

50 Ways To Help You

NAVIGATE
DEVICE
USE WITH
MORE
EASE

Workbook

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50 WAYS TO NAVIGATE DEVICES WITH MORE EASE

Technology and devices are a huge yet vital part of our lives today. We can no longer live without it but we struggle to live with it. It is all so intrusive and addictive. The virtual world is a highly stimulating place to hang out, especially for children. It is, after all, hard for any of us to DIS-connect from it.

The impact of role modeling acceptable digital behaviour cannot be underestimated. We have to shape our digital behaviour into that which we want our children to develop. Our children are our mirrors.

If we hope to address the challenges we face with technology we HAVE to accept the situation as it is and not resist it and be really good with setting boundaries. We have to hold the limits around screen use to protect our children from losing their experience of and connection with the real world. We absolutely have to live and embody the boundaries and limits we set to role model responsible digital habits to our children to protect them from and, educate them on the well documented harmful effects of too much screen time on the their developing brain.

The following tips are designed to spark your creativity and curiosity and help you navigate technology and device use in your homes with more ease and, come up with a plan that best meets your needs so that you can support your children and meet theirs.

Please note that they are not in any particular order or priority and you do not have to implement all of them! This is just a place to start!

Louise



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1. Role model the digital behavior you want to see your children develop. Children are great at copying, so give them responsible and socially acceptable digital behaviors to copy.
2. Set healthy and effective boundaries around technology. Let your children be part of the discussion. If they have been part of the process, they are more likely to adhere to the boundaries that were created in part by them.
3. Make sure you have your family basics and things you value firmly in place i.e., sleep, down-time, play-time, movement, face-to-face connection, meal times, and THEN add in time for technology and device use.
4. Encourage your children to be creators not just consumers of technology. Find outside the box ways for them to use it positively and spark their inherent imagination and curiosity.
5. Switch your whole family over to good old-fashioned alarm clocks and take all phones out of the bedrooms, yours included!
6. Empower them to develop the skills they need to regulate the amount of screen time they can cope with.
7. Teach your child to be aware of and attuned to how they are feeling as they spend more time on their devices. Help them understand and develop a feeling for how it makes them feel. Tired? Zombie-like?
8. All devices to go to a central charging station at appropriate times each evening for each child.



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9. Digital games can only be played once all non-preferred activities are done i.e., homework, chores. And remember, it is okay for your children to be bored and not let them turn to devices to bail them from facing their boredom. It's too easy to turn to this and dampen their imagination to think for themselves and come up with an alternative real world game to play.
10. With some of the ideas here why not collaborate as a family and create a set of Digital House rules for your home.
11. Create the conditions to foster open communication and to disconnect to connect. What things can you think of to do this and encourage conversation and real world social engagement?
12. Discourage the use of phones at the dinner table and no checking of phones that “ting” or “bleep” while at the table.
13. Set up designated times for screen free time. For example, Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings.
14. Try to see your role as mentor over monitor. When we can help our kids understand the impact of too much screen time on their developing brains, we can mentor them to develop the skills required to self-monitor.
15. Try not to respond to your phone while your child is engaged in a conversation with you and role model this to them. If your child sees you answer your phone while you are mid conversation with them, they are going to think it is acceptable and do exactly the same with you and their friends.



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16. Use the environment to control device use i.e., you could have a rule that says no phones in the bedrooms or in the car while driving to and from school. If you car-pool you can have this as a rule too which encourages the kids to actually talk to each other rather than communicate with people not in the car.
17. When your kids are younger, use a timer to monitor screen time. This not only allows for more accurate monitoring but also takes you out of being the rule enforcer – “I hear the times, that means your time is up!” versus “You’ve been on your device too long, please turn it off now!”
18. Try to make sure that play dates are PLAY dates and not screen dates or allocate a short amount of play date time to it. Also be cognizant of the fact that the games that your kids play might not be games the other kids play. It’s always good to check.
19. If possible, have a no phone use during homework rule. This works well until the kids are older and need their phone to access virtual classrooms or notes they might have on their phones.
20. Use empathy to help guide you in helping your child understand the role of technology in their life. When we can walk in their shoes it can help. Many of them have not known life without technology.
21. Consult known organizations like The American Academy of Paediatrics <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Default.aspx> or www.common sense.org to get a gauge of age appropriate games and limits for screen time.
22. Do not let the screen limits be skewed in your favor when you want more time and use them as extended child care as and when it suits you.



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23. Minimize the use of screen time before school or within an hour of going to bed as the blue light used to back light the screens is not conducive to sleep and the activities on line tend to rev kids up and wire them in a way that is not favorable to teachers or sleep.

24. Use technology to create conversations and connection in your family. Ask your kids to show you what they have been doing with technology and tell you about it.

25. Use apps to control Wi-Fi supply to the house and to each device (good for younger children who are learning to control their time spent on screens) There are apps that can do this and hard drive devices (The Circle) that you can wire to your modem to control the Wi-Fi available in the house. Some of these can be phone and app specific – for example you can limit the Wi-Fi use to a phone for a specific time period and for that time also shut off the connection to specific apps.

26. Help your children understand the addictive nature of technology and the fact that all the games and apps are designed to hook them in to become addicted.

27. Have some device-free car journeys to foster conversation.

28. Do not use time spent on phones and screen time as a reward or removal of time spent on them as punishment. If we do this, we play right into the power of technology. If anything we want to neutralize it and downplay it.

29. As a parent, you are the leader of the culture you want to create for your children.



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30. Help your children understand that LIKES on social media are meaningless and help them recognize that their real world identity is much more important than their social media identity...
31. Use consequences around technology wisely: they are to help your child learn the relationship between cause and effect for example, if your child came home late use a consequence that helps them understand the impact of that on everyone else and not just a “Right, you are losing your phone privileges for 2 days” or something equally unrelated to the action.
32. When you are waiting in a Doctor’s office or Dental office, read a hard copy of something instead of turning to your phone.
33. If you work from home, try to put your phone down or come off your screen when your kids come in the door from school. BE there for them. You can always go back to it once they are settled and have found something to unwind to.
34. Find ways to inspire your kids about the real world and encourage them to participate in the outdoor world. Get them involved in helping you in the garden or with an SPCA for example.
35. Collaborate as a family as to what the consequence will be for ignoring screen and device limits so that your kids know up front. When X then Y. When they know what to expect and also know that when it happens Y will always happen, it is fairer for them and will help them learn from their mistakes.



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36. Help your children understand that they need to show up as who they are in real life in the virtual world. What's shown in the virtual world can be so false yet they believe it to be real. Teenagers in particular can become so brainwashed by it all and believe it to be truth and real. Help them understand that almost every photo has been enhanced.
37. Teach your children to become safe and responsible users and to never post photos of anyone without their prior consent and to never type anything online that they would not say to the person real time.
38. Use technology to fuel your child's critical thinking.
39. Sit down and ask your child to teach you how to play a video game they like or find a game you both like and play it together
40. Sit down and ask your child to teach you their social media app of choice (i.e. SnapChat).
41. Help your kids to see how in-app purchases are meant to make you feel pressured to purchase right then and there – be an educated consumer.
42. Find ways to use technology to learn more about the world with your child. For example, a video about a space shuttle launching if they are interested in all things space.
43. Choose an educational game like Words with Friends (Scrabble) where you can have ongoing games with your child.
44. Find out what they like about the games/apps/devices they are using and then nurture them to enjoy it in a healthy way.



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45. If you are going to occasionally look through your child's phone and check out what they are posting on social media, make sure they know that you will be doing this. As the service provider and bill payer, you can tell them you have a right to do this given you are technically the "owner" of the phone. It's a great way to find out things you may not know otherwise. But try to balance that with respecting their privacy on a regular basis to the degree that you feel comfortable. It is sort of akin to reading a diary without permission to do so.

46. Talk to them about the three E's – E is for Electronic, Eternal and Evidence. When we send a text message, DM, photo or anything else, we are sending it in Electronic format. But because we are sending it electronically, it is also Eternal, meaning we can never actually erase it once it is sent. Even if we erase it from our phone, someone else can still screen shot what we have sent. And it is also Evidence – of the choices we have made and are making. If we would not want our parent, grandparent, teacher, priest, friend or another person to see it, we probably should not be posting it.

47. Teach your child to ask themselves before they post any comment – Would I be comfortable if my coach/teacher/parent/priest/grandmother read this comment I'm about to send?

48. Teach your child not to say something online that they would not say to the person face- to-face.



49. Help your kids to feel comfortable telling you or another trusted adult when and if they see a friend or peer acting inappropriately online and then make a plan together for how to address it. Also have a discussion with them about cyber bullying and how easily it can all become a desperately horrific place to find themselves – either side of the fence. Ask your kids to imagine what it would be like and how would they feel if that happened to them. Empathy is a great teacher.

50. Screens aren't going anywhere, so the quicker you learn to embrace them, the deeper your connection with your child will be

