# SCREEN TIME 101

## What the Data Says

**60%** of middle school students engaged in **3 or more** hours of screen time on an average day, in addition to time spent doing schoolwork (2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey).

**67%** of high school students have **3 or more** hours of screen time on an average day, in addition to time spent doing schoolwork (2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey).

Many youth are using screens in two ways:
- As a tool for schoolwork and learning, especially during post COVID 19 pandemic.
- For entertainment, when consuming social media content, playing games, and watching TV shows/movies.

## Negative Impacts

- Less: exercise, sleep, fresh air, connection with people
- FOMO - increased social stress
- Potential for screen/social media addiction
- Distracted during homework time
- Reading fewer books
- Increased comparison to what they see on social media
- Potentially exposed to cyberbullying

## Potential Benefits

- Parenting tool: Offering a means to stay connected
- Sense of connectedness with peers (especially during/after pandemic)
- Streamlining of homework/research
- Access to supports/educational tools
- Some video games can improve hand/eye coordination

## How are kids spending their screen time?

- Texting (individuals and group chats)
- Social Media: Instagram/Threads, Snapchat, VSCO, Tik Tok, BeReal
- Entertainment: Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, Twitch
- YouTube
- Gaming
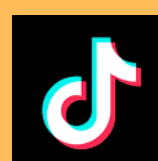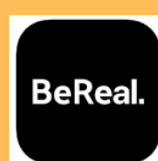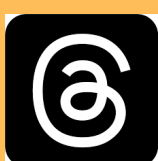
# Strategies for Reducing Screen Time

### 1. Set Parameters

Consider setting no device rules:
- After 9:00 (tweens) and 10:00 (teens)
- During meals
- In the car (exceptions for long trips)
- On family nights

2. Establish clear guidelines and explain why they are in effect.

3. Consider a cell phone contract (see below).

4. Engage parental control apps, like Bark, or set screen time limits with Apple products.

5. Decide if and what consequences will be if guidelines are not followed.

6. Consider joining/starting a "Wait Until 8th" initiative. Visit waituntil8th.org for more information.

7. Model good screen habits yourself!

**Steps to take before creating contract:**

- Discuss/Define Family Values
- Discuss types of rules (time spent vs. content)
- Touch on incentives and consequences
- Discuss where flexibility is OK
- Discuss what is appropriate to share on social media and what may be harmful

# Cell Phone Contracts/Agreements

Cell phone contracts and agreements allow you to sit down with youth to:
- Lay out your parameters
- Negotiate various points
- Delineate cell phone charging stations
- Explore what happens if a cell phone is lost or damaged
- State consequences of not adhering to parameters
- Discuss what parents have access to (passwords, texts, etc)

Check out commonsensemedia.org and belmontwellness.org for more resources and information.