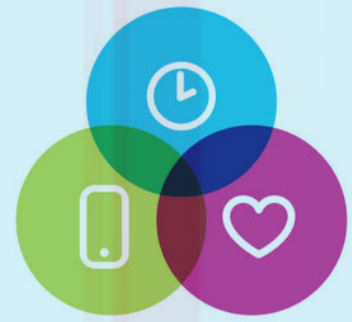


5

STEPS TO REDUCING

YOUR KID'S SCREEN TIME
AND RECONNECTING AS
A FAMILY



ScreenCoach

Harmony. Balance. Fun.



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**GET REALLY CLEAR
ON WHAT YOU WANT**

Page 4



TABLE of CONTENTS



**HOLD A
FAMILY MEETING**

Page 5



STAY STRONG

Page 7



**BRAINSTORM
SCREEN-FREE ACTIVITIES**

Page 6



**STICK TO THE
ROUTINE AND REPEAT**

Page 8

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Page 10



If your kid's screen time has gotten out of hand and you are feeling disconnected as a family, **you're not alone.**



Parents across the world are worried about their kids' moods, concentration spans, developmental milestones, lack of physical activity, and educational outcomes - all of which are impacted by too much screen time. They are exhausted by the constant nagging and losing the battle to get kids off their devices and do other things.

The latest research on screens and their impact on mental health shows a concerning link between the two - not a causal link but a correlation none-the-less.

If you're reading this, you're probably one of those concerned parents. With multiple devices in many homes, combined with the engaging nature of the content, motivating kids to get off and do anything else is a real challenge without alienating them and having devices thrown through windows or walls kicked in. Parents are feeling powerless and exhausted by the never-ending battle.

What can I do about it?

Some experts teach methods for a complete screen detox. Most parents I speak to, however, are not wanting a complete screen detox but definitely need some strategies to support their kids to spend less time on screens on an ongoing basis. As with food diets, people tend to return back to their previous state, so long-term issues are hard to resolve with a short term "Magic Pill."



Is your kid's screen time out of control?

Start here.

So... here's my #1 suggestion for parents desperately trying to find a healthy balance:

Decide on a set time each week that will become a non-negotiable screen-free time.

Aim for at least 2 hours, but aim for 3 if you can manage it. You can work backwards from there to determine your schedule.



STEP 1

Get really clear on what you want

Begin by discussing with your spouse (if you have one) and consider their ideas for the most suitable times. It would be great to present some options to the kids and then allow them to decide, this will help them to feel they've had a say in the matter. If you're single, sit down with a counsellor or a trusted friend or family member who will listen and can help you get clear on your plan.

In our experience, one parent is doing the majority of the screen time management, and if you're reading this, it's probably you. So whatever you decide, you're going to be the one enforcing it, so it's critical that you're feeling really good about your decision - and have buy-in from your partner to maximise your results.





STEP 2

Hold a Family Meeting

Next, call a family meeting and tell your kids you want to talk to them about their screen time habits. When everyone is together, find a suitable time to discuss - be it over dinner, in the car, or out for a walk (if you've managed to get them outside!).

- Tell them you are going to introduce a set time of 2 or 3 hours (you have previously decided which) each week which will be screen-free time. Present your suggestions and ask them for ideas of when they think would work best for the family.
- A weeknight where they are at home, from 5 - 7:30pm for instance, or a Sunday morning before 12 are great places to start.
- Alternatively, you might prefer to introduce a no screen rule every weeknight after 8pm, and/or no screens before school.
-

As mentioned I recommend you start with one time or set of times. The key is to have confidence in your ability to manage it, as initially, the kids will try and wear you down until you give in. It's critical you stay strong. Encourage input from the kids - listen to their objections and suggestions for the screen free time. Be prepared to compromise in the spirit of an agreement.

And last but not least, be sympathetic - remember how much they LOVE their screentime.



STEP 3

Brainstorm screen-free activities

The next step in the conversation is to brainstorm a list of things the kids can do during this non-screen time. Play a board game together, play solitaire with actual cards, read a book, do their homework, go outside and throw a ball, cook, do their chores, draw, do a jigsaw puzzle, play with Lego, play a musical instrument.

Get out some coloured pens and paper and ask each child to make a list of their favourite non-screen activities. Younger children can draw pictures. When the screen-free time comes, they can refer to the list to help them decide what to do. You will need to guide them and support them, and be prepared to spend some time with them during this time, especially at the beginning. It might even become a lovely regular family time ritual.



Stay strong

Many kids struggle with sticking to non-screen activities, which seem so boring compared to screens. This is because screen time is so engaging, anything else seems dull. However, downtime is essential for our kids' brains that have become overstimulated with devices. It does take time for them to adjust. So, stick to your guns, and over time your kids will learn to enjoy those activities again.

HERE'S THE THING

Kids will only nag and whine and beg to the extent that they believe it will work, and you will give in and change your mind.

HERE'S THE OTHER THING

You will probably only have to be "strong" for a month or so until this routine becomes the new normal in the home.

STEP 4





STEP 5

Stick to the routine and repeat

Make it a regular routine and once the kids are used to it, consider extending it to another timeslot. Sure, you'll have to continue to enforce the routine at times. Kids will no doubt want to play online with their friends, or tell you they NEED to watch something on YouTube, or whatever. However, after some time they will stop asking. In fact, even though they may not admit it, they will appreciate your firmness with this.

The younger you can start with these routines, the better!

Before we began developing ScreenCoach, we conducted interviews with children. They acknowledged that they were spending too much time on screens and felt guilty about the conflict it created, but they just couldn't help themselves.

Set some reminders in your personal calendar and write the times in a family planner if you have one. Remind kids the day before (if possible), that this is the new planned non-screen fun time. Don't expect them to remember because they won't! Then give them 10 minutes to finish up what they're doing if they are on screens, and put all the devices away somewhere they can't see them (out of sight, out of mind).



Direct them to their lists. **If they nag and whine, tell them they have two choices.** They can hate the experience and tell themselves that Mum (or Dad) is the worst in the world and that they are bored and it's horrible, or they can choose to make the most of it and enjoy it as best they can, especially if you reward them with extra screen time for doing off-screen activities!

Here's some feedback from one frustrated mum who implemented a Sunday morning screen-free time with her teens...

"I have managed to implement a screen-free half day on a Sunday so far, only for two weeks now, but today was a massive payoff! We had a lovely morning just mooching together, joking, laughing and just hanging out together! My eldest even voluntarily went and practised his cello!!! It set me up for a really great start to the day! Now they are all back on, but I am so grateful for the time we had this morning."

I then asked her how she did it...

"I just mentioned that I was really over them being glued to machines all of the time and that this is what we are going to do. Week one no one was impressed, but today much better! I am also starting a new internet cut off time in the evenings...that ended in a lot of arguing last night, but I think it's just a matter of standing firm."

Lots of parents use sticker charts with their kids when they are young because they work!



You can do the same with your off-screen activities to reward them with screen time or pocket money (or both). However you will need to measure and manage their Screen time; there are some free basic tools that will at least measure the time used on their devices; however, they are very limited and are not good at giving extra screen time.

If you're reading this and thinking,

"I'm not sure if I can implement this and have the energy to keep it going,"

THEN YOU'RE IN LUCK!



We invented ScreenCoach based on the sticker chart reward system to manage the screentime & dynamically provide the rewards for you, that works Across iPhones, iPads, Android phones and tablets, Windows laptops & PCs and Apple Macs.

Install ScreenCoach in your family and take all the hard work out of managing your kids screen time. Let ScreenCoach do all the heavy lifting for you and be the bad guy - leaving you to connect with your family! Parents all over the world are telling us how ScreenCoach has been a complete game-changer for their family.



Discover more by clicking here:

www.myscreencoach.com



Wishing you the best of luck - let us know how you go! Come along and get support and share your experiences with us in our

[**"Family Screen Time Strategies" Facebook group**](#)

It will be worth it!

Stephanie Kakris has a Masters in Psychology and is a published parenting author. She is the co-founder of ScreenCoach, a software platform where kids are allocated a set amount of screen time, and after their time is up, they need to go and complete activities such as exercise, chores or non-screen play to earn more time before they can resume.

Find out more at: [**www.myscreencoach.com**](http://www.myscreencoach.com)

Additional Resources



"Expert Tips for Raising Tech-Savvy Kids with Healthy Habits"

[Click here to see this interview](#) we did with Dr Demartini, world renowned behavioural expert.



Screen time and Dopamine

[Here is a 10-minute video](#) where we explain how dopamine keeps kids going back for more and more screen time - and why they don't want to do anything else.



Family meeting guide:

For our ScreenCoach users, we have created a comprehensive guide for the family meeting - [click here for exclusive access](#).

