



Connecting at our recent Mindstretch Family Picnic.



Mindstretch Teacher Aide's Asanda and Bongsi at our recent HANDLE training event.



Fun and learning with our new Fabric Tunnel.

2019 Unfolding

2019 has begun with a bang. Our Preschool goes from strength to strength and we recently brought **HANDLE Training** back to Cape Town.

All our staff – from our Head of Education to our Administrative Head – are HANDLE® trained (see HANDLE.org for more). It is one of many things that differentiates our school: we apply HANDLE every day.

Education tailored to the individual child is another hallmark of ours. Indeed, Term 1 was focused on **Individual Education and Development Plans** (IEDPs). We set specific goals for each learner and reviewed them with the parents. Now we will track each child's progress against the goals set.

We also ensure our equipment is current and relevant. For example, I recently added a **Fabric Tunnel**, a tool often used by Occupational Therapists (OTs). It encourages crawling, which, in turn, promotes interhemispheric integration and good communication between the left and right brain. The tunnel also gives proprioceptive input as the children push through it. And, importantly, the children have fun!

I thank our OT collaborator Faatima for her important article on **Limiting Screen Time**. Thanks also to Isolde for her beautiful **Testimonial** on her son's journey with Mindstretch.

With thanks and best wishes,

Jennifer
 Founder and Principal



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Join our May Community Lecture

WHO'S THE BOSS?

Presented by Jeannette Hille
 Certified Counsellor, HPCSA

- Saturday May 18, 10 am
- Methodist Church, 16 Ridge Street, Pinelands
- Free attendance, but please register with Colleen@Mindstretch.co.za

An informative talk and informal discussion on:

Challenges for parents | Changes in behaviour
Suggestions for positive parenting | Positive discipline

How Screen Time Impacts our Children

By Faatima Ebrahim-Abbas, BSc OT

I have helped many children with developmental delays and language disorders, including autism. It amazes me how much technology they often are exposed to, sometimes even in infancy. This can be harmful, and so here are some tips on how to limit screen time for children.

First, consider these **Technology Use Guidelines** (from the *American Paediatric Association*).

- **Infants up to 18 months:** avoid screen media other than video-chatting.
- **Ages 18–24 months:** allow only high-quality programmes with adult supervision, to help the child understand what they see.
- **Ages 2–5 years:** maximum 1 hour daily of high-quality programmes with caregivers co-viewing, to help the child understand and apply what they see to their world.
- **6 years and older:** set consistent limits on the time spent on different media. Never let screen time impact adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviours essential for health.

Studies show that many ignore these guidelines. 29% of babies under the age of 1 watch TV/videos for an average of 90 minutes each day. Meanwhile, the average pre-schooler spends up to 4.6 hours daily using screen media.

With this in mind, consider the **Risks of Excessive Exposure**.

- **Nervous and sensory system overload.** Fast-paced visual and auditory stimuli can create a sensory hyper-aroused state in developing brains. Just think of the 'techno tantrum' that sometimes results when we switch off a screen.
- **Learning limited to 2D.** Young children learn by engaging their 3-dimensional environment. They develop motor skills by feeling and exploring objects with their bodies. Screen-time learning typically occurs only in 2 dimensions. This risks negatively impacting future skills development.
- **Poor language development.** Screen-time learning does not enable two-way communication or the development of complex language, facial expressions and social skills.
- **Electromagnetic fields (EMF) exposure.** EMF involves the energy fields emitted by devices, which interact with our bodies' biological energy fields. Wi-Fi, mobile phones and smart devices all emit EMFs. Studies have shown that the impaired behaviours and physiological processes in people with autism resemble the biological and health effects of high EMF exposure.

Article continued overleaf

About Faatima

Faatima works in private practice in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. She has a special interest in working with young children with developmental challenges, including autism.

Faatima is currently doing her Masters in Occupational Therapy in this field.

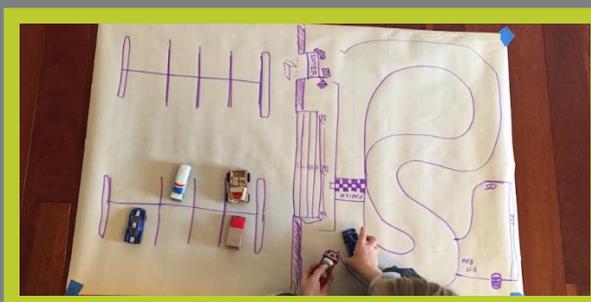
You can reach her at: faatima.e.a@gmail.com | 0823626045.

Manage Your Child's Screen Time with these tips.

- **Model good screen-time behaviour.** Be mindful of your own use and the example you set.
- **Switch off Wi-Fi at night.** This limits exposure.
- **Use EMF shielding devices and screen guards.** These are available online or at technology stores.
- **Agree family rules.** For example, switch off all devices 1 hour before bedtime.
- **Create a media use plan to suit your family.** See www.healthychildren.org/English/media for how to do this.
- **Offer children alternatives to screen use.** See www.screenfreeparenting.com for 1 million creative screen-free activities, organised by age and developmental level.

Children's development needs have not changed since historic times. Human connection, learning through engagement, and whole-body sensory experiences are the preferred way of learning.

Use technology and screen time to *enhance* such experience, but never to replace it.



Alternatives to screen time can range from quietly decorating a care box for Granny to noisily navigating an in-house obstacle course.

About our Mindstretch Cooking Classes

Our weekly 'cooking' classes are fun – and they are much more.

- We learn to follow instructions.
- It is a great sensory activity as we use our hands, say to knead dough or mix a salad.
- We use our fine motor skills to cut shapes in cookie dough or simply to grate a carrot salad.
- Coordination is needed when doing things like using a rolling pin.
- The classes are social and creative. The end result gives us a sense of accomplishment.

We particularly like eating what we make, although the carrot salad was not exactly a favourite.



Getting hands on with pizza making.



A Letter Received: Enzo

Enzo has come to the age where he must move on to primary school, and so it is with a heavy heart but also extreme gratitude that I write this letter.

When we moved Enzo to Mindstretch in 2014, at the age of 3, I was broken, scared and confused. I feared for my child and how he would do, and also for our family.

Now, 4 years later, he has grown into a sweet, well behaved boy who says a lot of words and can even form some sentences. He has developed so much in the past few years, and he absolutely blossomed in his last year thanks to the hard work of Mindstretch staff and speech therapists.

Thank you for providing Enzo a safe, homely space where he was accepted, loved and understood. Thank you for giving him the guidance to become such an awesome boy.

He has done so well and we are super proud of him. We are also grateful to all the Mindstretch staff for everything you have done for him.

We wish you many more successes with the many children who need your help.

You guys ROCK!

Isolde



The Mindstretch Way

We believe that every child can reach their full potential if learning challenges are addressed early in development.

We Welcome Your Feedback

- Email jen@mindstretch.co.za with comments or suggestions, and please follow us on Facebook ([@mindstretch.co.za](https://www.facebook.com/mindstretch.co.za))
- To join our newsletter mailing list, email colleen@mindstretch.co.za
- To access previous newsletters, visit our website: www.mindstretch.co.za