintendo Switch and he also has an Amazon kids Fire tablet. So, we've got this children's tablet which he uses for games, for reading up stuff, audio books, doing everything in regards to that.

Q Does he have any favourite games on the Switch?

A Pokemon.

Q Is that the new one that just came out?

A No, we've bought it, it's waiting for Santa's delivery.

Q How about on the tablet, what kind of use does he get out of that? Games, any kind of media like YouTube?

A The YouTube is restricted because it's on the kid's version, but we have watched

a few videos on there. He uses a lot of the children's apps, simple games you can download and there's also magazines and books he can read on there as well.

Q Any other kind of media apps? Anything like Netflix or CBeebies?

A Yes, Netflix, he knows how to use it, so he watches a lot of TV off that. He doesn't watch so much TV like he used to, I think Netflix is a lot easier to use, but I think Netflix is a bigger part. And he knows how to use things like the iPlayer and things like that as well.

Q When he does watch television or even Netflix, things like that, does he also play at the same time? Or is it a one or the other situation?

A He sometimes does, we try and make him one or the other. I don't like him doing two things at once, he's either concentrating properly on one and ignoring the other or just not doing it properly at all. We try and stop him from doing that and the other reason as well is because he's got his brother and it could be a case of he want to watch one thing, so if he's playing the tablet it's a [unclear].

Q Does he have any physical toys that relate to his digital interests?

A Yes, he has a camera, he likes using that and he can upload them if he wants to. I can't think of much else in regards to that, really.

Q Does he have any other digital toys, things that are electronic like maybe a robot, things like maybe the LeapPad tablet, sort of educational or anything?

A Yes, he had one them years ago, we never really used them properly. He's got the camera, I think that would be it there, really. He uses my phone and the wife's phone, but not his own, he hasn't got a phone himself.

Q Does he have any internet enabled toys at all?

A Yes, the Amazon tablet is, it works WIFI only, but if we're out and about we tether it as well to our phones for him to go onto the internet as well.

Q Has he ever had a chance to play with anything that involves augmented reality or virtual reality?

A Sadly, no. I'd love to, but he has not had a chance to yet.

Q How about any kind of artificial intelligence systems? Something like Alexa or Siri or Google Home?

A Again, he uses it on my phone, but nothing proper, more like joking stuff.

Q Does he play in outdoor spaces a lot?

A Yes, he does a lot of that, a lot of outdoor activities, Beavers and all things like that.

Q Does technology ever feature in that kind of play?

A Yes, it has. He's part of Beavers so they do make things interactive, he got to use a ham radio and speak to people all over the world, things like that. He also does Ju Jitsu and they use a dojo app to track their progress. So, it's something we

have on our phones and we can see the progress and they show us on the screen and there's a little character monster which [unclear].

Q When he's playing with physical toys do you ever notice the influence of technology in what he's doing?

A No, not with him. Say, like he's building something, you couldn't say that's that sort of basis, it's something completely separate.

Q The next question's specifically about LEGO, how much LEGO is there in the household, if any?

A There's quite a bit of it, there's LEGO, Duplo and there's other not LEGO, but there's other things like LEGO.

Q A similar kind of idea.

A Yes.

Q How much would you say there is? Is it in sets or is there an amount of sets?

A Yes, we've got one or two boxes of just miscellaneous and then we buy, it's hard to buy just LEGO anymore, it has to be a set of something. So, we do have a few of them and the buildings here and there.

Q Is there any other kind of LEGO stuff? Like accessories or any of the LEGO films?

A He's watched the LEGO films, he's gone to the cinema and seen them, I think we've got the DVD somewhere or it's on the TV. And other things like Batman LEGO and Ninjago and we've had LEGO games as well.

Q Have you ever been to Legoland?

A Yes, we have, about two years ago.

Q Did you enjoy that? Was it a good experience?

A Yes, we go in March every year and we try to go to different theme parks every year, so far LEGO's been the best, it's one that we would consider going again it was that good.

Q This one's a little bit more hypothetical.

A Okay.

Q What kind of new toys or products do you think that LEGO should be developing for the digital age?

A It'll be interesting to see, you mentioned the VR augmented. Like VR builders where you're in the world and you can build maybe something bigger than normal because virtual reality [unclear] are that bigger, you can build a building, but a good size. Something that he doesn't know, but I know is like in Fortnite you can build and you can travel, something like that in the VR reality where you can build things on a bigger scale.

Q That's the end of the first set of questions, we're going to move on to the second

set now, this more about your opinions on children's play and technology.

A Okay.

Q When it comes to playing with technology, when he's on different devices, who gets to make the decision about what he gets to play on and when?

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A When is us, well, it's a bit of sharing, really. We see how good he is and we see if he's done anything right for the rewards. I guess because of what we've given him he is restricted so he's not going to access anything inappropriate. But we do like, do what you want to do, let him, I've always been a man to have learnt through your mistakes, try it and see if you like it or not.

Q In your view do you think different types of devices and digital toys and apps and things, do you think that they can promote play?

A 100% yes.

Q How do you think that takes shape?

A I grew up as a gamer, obviously I had friends around and I played with them and we played games together. And just because you play games it doesn't mean he doesn't have to play anything else. We go out, we play football, we go to my house play a few games and then maybe go and do something else. It was never restricted where you have this game and now you're stuck to that, it could be an opening into other things.

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Q Do you think on the other hand that certain types of digital devices, certain types of apps maybe, do you think they can limit play?

A It's very limited to the app itself I think, that's when if you're limited to an app then you just do something different. If there was a clear gain for instance and you can only do so much in a certain time, well then that gives you time to do something different.

Q Do you think certain kinds of technology used can promote creativity?

A Yes, 100%. The LEGO, VR. It's creative, it's doing something simple, like Fortnite and things like that, but you have to be creative in how you play the game when you may have to think outside the box how to do certain things. Especially with the other game they have a lot is Mario and Pokemon, you have to think a lot more about how to win and how to do things.

Q Do you think on the other hand that certain kinds of technology, certain kinds of apps can limit creativity?

A Again, its based on the app. If you have an app that only allows you to do so much then that is going to limit it. Again, if that doesn't give him the creativity he needs he'll find something else.

Q When your son's playing technology is he quite actively engaged in what he's doing? Is he very interested and focused on it?

A He can be, yes. He does get involved, sometimes he tries to understand more as well, so if there's a simple thing he may know a little bit bigger about it to understand it more.

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Q Do you think that he finds his play with technology to be meaningful to him? Do you think it has relevance to his every day interests?

A Yes, because he enjoys it, we will only play things that he does find enjoyable and then he knows when he's bored of something. He can play Pokemon for half an hour and then he'll be like, I just don't want to play anymore because I've had my full, so to speak.

Q When he does get bored of playing with technology do you think that's different at all to the way he might get bored when playing with something physical?

A The only thing I would say is there's more [unclear] at the end. Again, he can jump to different things quite easily, whether it's technology or physical, if he's bored he's bored, he'll just do something else.

Q When he's playing with tech do you think that he has a tendency to try out new things, make improvements to what he's doing that kind of thing?

A Yes, maybe, because I promote that myself. Like say, food, if you don't try it you don't know. He'll say, I don't know if I like this game and I say, well, have you played it? No. Well, have a go see what you think. He does do it more from me pushing him to do it.

Q We're going to move onto the third set of questions now, this is about play with technology and children's emotions.

A Okay.

Q Do you think that technology specifically can have an effect on children's emotions while they're playing?

A Yes, I think so.

Q How do you think that takes shape?

A Frustration, anger, if you've got two children [unclear]. Play Pokemon and, he's further ahead of me, he's got Pokemon I haven't got and gets angry at that

Q What do you think are the most common emotions you see when your children are playing with technology?

A It's a mixture between happy and frustration I would find

Q Do you think that different kinds of emotions tend to be more typical with different kinds of play? Do they tend to feel differently when he's say watching something on his tablet than when he's playing on a console?

A Yes, on the console because he doesn't know it as well he'll get more frustrated, whereas on the tablet the games are easier, they're a lot more child-based so he finds them a lot easier to use and play with. Like he wanted to play Fortnite, but

he hasn't got the motor skills to play a game properly like that, but with the tablet it's a very simple thing to play so he's a lot happier doing that.

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

A Yes, again, he would have myself, the wife, the brother and he'll interact then. He doesn't have access to online, again, I go back to Fortnite because you can play with friends online, he doesn't have access to that. But like I say, he will play with friends in school with the tablet, there's a specific app as well, there's a website that's called the Hub where he'll [unclear].

And it's like his whole school thing, so when he logs in and he plays games he can see his friends scores. And he talks to the friends about that and asks them and they'll try and compete against each other as well.

Q I'm going to go onto the fourth set of questions now, these are more about your role as a parent in technology mediated play.

A Okay.

Q What I want to ask first because it occurred to me to ask is Fortnite something that you play yourself?

A Yes, I'm a gamer, I love my games. He does not play anywhere near like me because he hasn't got the skills, he can't.

Q Do you think that's something that you're going to want to get him into when he's a little bit older? Is that something you're going to introduce him to?

A I'd love to, yes. I talk to him a lot, we talk about [unclear] and things like that, I said nothing in this world is bad, it's not mediation it's moderation. So, I teach him a lot about that, foods, drink, Coke is bad for you, it is bad for you, but if you have one can a month you're fine. I used to think that McDonald's was a bad example, if you eat it once a month it's not bad for you, if you have it breakfast, dinner and tea every day, it's bad. The same as gaming, if you play it constantly, it's not great for you, but if you play one or two hours here and that that's fine.

Q That philosophy kind of walks into different aspects of life and then technology is in play as well, very interesting, thank you. When your son's play involves technology, do you play with him?

A Yes and no, I try and maybe set things up for him, but I want him to learn by himself by doing it. He does constantly ask me, how do I do this and I'm like, play the game, try it and if you need help then I'll come along. I want him to experience it first without just going straight to the help.

Q When you're on your devices, I think you mentioned this very briefly towards the beginning, does your son ever ask to play on your devices with you or without you?

A Pokemon's the best, we may play that together if he wants me to, but if I'm playing my Fortnite or if I'm playing my other games that's more just me on my own doing it.

Q Is that in a separate space like an office, something like that?

A No, when I'm in bed.

Q Does he have access to any other kinds of technology with other members of the family, extended family maybe, grandparents, anything like that, that you don't have in your household?

A No, it'll be same. My mother in-law would be the best one, she has an iPad, but again doesn't really use it, but can have access to it as well and again, there's spare mobile phones if need be

Q Do you ever use technology to initiate play with your son?

A Yes, I can do, I'll say, do you want to play the Switch, do you want to throw on the tablet? It's one on the list of questions I would ask to see what he wants to do, so it will be do you want to do this, do you want to do that, do you want to play something, do you want to go on Switch? To understand what he wants to do.

Q We're going to move on to the last set of questions now, these are more about your general perceptions of technologies in play.

A Okay.

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

A For me it's all about the social media aspect, I think you have to be very careful in that, and again, it's moderation, so if you were to play certain games I know there's a lot about age ratings and violence and things like that, I study that myself. I know that can mess and I do if there's an age limit, I'm not going to let him, I'm not going to let him play like, Grand Theft Auto. But I will consider and look into it, like Fortnite, I think that's a 12+ game, but that's not so violent. Yes, I do try and monitor what he does and just see how he behaves from it as well.

Q Is there anything that you think has sort of shaped those concerns, is it something that you've read about online? You mentioned that you've done the research.

A Yes, it's news and what I remember reading from politicians and [unclear], sometimes it can be used as a scapegoat media especially with women. I remember a grade one before in America, where somebody ended up killing somebody and they blamed games because the media found out she was playing ten hours a day. But they didn't actually realise or say the game was Dance, Dance.

When Mortal Kombat came out that was the biggest thing, but then when you look at other countries, it was linked as well to music like Death Metal and things like that. But then they realised the heaviest people who played the game were Japan, Germany and they have the lowest death rates. It's just a scapegoat sometimes, where it's made to take the blame, but if you're slightly clued up you'll understand rationally that no, it doesn't really.

I've played violent video games and I don't want to kill anybody. Someone said, no, you get angry playing video games and I said, you go watch a game of

football with a good bunch of fans, watch them get angry and shout at people. It's a normal part of life now.

Q Do you ever talk to other parents about things that might or might not be appropriate for your children, do they shape your concerns at all?

A People know I'm a gamer, so people will come to me and ask me about particular games and they'll be like, what's Fortnite like? And they're saying my son likes Fortnite. Ultimately it's all down to that, I'll just tell them this is what the game's about, this is what you do and then you [unclear]. Many people have asked as well because again, I like my technology, they ask, what have you done and have you put barriers in place, how did you do certain things?

So, again, if we do talk it is about tech, it is quite a lot about safety and it's about is it appropriate for children. And I'm like, everyone's different, my son doesn't play Fortnite and I know other children in his class love it. I never tell people, you choose your life, you do what you want with it.

Q Are you concerned about or do you think you will be concerned about the safety aspect of internet enabled toys?

A Yes, especially if they're able to communicate with other people. I think there's a lot about that, I see in the news you get apps about random people talking to people, Facebook's a classic example. It's going to change over the next couple of years when he gets more into it, it's still one of those things to solve, you hear the stories, but then again that's two stories in thousands of people.

Again, it's a case of what are the parents doing? Are they actually doing anything about it, are they checking things? I mistakenly forgot put a block on my PS4, so they bought something without my knowledge, but again, that was done accidentally and it was my fault because I didn't put the block in place. So, if parents and whoever else has to read up about it and put those checks in place it should be fine.

Q Do you have any concerns about or do you think you will have any concerns about data privacy?

A Again, a little, it's not so much privacy it's more a case of not what they're going to do with the information, but it's how they store it and the GDPR rules and whether it's stored securely. Most of the information people have about me is the basic stuff, but again that's something you can access any way anytime. When you get down to the nitty gritty like bank details and things like that, I know PlayStation had a massive breach a couple of years ago.

And it's not so much of what they do with the data, it's how they look after it that's more my bigger concern. Is it protected? Most of the major companies do you use it, I'd like to think [unclear], but then my worry is is it stored, is it secure and what do you do with the data and can anyone get access to it?

Q Do you think your son's use of technology influences family life in a positive way?

A Yes, it's another way of people coming together. You're playing together, it

doesn't matter if you do it electronically or interactively or if it's physical, it's still people coming together. It's where you have to be careful not to sit them in front of a screen and say, there you go, bye bye. The playing interaction's there, it doesn't matter how you do it.

Q On the other hand do you think that children's use of technology can influence family life in a negative way?

A Yes, again, it's like with anything, they can get fixated on things, they may not want to do something because they want to play a video game. Again, for me, that's down to the parents putting these procedures in place to make sure that they don't get sucked in by it all and they have time to do other things. Again, for me, it's all down to moderation. If you want to play on the Switch, that's fine, have you done what we've asked you to do, have you cleaned, have you? Yes, I have.

Go play it then, but there's a set time limit or a rushed time limit at least. I'm not one to say you've got exactly half an hour, but again, I'll watch how they behave, if they're playing well together really nicely let it carry on because it's not a bad thing.

Q Do you have any other concerns about your child's use of technology that you haven't mentioned so far?

A Again, we're not into it yet, but the only bigger one because I know what it's like, will be when they get near social media itself, that will be the biggest thing. I think that's well publicised and documented, but again, I know things will change and attitudes will change and make things a lot easier and better.

Q We've got one question left and you have kind of mentioned this interspersed with different questions, so you don't have to talk about it if you don't want to. What advice or guidance would you offer to new parents on issues relating to children and their technology use?

A Let them do it, let them learn their mistakes, but read up before you do anything else. Just double check things, check the game, check is it suitable, check that there's the proper blocks in place to stop them from doing something stupid like buying things like I did. Research and do it with them, don't leave them to their own ways, play with them.

Q Is there anything else that you'd like to say? Any questions that you'd like to ask?

A No, I think that's it.