



Austin Psychology & Assessment Center

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Stay Connected: Raising Balanced Kids in a Technological World

By

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1. Tech isn't inherently good or bad. There are many benefits, but many areas of concern. We are trying to find the right balance as parents to maximize the benefits and minimize the negatives.
2. The main area of concern is the incessant allure of screen time. Goal is self-regulation and a balanced life.
3. Finding a healthy balance can reduce the likelihood of other areas of concern (e.g., sexting).
4. Screen time can be "addictive" in the same way gambling and drugs are because it taps into the same primitive reward system in the brain. Like craving junk food, we are drawn to the seductive promises that technology offers us in the forms of more information, action, and social connection.
5. Focus on whether it is a problem rather than whether it is an addiction. Kids won't respond well to being told they are "addicts." Beware of hypocrisy!
6. Be on the same page with your partner. All parents love/care about their kids and want what's best for them. Given the dangers of being too plugged in, it's important that kids AND adults be more connected to what matters most in life. Both parents need to model balanced tech use themselves for them to have the leverage to influence their kids.
7. As a parent, model balanced tech use. We should model how we manage our own struggles as well. This isn't easy – we are struggling using technology in healthy ways.



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8. What To Do About It

A. The Foundation: It's About the Relationship

- i. Helping to manage kids' screen time is nested within a positive relationship with parents.
 1. We can influence our kids through the relationship. The more positive the relationship, the greater the influence that we have (but not control).
 2. Use the "Magic Ratio" – 3 to 5 positive interactions to 1 negative

B. Prevention (Green Light)

- i. Be the change – Model the way you would like your kids to manage tech use
- ii. Get your kids involved in other activities (e.g., sports, music, family games) that will naturally engage them & limit their tech time.
- iii. Delay access to tech whenever possible
 1. Ensure that the tech is developmentally appropriate
 2. Steer them away from games/tech that is known to be "addictive"
- iv. Discuss *before* giving access

C. Addressing (Yellow Light)

- i. Talk to your child about *their* goals
- ii. Getting in the zone – establish tech free areas & times. Parents should abide by these too!
- iii. Separate work computers/devices from leisure devices because the temptation is too strong to fight
- iv. Collaboratively problem-solve the issue of tech usage
- v. Arrange that certain screen time (e.g., gaming) is a privilege
- vi. Develop & enforce limits

D. Intervening (Red Light)

- i. Be in a calm state
- ii. Pick a good time to talk about it
- iii. Discuss with your partner first
- iv. Apply consequences agreed upon beforehand
- v. Limit Wi-Fi access
- vi. Use natural consequences when possible
- vii. Use minimum amount of consequences needed
- viii. Collaboratively problem solve
- ix. Establish terms under which the screen time can be earned back

x. If all else fails, seek professional help for the child/teen



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Resources:

- * *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age* by Catherine Steiner-Adair and Teresa H. Barker
- * *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* by Nicholas Carr
- * *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World* by Jane McGonigal
- * *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* by Danah Boyd
- * *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* by Sherry Turkle
- * *Hooked: How to Build Habit Forming-Products* by Nir Eyal
- * *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* by Sherry Turkle
- * www.TechHappyLife.com (Dr. Brooks' new site with a focus on raising balanced kids & living a balanced life in a technological world)
- * www.commonsemmedia.org
- * depts.washington.edu/waaction/tools/featured_resources/screentime_schoolage.html
- * www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/tools-resources/tools-reduce-screen-time.htm

Thanks so much for attending the presentation. I hope that you enjoyed it and found it useful. If you have additional questions, comments, or want to inquire about ApaCenter services, please contact us at (512) 891-1500 or info@apacenter.com. You can also contact Dr. Brooks at drmikebrooks@apacenter.com and Dr. Lasser at lasser@txstate.edu.

Sincerely,

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