PARENT CONNEXT™
THE PARENT CONNECTION HUB

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Welcome to the Parenting Hub!

March 2023

Screentime Stress with Kids

beech acres
PARENTING CENTER | Always There Always Care™

Parent Connext™ is under the Beech Acres Parenting Center umbrella of programs.
Serving children and all the adults in their lives for over 170 years.

Before you flip to the next slide take a moment to...

- Identify your values around screens (i.e., is it knowledge, connection to others, balance, competence?)

- Acknowledge the role that screens play in our society. How do you want that to fit into your family and values?

- Be mindful of your relationship with screens. Can you use screens with more intentionality? Use your strength of curiosity to investigate your own screen habits. Children learn from what we do more than what we say.

"Start as Your Wish to Go On"
Young kids

- **Children younger than 2** learn to explore the world around them through play and hands on experiences. Interaction with caregivers, siblings and other children or adults is most important for healthy development.

- **Children younger than 2** have a hard time understanding what they see on screens and how it relates to their environment.

- **Children under 18 months**, the AAP discourages any use of screens other than video chatting. Research has shown that **an increase in the amount of screen time and the early age of onset of viewing has negative effects on language development. This includes having a television or other screens on in the background.** We understand that sometimes a screen can be helpful to get a quick shower or on an airplane but be mindful of the content and quality of the video as well as how much.

- **Children 18-24 months** can learn from high-quality educational media content IF their parents play or view with them and re-teach the lesson.

- **Children 2 and up**, educational programs (such as sesame street) in moderation can help children learn social, language and reading skills, but again quality content and quantity is important to be mindful of.

ONE SECOND

i'm on Facebook

GRANDMA NEEDS HELP WITH HER WI-FI

imgflip.com

Media Use Guidelines for Young Kids:
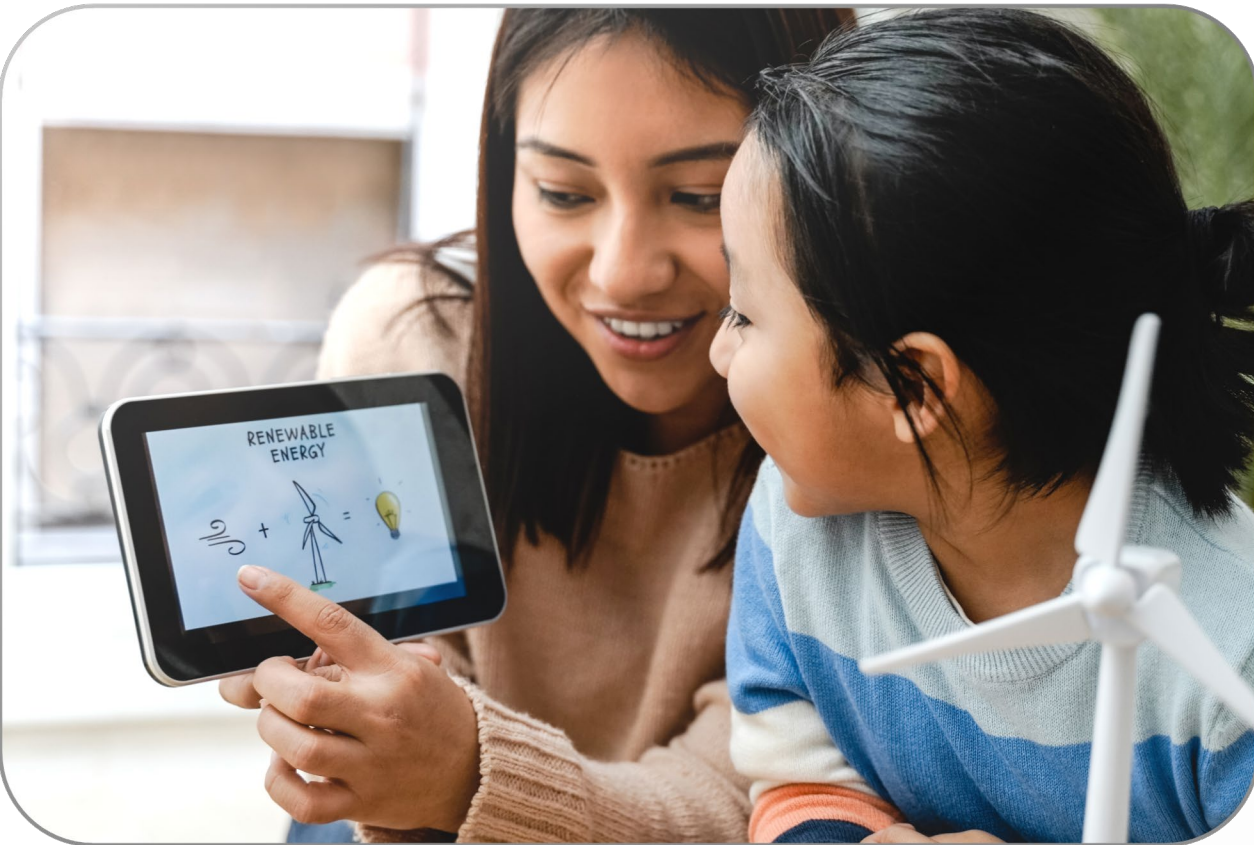
- Do not feel pressured to introduce media or technology early. Children can learn quickly once introduced.

- Avoid having screens on in the background. Play music in the background instead of having televisions or other screens on.

- Avoid using screens to soothe your upset child. Be intentional in finding other ways to help them regulate their emotions.

- Use media together with your child. Avoid solo media use.

- Choose high quality media. Educational media is best. Avoid violent and rapid paced content, and advertisements if possible.

- Find other activities for children to do besides be on screens. Provide opportunities for free play.

Media Use Guidelines for Young Kids:

- Lean into the discomfort of boredom. Out of boredom comes creativity. Introduce mindfulness practice to help everyone sit in that discomfort.

- Avoid screen use during mealtimes and for 1 hour before bedtime.

- Create screen-free zones, such as bathrooms and bedrooms or the dinner table.

- Starting these expectations young makes it easier to maintain boundaries around screen usage as your child grows.

- When taking your children out, a screen can feel like an easy solution, but don't let it become your default. An activity bag of things for them to do is better for them developmentally.

For your consideration....

*You don't have to have a lot of toys, as children can find play in everyday objects. It is more important to have opportunities provided for exploration.

One of the biggest issues regarding screens is not only the quality of the content itself, but what your child ISN'T doing when they are on screens... **Children learn through play and if they are passively watching a screen, they are not playing.** Play is essential to language development, improved gross and fine motor skills, and social and emotional development.

Use your strength of creativity to find non-screen activities, but here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Outdoors -** sports, nature scavenger hunt or walk, free exploration of nature or city murals, chalk, bubbles, games, bikes, trikes, scooters.
- **Indoors –** crafts, painting, play doh, baking/cooking activities, Legos, board games, make your own... book, obstacle course (great on a rainy day), hide and seek, fort building, reading, freeze dance party, scavenger hunt.

School Age

According the AAP: There are benefits and risks of media use for the health of children and teenagers.

- **Benefits may include:**
  - exposure to new ideas
  - knowledge acquisition
  - increased opportunities for social contact and support
- **Risks may include:**
  - negative health effects on weight and sleep
  - exposure to inaccurate, inappropriate, or unsafe content and contacts
  - compromised privacy and confidentiality

Evidence regarding healthy media use does not support a one-size-fits-all approach. As a parent, it can be challenging to monitor your child's screen habits and set a positive example with your own screen usage. This is where creating a **Family Media Plan** or **Phone Contract** can help. It is important to set expectations that are clear to all family members. It is also easier to loosen the reins a little than it is to tighten them, so keep that in mind when establishing rules.

Elementary School Age Guidelines
## *Quality is more important than quantity.*

- The general guideline is no more than 2 hours of screen time per day (that is not related to schoolwork). Watching YouTube videos of a gamer is different than creating art on an app. There are also days where you may need to use screens more than others (i.e., your child is home sick, snow day, you don't feel well), **so think in terms of creating balance.**

- **Intentional** communication around screens and media is very important for all ages. Use your strength of **Curiosity** to learn about your child(ren)'s experience with screens and media. *How do they view screens and online content? Why is it important for them and what do they like/dislike about technology?* Share your thoughts about technology in a curious vs judgmental manner.

- Watch shows or play video games with your child and **share your observations**, "*I noticed that in this video game none of the main characters are female. What do you think about that?*" "*I noticed on this show how the characters interactions were sometimes hurtful? How do you feel about it?*"

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Elementary School Age Guidelines

- **Establish "screen free" zones** and times at home, such as no screens in bedrooms, bathrooms, during mealtimes, right before bed, during homework time, or playtime. Remember to role model and follow the same guidelines. If you have a screen free zone at the dinner table, avoid checking your phone too unless for an emergency, and then communicate why to your family.

- **When you are on your screens, communicate what you are doing.** You may be paying bills or texting a grocery list to your partner, but they may assume you are just playing a game.

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Elementary School Age Guidelines
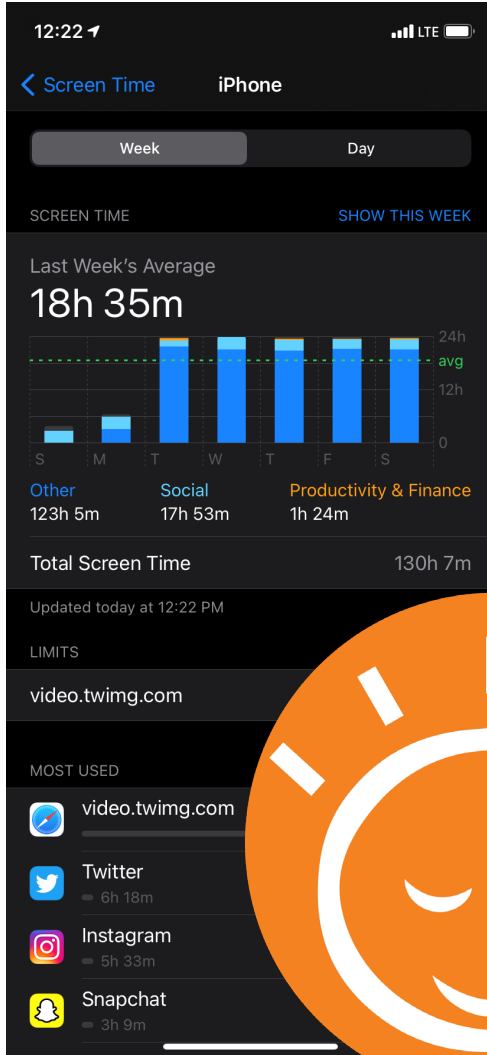
- Children learn from their environment. They are constantly watching and listening to what we do. **Be mindful of what you are modeling and how much time you spend on your phone.**

- Be mindful that use of screens is a learning experience. Expect that your child will make mistakes. **Having a close relationship allows them to feel safe coming to you when they make a mistake.** Keep screen usage in open spaces at home so you can observe what your child is doing online.

Kid-Friendly Phone

Parents often wonder about what the best age is to get a phone or device for their child. The best way to decide is based on your family values. Some get their child a device for safety reasons, others to help their child feel connected to peers. Whatever the reason, be sure to establish guidelines and boundaries before your offer it to your child (see technology contract provided). From there, figure out what is most affordable and what the child's responsibility is for the device (is it a gift, do they have to buy in, pay towards monthly fees, etc.), and if so, what happens when they violate the guidelines. Deciding this beforehand will help with eventual challenges later.

Here are some examples of devices to start off with:

- Flip Phone
- Pinwheel
- Light Phone
- Smart watches

Brain Development and Technology

- ***The brain develops very rapidly in the first 3 to 5 years of life, and all the structure and building blocks are present by the age of 9.***
  - The brain is thought to develop and connect functionally in stages. The emotional areas of the brain (the limbic system) are present at birth, but regulation of emotions moves from being more of a shared responsibility (with parents) in childhood, to an individual responsibility in adolescence. This process requires new connections to be formed between the cortical or higher-level thinking and the emotional areas of the brain. It also leads to adult level decision making, planning and thinking.

- **Teens often 'think with their feelings'**
  - Experiments have been done to show that teens often 'think with their feelings'. Scans of the brain can be done to show different parts lighting up when they are being used. When adults and teens look at faces showing different emotions, the part of their brains that light up are different. Adults use their prefrontal cortex to look at faces and try to decide what emotion is happening. Teenagers use their amygdala rather than their prefrontal cortex most of the time. In other words, they are using their emotions to try and understand emotion.

- **It helps if adults can understand how this feels for teens**
  - To understand how this feels, imagine you have lost your keys and you are already late for work. Think about how many times you look for the keys in the same place - 5, 10 even 20 times. You panic - you no longer think with your cortex, you are thinking with your emotions. Remember how it feels if someone tells you to calm down and think sensibly about when you last had them. That is how your teenager feels when they are running on their emotions because their brain hasn't developed that linkage.

Adolescents and Teens

- As your child grows, so likely will their appetite for screens. This is a **common age for social media apps** to become popular among their peers, as well as group chats, texting, etc. We want to teach our children the ability to consume media in an active and thoughtful way.

- You will need to continue to **set boundaries on their screen usage and what is and isn't okay with you** (i.e., how old do you want them to be before they have an Instagram account? What privacy settings do you want in place?). It will be impossible to monitor everything your child does online, so a positive relationship and open communication are important so that you can trust your child to make good choices and to come to you when they make a mistake.

- **It is normal for your teen to engage in new and risky behavior.** The more we try to restrict access without having meaningful conversations, the more they persist, and can find ways around our rules and restrictions. Explain why you don't like certain apps and your concerns, and then get curious about why it is important to them and find ways to compromise if possible. For example, *'you can have Instagram, but I need your password and to be able to follow you as well'*.
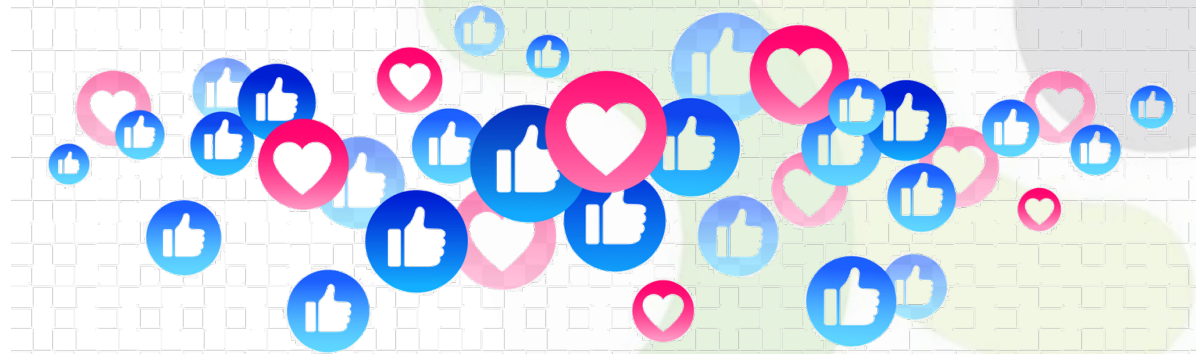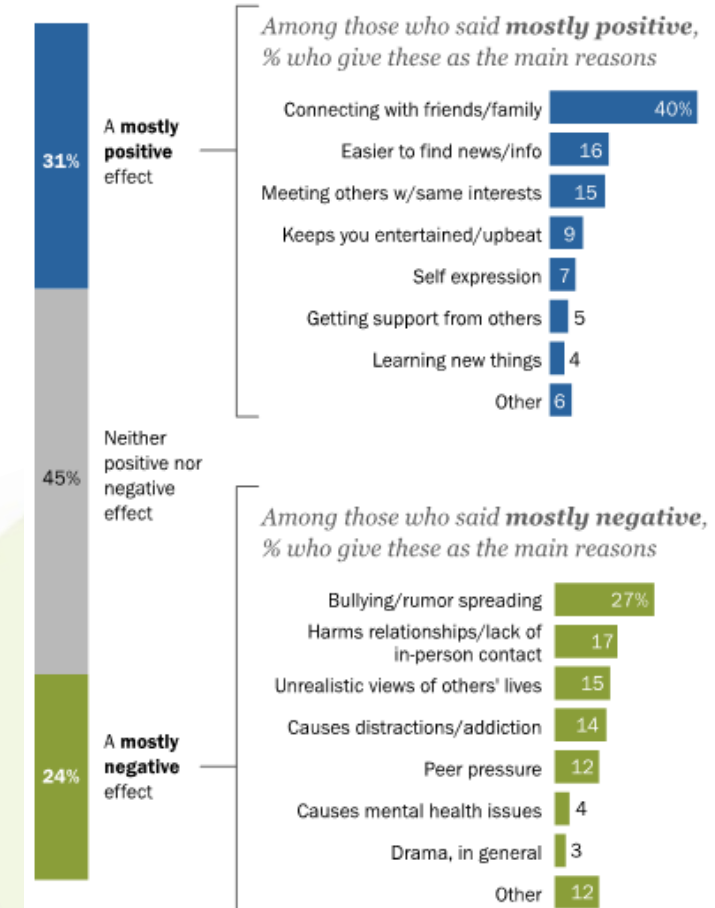
Adolescents and Teens

- Continue conversations with your child about the pros and cons of screens. Challenge them to continue to think critically about what they view – just because something is on the internet doesn't make it true. Discuss peer pressure, FOMO (fear of missing out), and screen addiction. Talk to your child about their digital footprint and that anything that they post, or text is out there forever.

- As your child gets closer to legal adulthood, you may want to allow them a little more freedom, such as using their phone as an alarm and teaching them to put it in silent mode at night, as this is a way for them to practice skills you want them to use away from home. If they are unable to do this successfully, there is the opportunity to learn from their mistake and try again later. It is important to honor their need for privacy at this age. If there is trust, allow your child to keep their communication with peers private.

Teens have mixed views on social media's effect on people their age; many say it helps them connect with others, some express concerns about bullying

% of U.S. teens who say social media has had ___ on people their own age

A **mostly positive** effect — 31%

*Among those who said **mostly positive**, % who give these as the main reasons*

- Connecting with friends/family — 40%
- Easier to find news/info — 16
- Meeting others w/same interests — 15
- Keeps you entertained/upbeat — 9
- Self expression — 7
- Getting support from others — 5
- Learning new things — 4
- Other — 6

Neither positive nor negative effect — 45%

A **mostly negative** effect — 24%

*Among those who said **mostly negative**, % who give these as the main reasons*

- Bullying/rumor spreading — 27%
- Harms relationships/lack of in-person contact — 17
- Unrealistic views of others' lives — 15
- Causes distractions/addiction — 14
- Peer pressure — 12
- Causes mental health issues — 4
- Drama, in general — 3
- Other — 12

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Verbatim responses have been coded into categories, and figures may add up to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed.
Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.
"Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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SAFETY

Continue to keep the lines of communication open with your child. As they get older, and their online presence increases, the exposure to unsafe content and online predators also increases. **Change your focus from fear** (I'm afraid my child will be kidnapped by an online predator or be exposed to porn) **to your goals and what you want your child to learn. A goal may be, I want my child to be safe and responsible online. This helps you become proactive vs reactive.**

Be aware that videogames and apps are designed to be addictive. They create a feedback loop that reinforces the behavior and causes the user to want to do more. **Based on your child's brain development at this age, they are more prone to become addicted.**

Technology is constantly changing, so it is hard as parents to keep up. Installing monitoring programs and time limit apps is helpful, but the most important safety net is a **good and open relationship** with your child(ren). Communicate about why you have limits and safety practices in place. Tell them about online predators and how to handle receiving inappropriate content and let them know you are there to help problem solve a solution to a challenge. If they feel like you are just going to judge or jump in to fix it, they may not come to you.

Concerning Behaviors

Interest in screens and time spent on screens continues to increase with schools using technology more and access being available at all ages. Look for concerning behaviors around technology use. The following symptoms may present themselves if their screen time – especially on the internet and video games – **compromises their ability to function**:

- Preoccupation around and constant request to use screens
- Withdrawal symptoms (i.e., extreme anger and aggression when they have to stop)
- Increasing tolerance (the need for more to satisfy their desire)
- Failure to reduce or stop screen activities
- Loss of outside interests
- Continuation despite negative consequences
- Lying about extent of use or trying to hide usage
- Use to escape adverse moods
- Exhibits symptoms of depression and/or anxiety

Practical Tips for Androids

- Overview of Google Family Link which is an Android app that is used to help manage a child's device.

- **Google Family Link help guides:**
  - How to set up and use
  - Managing your child's screen time
  - Managing purchases and downloads
  - Parental controls and content restrictions
  - Managing Websites on Google Chrome and Google search filters
  - Managing your child's Google Play apps
  - Using location sharing

If your children use your phone to play games or watch videos, use an app to lock apps as a good way to prevent them from opening apps such as social media, banking or other apps that have data you don't want them to have access to. Some free options you can download from the Google Play store are AppLock by IvyMobile, Norton App Lock and Applock by DoMobile lab.
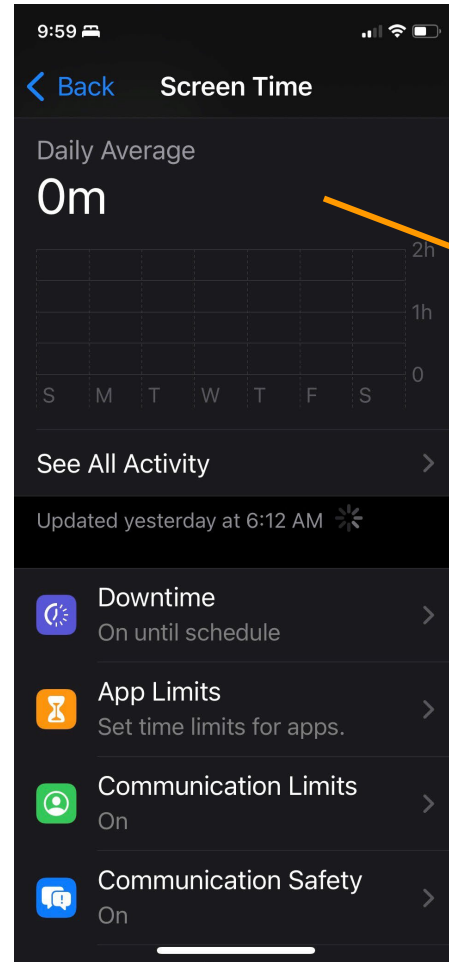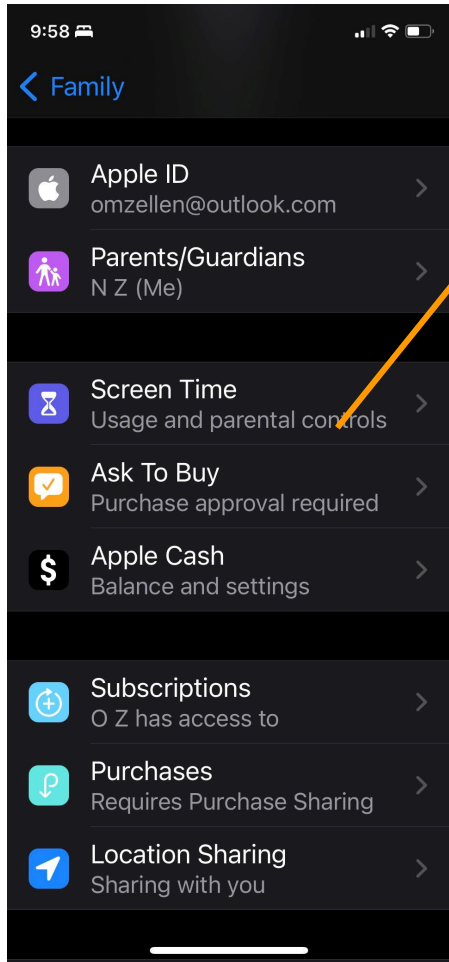
Practical Tips for iPhone

- [Apple for Families](#)
- [Use Screen Time](#)
- [Set Content & Privacy Restrictions](#)
- [Prevent App Store Purchases](#)
- [Prevent explicit content](#)
- [Prevent Web Content](#)
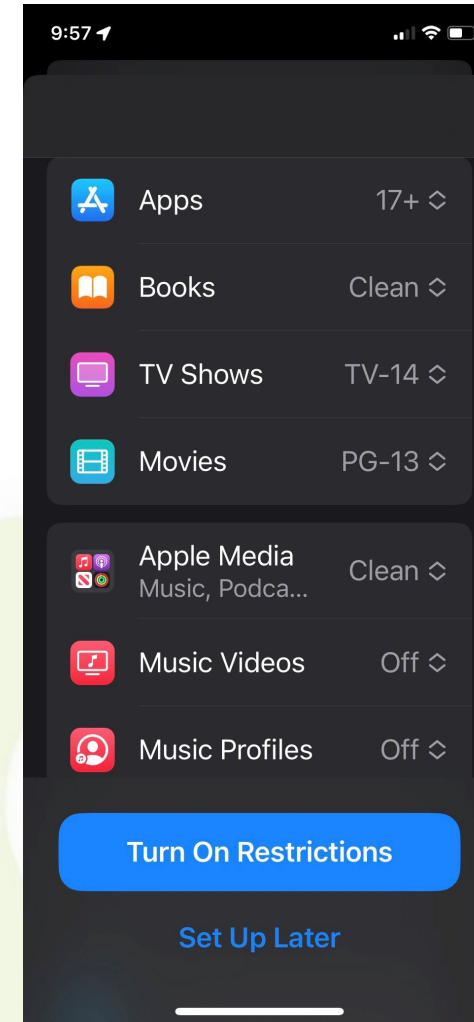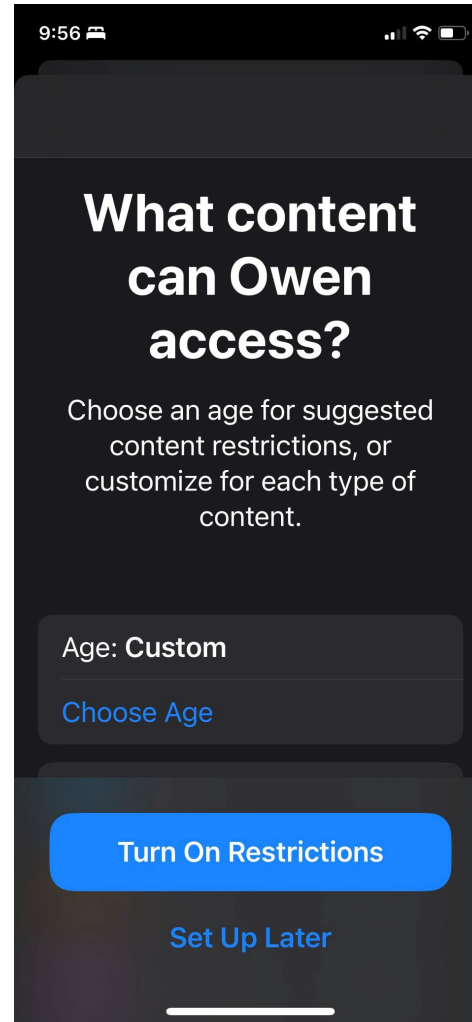
Apple

Scroll down…

Be intentional with what apps are always allowed, in case the phone is allowed in the bedroom at night.
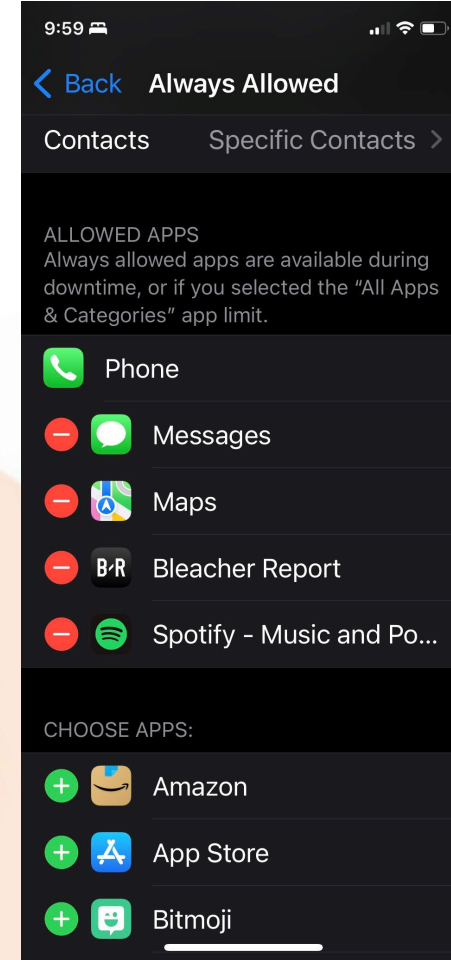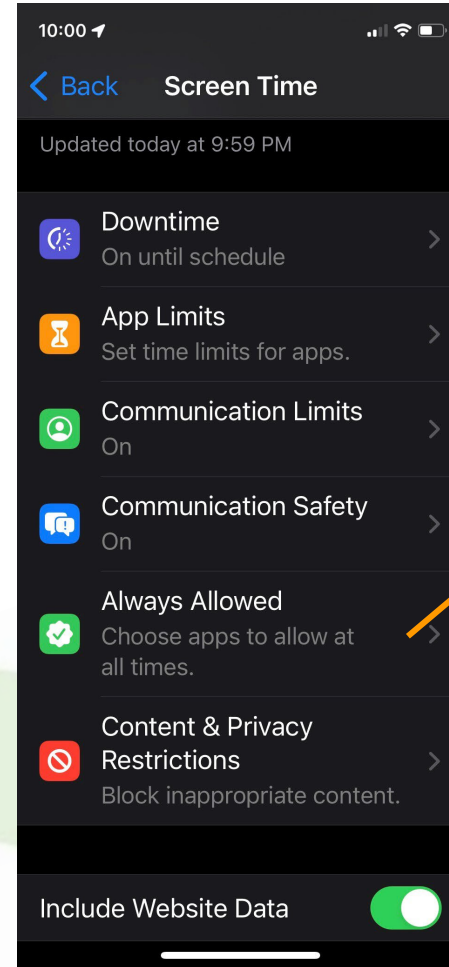
Removing Safari from iPhone

1. Select "Settings" from the apps screen.

2. Click on "Screen Time" in the settings menu.

3. On the new menu list click on "Content & Privacy Restrictions".

4. Enable "Content and Privacy Restrictions" by clicking on the switch next to it.

5. Go to "Allowed Apps".

6. Disable Safari by clicking on the switch next to it.
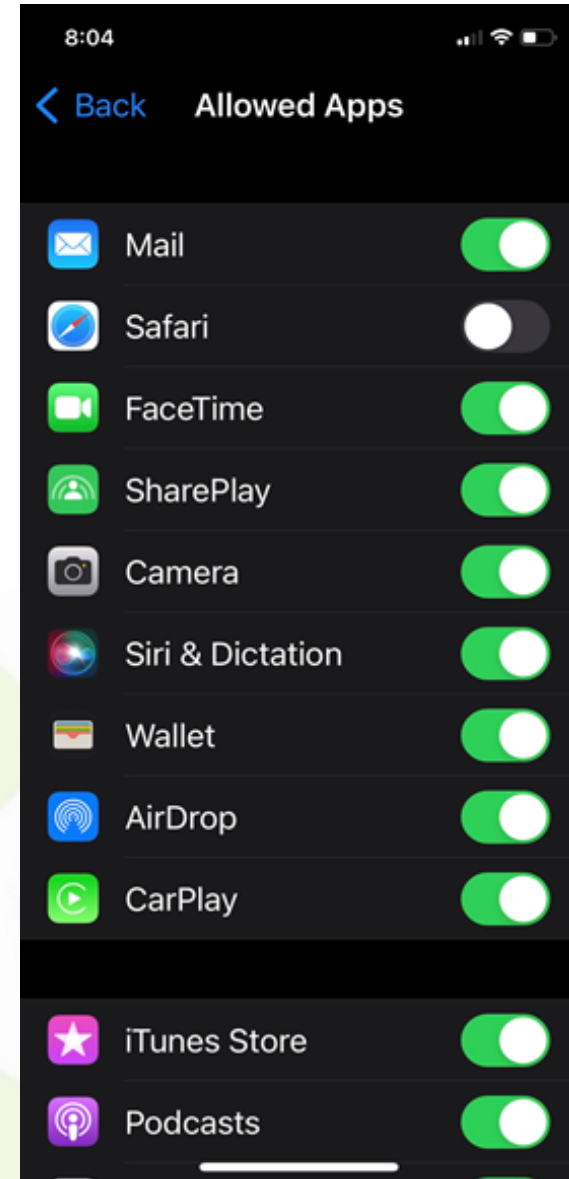
Practical Tips for Microsoft Family & Xbox

- [Link](#) to information about creating a family account and the benefits and features of using a family account.

- [Xbox Family Settings app](#) for iPhone and Android. Used with a family account to set screen time, update content, restrictions, manage purchases, manage friends & online interactions and view activity reports.
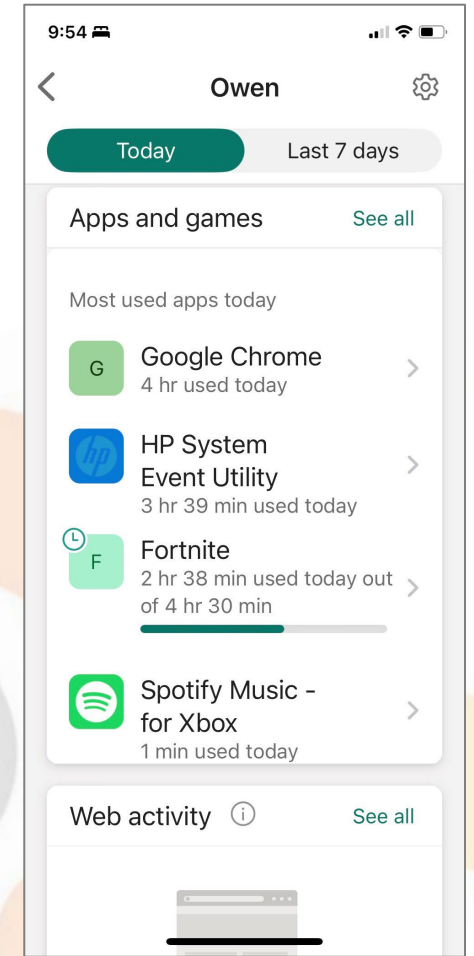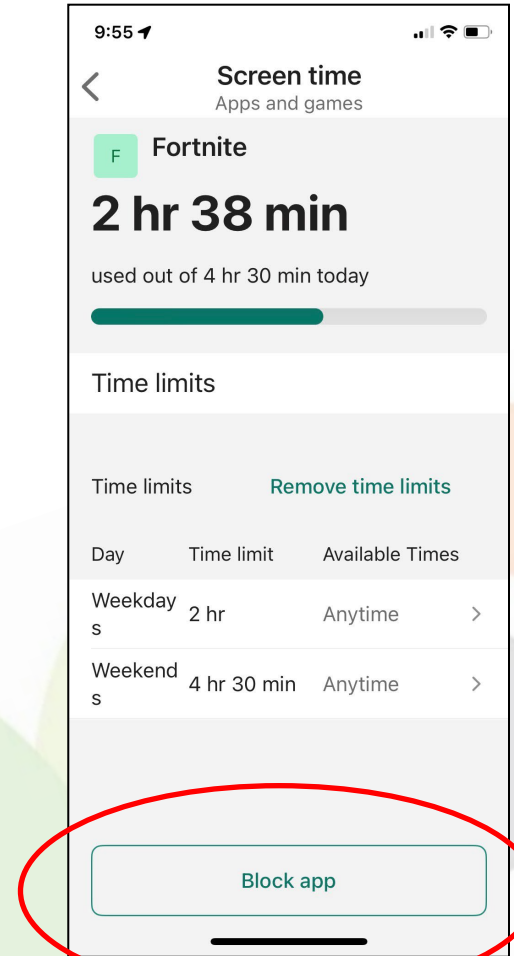
Shut them down with one push...

Gaming In General

- Video gaming often has a bad reputation, but overall, **there are some positive aspects to gaming**. They can improve problem solving and logic skills, increase hand-to-eye coordination and enhance prosocial behaviors as they encourage teamwork and cooperation with others.

- As a parent, be aware of what your child is playing and who they may be playing with or communicating with in a game. **Continue to have conversations around safety and privacy and your values about the games. If you are not a fan of violent video games, explain why to your child.** Banning a game or app can increase their curiosity about it, so lean into your strengths of Perspective and Curiosity to find out what is important for your child with each game and app. This again opens the lines of communication for you both. This may be a time to talk about "when, then" instead of just "no" (i.e., when you are 13, you can play this game).
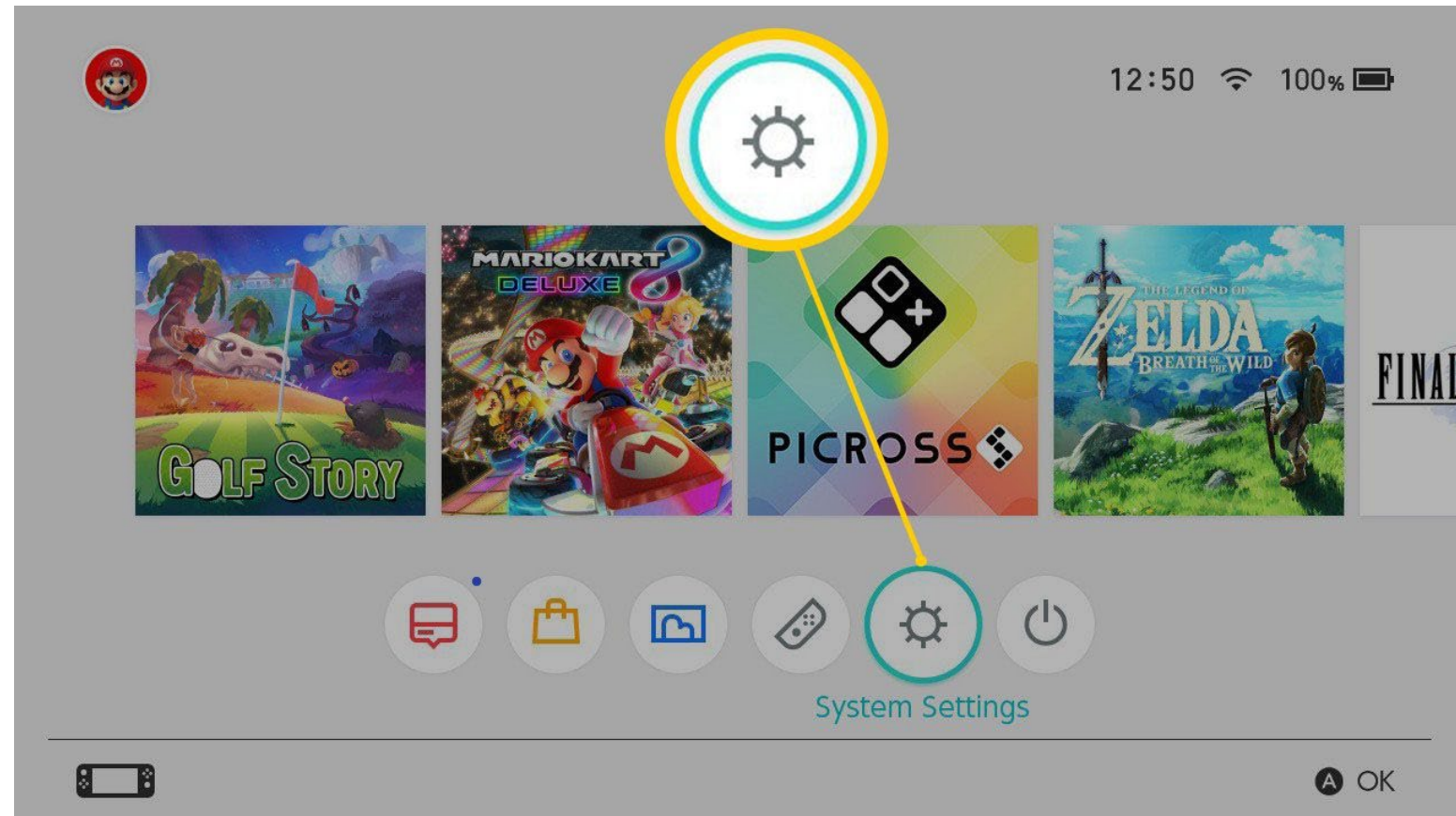
Practical Tips for Making PlayStation a Safer Place to Play

- [Here is a link](#) to setting up a PlayStation Family account and setting up parental controls on PlayStation
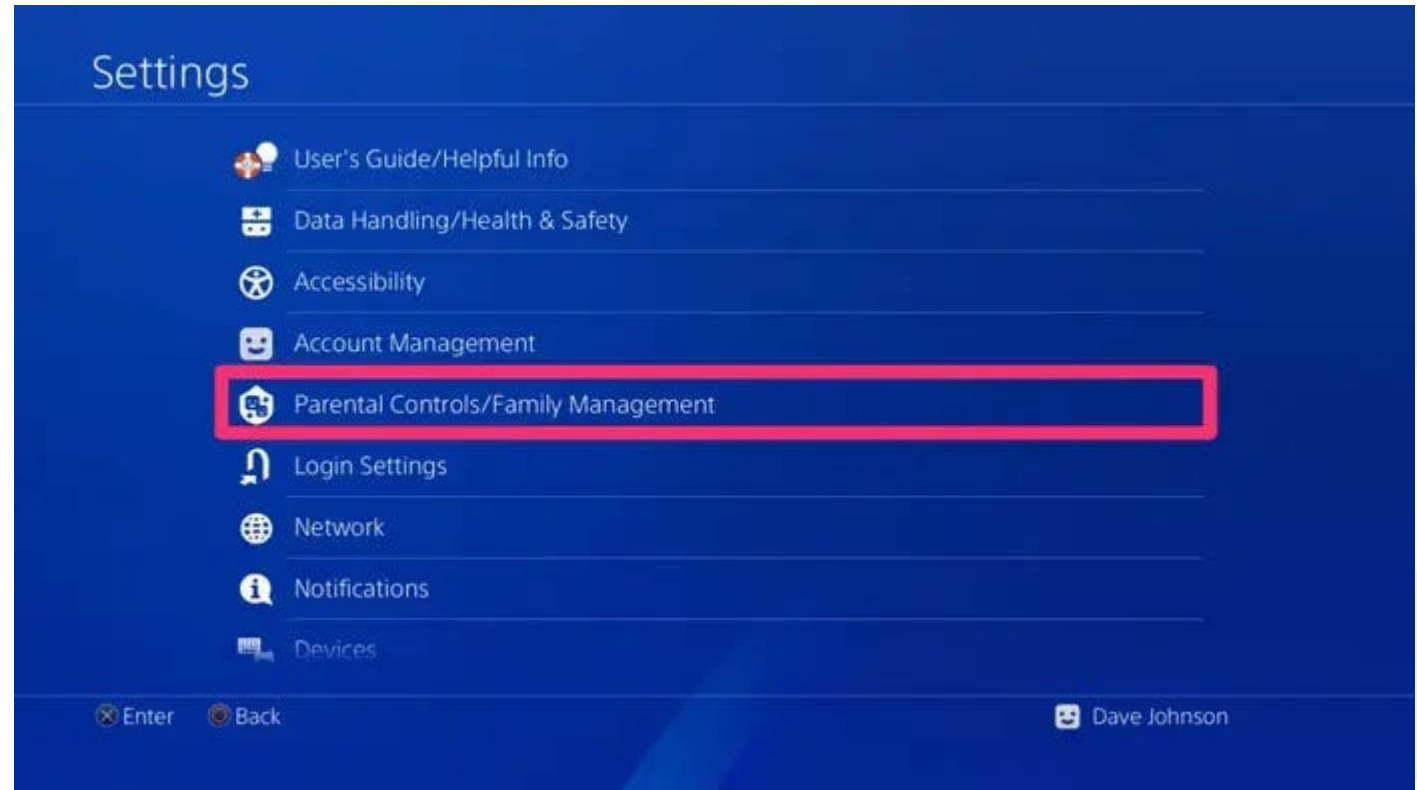
Practical Tips for Making Nintendo Switch a Safer Place to Play

- [Here is a link](#) to setting up parental controls on a Nintendo Switch

Using 'Find My Phone' and Life360 with Kids

One benefit of technology is the ability to communicate easily with our children. There are also ways to track where your child is located, which can be helpful for safety. **However, be mindful of your teens growing need for privacy. Be sure to communicate if you are tracking your child and why.** Assess each year how much tracking is necessary. If your child has given you a reason to track or read their device, communicate the steps your teen would need to take to gain back some freedom and independence.

Like all ways to monitor your child and their screen usage and location tools, there is no fail-safe answer. Children are tech-savvy and often find ways to work around these tools. The best predictor of your child using technology responsibly is coming to you when there is a problem or owning up to a mistake. Is your relationship with them and their feelings that you are a safe person to talk to about it? Responsible technology use and the pros and cons of devices is not a one and done conversation. It needs to be an ongoing dialogue with your child. This conversation will change as your child grows, but starting early often is ideal.

Use Technology With Your Kids With Intentionality

- Engage with your child with screens. Let them show you what they are building in Minecraft or **try the latest Tik Tok dance together**. Use this as an opportunity to bond.

- **Share positive messaging with your child through videos or memes.** A meme about internet safety or a video about the dangers of alcohol use from someone they admire on-line, so they aren't just hearing it from you.

- Send your child a quick "🫰thinking of you" or "good luck on your test today 🍀" text. Remind them they are loved. Make sure you are sending more positive texts than neutral or negative!

- **Put down your own device when you child walks in the room**, at the dinner table, when doing something as a family. Show more interest in your child than what is on your device.

How are we doing?

Help us do better!

Our vision is a world where every child's natural strengths are nurtured so they realize their endless potential – use your **strength of honesty** to help us get there.

Answer 4 quick questions by scanning the QR code and enter to win a family game night package!

Your voice matters. Please scan the QR code for a quick survey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MWCQN6F
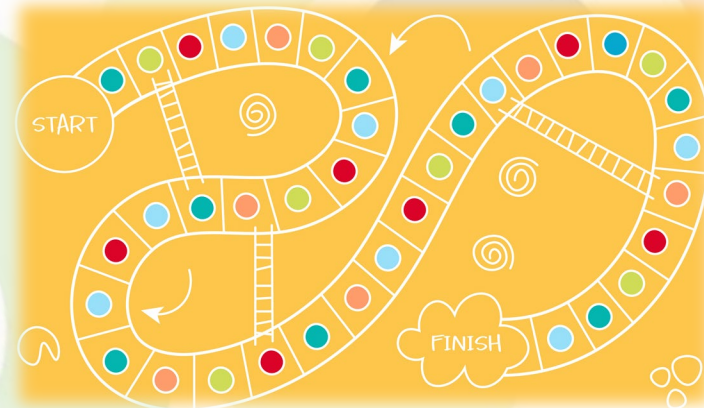
Complimentary Week-Long Classes on a Variety of Parenting Topics Delivered Via Text.
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Welcome to Healthy Friendships for School-Aged Children K-12, brought to you by the team at Beech Acres Parenting Center! In this course, you'll learn how you can...

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Welcome to Intentionality with Family Values! This five day course explores what your family's shared values consist of and how you can implement them into your daily...

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Welcome to Understanding and Supporting Transgender Youth, brought to you by the team at Beech Acres Parenting Center! In this course, you'll be given a brief...

PARENT CONNEXT®

In just **3 sessions,** their approach has been proven to strengthen the parent/child relationship – with the effect lasting at least **3 months later**.

Connect with us!

If you are interested in something more personal, feel free to contact Katie Helmes at khelmes@beechacres.org to set-up a **virtual** session with a Child Development expert.