

Teens and Screens: Exploring Best Practices



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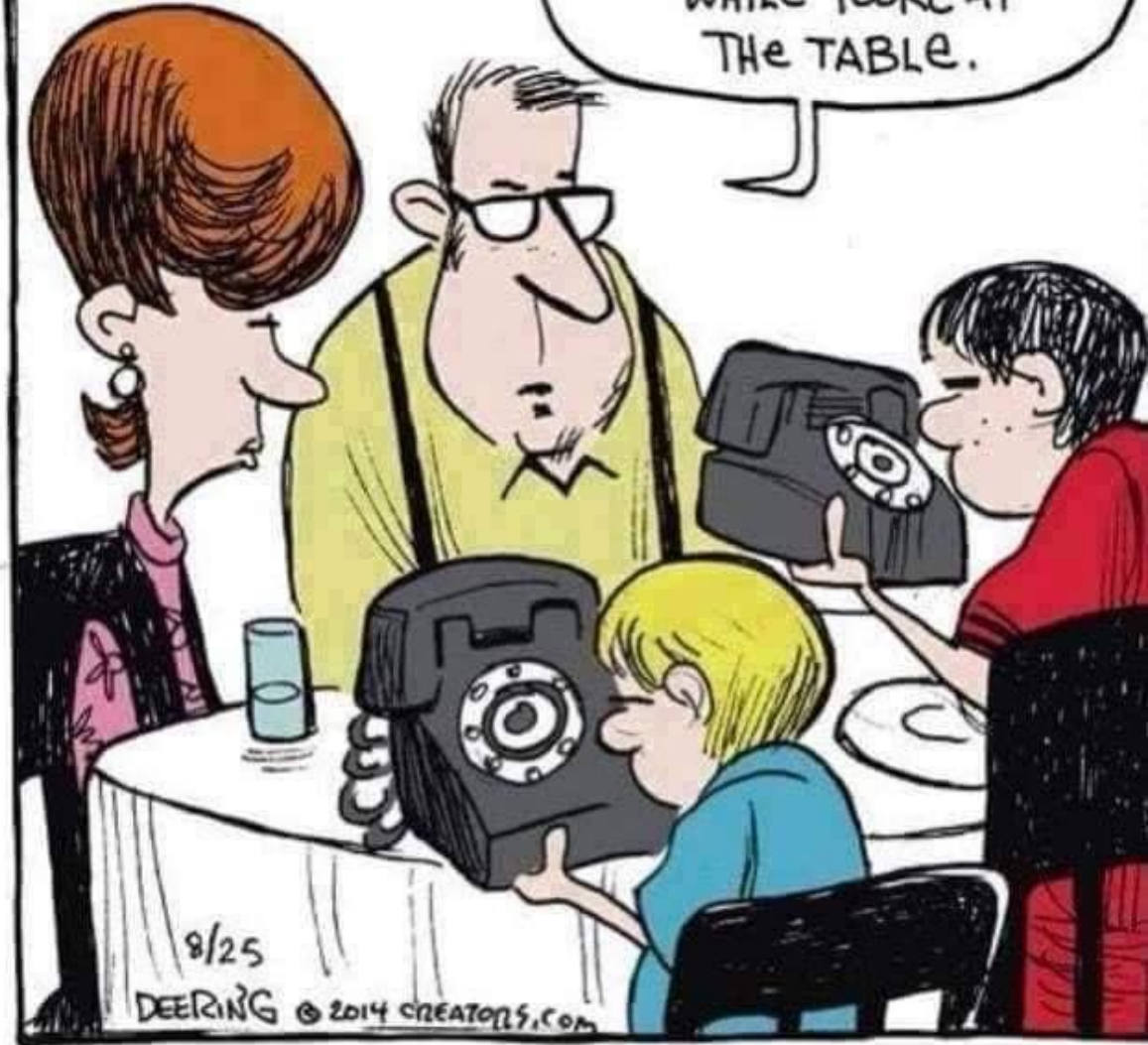
A little about me...

- MPH from Boston University
- Oversee the Belmont Wellness Coalition, a program of Wayside Youth and Family Support Network
- Professional experience coupled with 25 years of parenting paved the way for consulting with parents



1965

STOP LOOKING
AT THOSE PHONES
WHILE YOU'RE AT
THE TABLE.



What the Data Says:



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



67% of high school students engaged in 3 or more hours of screen time per day **in addition to time spent doing schoolwork** (2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey)

Screen Time Categories:



Tool for schoolwork and learning



Consuming: social media, texting, games, shows, other entertainment

Negative impacts of screen use on youth

- **Less:** Exercise, Sleep, Fresh Air, Connection with People
- FOMO - increased Social Stress
- Potential screen addiction
- Distracted during homework time
- Reading fewer books
- Potential desensitization to violence
- Exposure to sexting, porn, etc.
- Potential for bullying

Mental Health Impacts:

- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Anxiety
- ❖ Low Self Esteem (esp. among teen girls)
- ❖ Higher Stress Levels

“Comparisons are the thief of joy.”

Digital Footprint

Help your child understand that everything done online:

- ✓ Posts
- ✓ Comments
- ✓ Likes

stays online for years to come.


A word about Influencers ...

Your children will “follow” people - who may NOT share your values.

- Looking to *others* for guidance, insights, advice ... on almost everything!
- Emma Chamberlain, Alix Earle, Huddy, etc.

Potential *benefits* of screens

- Parenting tool: A means to stay connected
- Connectedness with peers
- Streamlining of homework/research
- Access to supports/educational tools
- Some video games can improve hand/eye coordination
- Games that get kids moving (Just Dance)



How are kids spending their time?

1. Texting (individuals and group chats)
2. Social Media: Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, BeReal
3. Entertainment: Netflix, Hulu, Disney+
4. YouTube
5. Gaming

What can *you* do?



Strategies for Caregivers

1. You can set parameters:

Consider “device free” times:

- After 9:00 (tweens) and 10:00 (teens)
- During meals
- In the car (exceptions for long trips)
- On family nights

Strategies continued:

2. **Make recharging stations neutral zones**
 - Kitchen, hallway, *not* bedrooms
3. **Establish that phones are a *privilege*, not a right**
4. **Collect phones on playdates**
5. **Consider starting/joining a “*Wait Until 8th*” initiative**
6. **Express your concerns**

More Strategies

Establish	Establish clear guidelines and explain why these are in place
Decide	Decide if there will be consequences and say upfront what those will be (need to follow through...)
Consider	Consider a cell phone contract (more on this later)
Engage	Engage parental control apps (Bark, Net Nanny, Apple Parental Controls and Screen Time Limits)
Model	Model good screen habits

Explicitly Review Texting Etiquette

Texting does not replace talking

Keep texts short and sweet

Minimize time spent texting *in front of others*

Be kind

Explain the concept of *tone*

Never text and drive

Be mindful of content

For photos: “Front page of paper” rule


Talk About the *Curated* Life ...

Discuss how:

- ❖ Images are carefully selected
- ❖ Stories are edited
- ❖ Social Media = filtered versions of lives

We project: beauty, positivity, inspiration – our *ideal* lives.

We hide: failure, insecurity, tensions, hardships.



Steps to take before creating cell phone contract ...

1. Discuss/Define Family Values
2. Discuss types of rules (time spent vs. content)
3. Touch on Incentives and Consequences
4. Discuss where flexibility is OK

“Consistent family rules are associated with lowest prevalence of kids exceeding recommended screen-time limits.” -- CSM

Cell Phone Contracts (or Agreement Plans)

Offers Parents the Opportunity to:

- Lay out parameters
- State consequences of not adhering to parameters
- Create together, negotiating various points
- Delineate location of charging stations
- Explore what happens if a cell phone is lost or damaged (who pays?)
- Discuss what parents have access to (passwords, texts, etc.)

More on Cell Phone Agreements

- Offers some control over Apps
- Expect resistance
- Do reference the document when needed (not helpful if create and stash away ...)
- Update and adjust, as needed
- Discuss with other parents

Keep Your Eye on the Goal

... to support them in establishing a more healthy relationship with screens.

- ✓ Start small
- ✓ Reward changes that are moving in the right direction
- ✓ Create fun alternatives
- ✓ Model good habits!

Resources

1. **Common Sense Media** commonsensemedia.org
2. **NetSmartz** netsmartzkids.org
3. **Wait Until 8th** waituntil8th.org
4. **You Are What You Click**
by Brian Primack
5. **It's Complicated: the Social Lives of Networked Teens**
by Danah Boyd

Belmont Wellness Coalition

Belmontwellness.org – lots of resources

Other youth-centered topics BWC addresses:

- Mental Health Impacts
- Substance Misuse and Social Host Liability Law
- Impacts of Overwhelming Stress
- Limits and Autonomy
- Relationships and Dating

Discussion

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