Screen Time and You

All technology comes with risks and all must be learned to be used in a balanced way that doesn't do harm. Our phones, tablets, computers, and gaming consoles can improve our lives in incredible ways, but they can also steal precious time, disconnect us from each other, and even create health problems. When anything is used without boundaries and limits, it harms relationships. The problem isn't smart phones themselves; it is balance.

The Better Balance

Finding a balance between time on and off of your devices starts with establishing good habits. A habit is a behavior you do regularly without thinking. Like, when you get up in the morning, do you grab for your phone or tablet first thing? Changing habits requires you to think about the behaviors you want to change. Research has shown that the best way to change or break a bad habit is to replace it with a *good* one.

Good Habits

- Decide on a *maximum* number of hours daily you will spend on your device, not including working or using it productively.
- Come up with a screen-time plan for you and your family.
- Have designated unplugged family *time*.
- Turn off your screen when someone is having a conversation with you.

Goals and Boundaries

Define the goals that are most important to you, and then come up with the boundaries that allow both you and your family to protect those goals.

Goal	Boundary
Exercise more	Replace one or two hours of screen time with exercise
Practice good *sleep* hygiene	No devices in bed
Make more time for kids	Limit amount of daily screen time
Spend quality time with *family*	No devices at the dinner table
Be a better listener	Turn off screens and ignore notifications during conversations

Time Management

Keep *track* of how much screen time you use in a day. Most devices will track how much time you spend on apps you use.

- Set timers for ending screen time an hour or two before bedtime.
- Set downtimes in your devices that schedule time away from the screen.

- Set a timer or time limits in your devices for apps that you know you get sucked into, such as games or social media.

Dangers

Too much screen time in the evening delays your ability to fall *asleep*, hurts your quality of sleep, and throws off your biological clock. Other dangers of too much screen time include:

- Addiction
- Sleep deprivation
- Poor health

We all enjoy our screen time and when used correctly, with balance, boundaries, and time management, our devices can add great value to our lives. Make sure that you balance your usage by valuing relationships over time spent on your screen, by knowing your goals and boundaries, and by having clearly defined times of use and non use. Remember, your screen time cannot replace the love, care, and connection you have with the people around you.

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