

Growing Up Connected: Learning Balance in a Digital World

Technology isn't just a tool anymore; it's the landscape our children inhabit. Technology is their world of learning, playing, communicating, and growing up, acting as a limitless library and a global playground. While the internet offers access to infinite resources and friends, it also brings many compromises – lack of sleep, concentration difficulties, and a sedentary lifestyle. Our objective was not to take away all gadgets from our children but to bring up tech-savvy generations that use technology intentionally as a tool for knowledge and future growth, rather than relying on it by default.

Beyond the Screen: Spotting the "Hook"

Digital Addiction is not just about the amount of time spent behind the screen, it can be found in subtle actions, such as a kid getting irritable at the mention of putting away their phone, “ghosting” hobbies they once enjoyed, or being distant during family interactions. The difficulty comes because of biology. The prefrontal cortex- brain's “braking system”, which handles impulse control and rational thinking, does not fully develop until one reaches their mid-20s. Thus, when children find themselves unable to disengage from their phones, they're not being stubborn, they simply cannot compete against the technology that is designed to grab and maintain their attention.



Setting Healthy Limits

Screen time should not be thought of as a deprivation but more as a balanced digital diet, just like how one would not allow child to eat only sweets and candies. This balance can be made through three major changes:

- **Active vs. Passive Digital Use:** Favoring creation over consumption online such as coding, digital art or making music rather than simply consuming things such as videos and news on social media.
- **The "Sunset" Rule:** Having a "digital sunset" an hour before bedtime, because blue light blocks melatonin production, which is essential for sleep.

- **Tech-Free Zones:** Device-free routines such as during meals, study hours, or during car rides as "human-to-human" zones to preserve the art of conversation and help children maintain balance in their daily lives.

Teaching Online Etiquette

We need to teach our children proper behavior not only offline but also online, because everything we post becomes a part of us and stays forever on the Internet, like a digital tattoo. Therefore, we should remind them not only of the phrase, "Think before you speak," but also of the phrase, "Think before you click." It is important to explain to them that there is no difference between offline and online communication, and that it is necessary to choose the right words and protect personal information while digital use. In turn, by keeping a sincere and truthful dialogue with children, we can encourage them to talk to us when something online feels wrong.



Conclusion

In the end, raising digitally healthy children isn't about perfection — it's about intention. Small, consistent choices made every day quietly shape the relationship a child builds with technology for the rest of their life. As Cal Newport reminds us, *"Every moment you spend online is a moment you are choosing not to spend somewhere else."* The goal was never to fear the digital world, but to make sure it never becomes larger than the real one.

With best wishes,

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