



When I was a kid (a long time ago) the bus driver clicked your bus ticket and bait and was something used to attract fish; but the two words together have a new connotation and we all need to be more aware of the power of clickbait. Clickbait is a website link designed to entice users to go to a certain web-page or in this case YouTube videos. This is all of course connected to views; the more views a YouTuber amasses the more advertising revenue they earn and the more likely their subscriber base will grow.

When my own kids were younger they watched VHS tapes and DVDs in the lounge and the PC was positioned in the family room. Life, as it turns out from a media point of view was simple but this was turned on its head in 2007 when the late Steve Job introduced us to mobile devices. Communications were instant, we could and can take our devices anywhere at any time.

Recently on a walk I listened to a<sup>1</sup>Ted Talk by James Bridle; it literally gave me goose-bumps. I was curious and concerned about the concept he spoke of so much so that I delved into it a bit more. James Bridle spoke of uncovering a dark, strange corner of the internet, where unknown people or groups on YouTube hack the brains of young children in return for advertising revenue. From "Surprise Egg" reveals and the "Finger Family Song" to algorithmically created mashups of familiar cartoon characters in violent situations, these videos can terrify young minds – Bridle's Ted Talk was in particular aimed at parents of young children, toddlers, i.e., those between 2 and 4 years who cannot read but they can operate the Autoplay feature on YouTube.

Autoplay makes it easier for children to decide what to watch next; YouTube will automatically play another related video based on viewing history. Here is the very scary part, children can be innocently watching 'Finger Family' and within ten clicks be watching a dark video with sexual or violent content, try it yourself. Innocent kids are being exposed to some very dark content and parents need to be very aware of this. At the Kidz Therapy centre I have been privy to many discussions with parents concerned their children are addicted to their screens and we see quite a few families at the centre seeking support to break their children's cycle of addictive watching/gaming. Autoplay may be one reason for excessive screen use.

Earlier this year, a mother of an 8-year-old boy called Jack called me extremely upset and concerned her son had become addicted to sexual content. The mother relayed that during the April holidays Jack was using his iPad constantly so she took it on herself to look at his history. Right under her nose

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<sup>1</sup> 'The nightmare videos of childrens' YouTube and what's wrong with the internet today''

Jack had been accessing and exposed to sexual and violent content, can you imagine how she felt? I suspect he was an innocent victim of click bait

As an Educational Psychologist I often work alongside ADHD students and it is a truism that most parents comment along the lines of “Scarlett has attentional problems but none are apparent when it comes to interacting with screens; she can sit for hours without moving, totally mesmerised by the screen”. <sup>2</sup>Research from 2005 reports that the performance of participants with ADHD (aged between 6 and 14 years) on commercially available games was equivalent to that of typically developing participants and their attention significantly better on the more game-like version of the Conners Continuous Performance Test II. Like the younger children it is the constant screen movement, for some the repetitious nature of the video clips and certainly the dopamine hit captures their attention.

So; what can we do: one of the main pieces of advice I received from the Ted Talk was simply not to allow your younger children unrestrained access to YouTube. Some very strange and dark clips are loaded onto YouTube, perhaps have a look yourself by going to popular video clip such as the ‘Finger Family song’ and use the Autoplay function.

Secondly, you can set parental controls on YouTube; have a look at this article: <http://www.real.com/resources/youtube-parental-controls/>

Thirdly, do some research there are excellent apps such as OurPact.com which allow you as the parent to limit screen time and be in charge of your children’s phone and devices across Wi-fi platforms. This can be applied remotely as well. The app allows you to allow, schedule and block content and distracting apps while ensuring your children can access apps which are useful and appropriate.

Fourthly, know what your children are looking at, review their history regularly. The old saying ‘ignorance is bliss’ does not apply in our technological age.

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<sup>2</sup> **Inhibition, ADHD, and Computer Games: The Inhibitory Performance of Children with ADHD on Computerized Tasks and Games, Rebecca Shaw, Andy Grayson, Vicky Lewis**

