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Top Tips for Healthier Digital Habits as a Family

1 Delay Smartphones and Social Media

Hold off on smartphones and social media for as long as possible, ideally until age 16. In the meantime, a basic "brick" phone is a much healthier alternative, allowing children to stay safe and stay in touch while traveling independently to and from school. For older children, already with smartphones, focus on parental controls to limit screen time, block inappropriate content and ensure the device is as safe as possible.

2 Model Good Habits

Our relationship with our smartphones is key, children learn from our behaviour. Be mindful and present when spending time together as a family. Where possible, keep phones out of sight to minimise distractions and encourage meaningful interactions.

3 No Phones at the Table

Mealtimes should be about connection, conversation, and eye contact. By setting this expectation at home, we help children develop healthier digital habits they can carry into adulthood.

4 Keep Phones Out of the Bedroom at Night

This applies to both children and adults. Many issues arise when children have unsupervised access to devices at night. Parents can model good habits by charging devices in a central location, like the kitchen, instead of next to their bed. No phones for at least 1 hour before bedtime. Swap your smartphone alarm for a traditional alarm clock to create a healthier nighttime routine.

5 No Phones First Thing in the Morning

Checking your phone as soon as you wake up primes your brain for distraction and can trigger a stress response. Most things can wait at least 60 minutes in the morning. Starting your day without screens will help improve focus and overall well-being.

6 Avoid Multi-Screening

Encourage children to focus on one screen at a time. Constantly switching between devices can lead to shorter attention spans and difficulty concentrating. Keeping phones out of sight can reduce the temptation and improve focus.

By implementing these small changes, we can create a healthier digital environment for the whole family and set our children up for better long-term habits.

Support for Safe Gaming for Children

1 **Supervised Play Areas**
Ensure children play in shared or open spaces where an adult is present. Avoid allowing unsupervised gaming in bedrooms.

2 **Set Time Limits**
Limit gaming to a maximum of one hour, and only on weekends during term time.

3 **Choose Safe Games**
Avoid platforms that allow contact with strangers. Opt for games that don't include chat features or access to unknown users.

4 **Consistent Boundaries**
Make sure all parents and carers agree on the same rules and time limits to provide consistent guidance.

To effectively raise awareness about the risks of smartphones, social media and excessive gaming for young children within your parent community, whether at schools or in a corporate setting, consider hosting a Parenting in the Digital Age talk.

Nova Eden: Children's Mental Health Expert

Nova Eden is a passionate educator, public speaker, and expert in children's health and well-being, specialising in digital wellness and the impact of digital media on young people. As a leading voice in the Smartphone-Free Childhood Movement, Nova is driving meaningful and accelerated change in the digital landscape for children across the UK.

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Working with SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD