

◆ PARENT CONNECTIONS ◆

Well-being Newsletter for Parents May 2026

THEME- DIGITAL WELL-BEING FOR CHILDREN

The Mindful Approach to Screen Time



The question is not how much screen time is “too much”—it is about the quality of that time and how we frame it within our family’s values. Dr. Jenny Radesky, a developmental behavioral pediatrician at the University of Michigan, emphasizes that “it’s not just about the amount of time, but what children are doing during that time and how it fits into the family’s lifestyle.”

Consider this transformative shift: instead of setting rigid time limits that often lead to power struggles, create intentional boundaries that honor both connection and growth.

Families have found success with:

- Screen-free hours during meals and before bedtime.
- Shared screen time experiences, where parents engage with their children’s digital content.
- Digital detox that creates space for reflection and real-world connection

The key is to approach these boundaries not as restrictions but as ones that help children develop self-regulation skills they will carry into adulthood.



Technology can become a valuable tool for building resilience when guided by parents

As parents, we are navigating uncharted territory. Our children are growing immersed in a digital world that did not exist when we were their age. The statistics are sobering. Children aged 8-12 now spend an average of 4-6 hours per day on screens, while teens average up to 9 hours daily. Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics links excessive screen time to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders in children.

But here is what traditional parenting advice gets wrong: the solution is not to wage war against technology. It is to embrace our role as digital guides, helping our children develop the knowledge and resilience they need to thrive in both virtual and real worlds. Digital resilience is the ability to bounce back from challenges in an online world. Digital resilience is a skill that builds each time you learn how to deal with, adapt to, and overcome challenges.

Nurturing Digital Wisdom Over Digital Literacy

Traditional digital literacy focuses on technical skills—how to use devices and software. But our children need something deeper: digital wisdom. This encompasses critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and the ability to discern what serves their highest good online.

Dr. Howard Gardner, the renowned psychologist behind multiple intelligences theory, argues that children need to develop “ethical intelligence” in digital spaces. This means teaching them to ask powerful questions:

- Does this content align with my values?
- How am I feeling after consuming this media?
- Am I being my authentic self-online?
- How can I use technology to contribute positively to the world?

What could work - “Instead of lecturing children about social media dangers, have weekly ‘digital check-ins’ where you could both share how your online experiences made you feel. It will open conversations that you never expected and help your child develop their own internal compass.”

Conversation starter ideas

1. Ask your children to tell you about what they enjoy doing online and their favorite apps, games, or websites.
2. Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is okay and not okay to share?
3. Ask them if they know where to go for help, where to find safety advice, privacy settings, and how to report or block the services they use.
4. Encourage them to help. They can show you how to do something better online, or they might have a friend who would benefit from their help and support.
5. Think about how you use the internet as a family. What could you do to get more out of the internet together and enjoy your lives online?

Building Emotional Resilience in Virtual Spaces



The online world can be a mirror, reflecting our children’s deepest insecurities and fears. Cyberbullying affects 37% of young people, and the pressure to maintain perfect online personas can be overwhelming. But within these challenges lies an opportunity for profound growth.

Research from the Greater Good Science Centre at UC Berkeley shows that children who learn emotional regulation skills early are better equipped to handle online negativity and peer pressure. As parents, we can create healing spaces where our children feel safe to process their digital experiences.

Practical strategies for emotional resilience:

- Validate their experiences without immediately trying to “fix” the problem.
- Share your own struggles with technology and social media.
- Create routines for transitioning between online and offline time.
- Teach breathwork and mindfulness techniques they can use when feeling overwhelmed online.

The Power of Modelling Conscious Technology Use

Our children are watching us more closely than we realize. Children whose parents modelled mindful technology use were 40% more likely to develop healthy digital habits themselves. This is not about perfection—it is about consciousness. When we put our phones down to listen, when we share our struggles with digital overwhelm, when we demonstrate that we, too, are learning to navigate this complex landscape, we permit our children to be human in their own digital journey.



Morning digital wellness practice:

- Begin each day with five minutes of gratitude or meditation before checking devices.
- Set intentions for how technology will serve the family that day.
- Share one thing each family member is excited to create or learn.

Evening digital wellness practice:

- Devices “sleep” in a designated area 30 minutes before bedtime
- Family members share one meaningful connection they made that day (online or offline)
- Practice gentle breathing exercises to transition from screen stimulation to rest.

What could work?

Be a role model for healthy device use. Practice phone-free time and being fully present, as children are more likely to follow what parents do than to what they are told.

Creating Digital Wellness Practices

Just as we teach our children physical hygiene, we must guide them in developing digital hygiene practices. These are not just rules—they are practices that honour the family’s commitment to wellbeing.

Your Journey Forward: Taking the First Courageous Step

Digital parenting is not about having all the answers—it is about staying present. The most profound gift we can give our children is not protection from the digital world, but the inner resources to navigate it with wisdom, compassion, and authentic connection.

Survey

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