Navigating Screen Time & Social Media:
A Guide for Conscious Parenting

Supporting Healthy Digital Habits for Kids & Families

📌 Understanding the Impact

- Research shows that excessive screen time can contribute to sleep disturbances, emotional dysregulation, decreased physical activity, and even myopia (nearsightedness).

- However, not all screen time is harmful! The key is balance—guiding children to use technology in a way that enhances learning, connection, and creativity while preventing overuse.

1. Set Clear & Consistent Boundaries

📅 Establish Daily Limits —

- **Ages 2-5:** Limit non-educational screen time to 1 hour per weekday and 3 hours on weekends.
- **Ages 6+:** Focus on healthy digital habits rather than strict time limits. Encourage self-awareness about how screens affect mood, behavior, and sleep.

🚫📱 Create Screen-Free Zones —

- No screens at **mealtimes**—encourage family connection.
- No screens **1 hour before bedtime**—to support better sleep.
- No screens in **bedrooms**—to reduce overstimulation and exposure to late-night scrolling.

2. Model Healthy Digital Habits

Children learn more from what we do than what we say.

📋 Establish Family-Wide Screen Rules —

- Rules should apply to **everyone**—parents included! If kids aren't allowed to scroll during meals, parents should put their phones away too.
- Set a **family-wide screen curfew**—no screens **1 hour before bedtime** for everyone, adults included.
- Designate **"tech-free times"** (e.g., during family outings, board game nights, or storytime).

🚫 Avoid "Phubbing" (phone + snubbing) —

- Constantly checking devices during conversations can send the message that screens are more important than people.
- Model **attentive listening and engagement** to help kids develop strong social-emotional skills.

3. Encourage Open Conversations

Instead of strict control, aim for collaborative guidance.

💬 Ask Open-Ended Questions

- "What's your favorite thing to do online?"
- "Have you ever seen something online that made you uncomfortable?"
- "How does social media make you feel about yourself?"

🚩 Teach Online Safety

- **Help kids recognize red flags** (e.g., cyberbullying, inappropriate messages, scams).
- Encourage **"pause before posting"**—think before sharing personal information or emotional reactions.
- Teach kids that **nothing online is truly private** and that digital footprints last forever.

4. Promote Alternative Activities

Screens should complement, not replace, real-world engagement.

🌳 Encourage Outdoor Play & Movement

- More screen time = less physical activity. Build daily movement into routines (bike rides, sports, nature walks).

🎨 Support Offline Hobbies

- Help kids explore non-screen interests like reading, art, music, or hands-on activities.

Create Family Connection Time

- Plan screen-free family bonding: game nights, cooking together, storytelling, or creative projects.

5. Utilize Parental Controls & Co-Viewing

🔐 Set Up Digital Boundaries

- Use parental controls on apps & devices to limit exposure to harmful content.
- Manage screen time settings to help kids stay within healthy limits.

💬 Co-View & Co-Play

- Engage with your child's digital world—watch shows together, play video games as a team, and discuss online content openly.
- Ask questions about their experiences rather than policing them.

Balancing Benefits & Risks

Technology is a tool, not a babysitter—and not the enemy either! Moderation & mindful use are key.

🔑 Key Takeaways for Conscious Digital Parenting

- ✅ Model what healthy screen habits look like. Engage with your child's online world.
- ✅ Set boundaries together instead of imposing strict rules.
- ✅ Prioritize connection—screens should enhance relationships, not replace them.