

Get ready for positive change

By T. Lee Brown
Correspondent

During the elementary school's Screen Free Week, local mom Renee Stelle enjoyed checking out Hoodoo Ski Bowl. But, she said, her family wasn't able to take a break from screens. "I definitely feel bad that we didn't fully embrace it," she said.

They weren't prepared. Stelle's family is not alone. Research has found that most people, kids and adults, have a difficult time controlling technology in our lives. Whether we struggle with full-blown addiction or a few mindless little habits, changing our ways can be rough going.

Be a prepper: Want to try a screen-reduction program or experiment with a screen-free week of your own? Take a few weeks to prepare mentally and physically. Don't skip this step.

Plan real-life activities: Make a list of fun things you could do if you weren't staring at a screen or interrupted by endless notifications. It may feel silly writing out simple phrases like "read a book," but this list will come in handy later. Hang it on the wall for inspiration and guidance.

Grade school kids jumped right into their screen-free Bingo cards last week, eager to X off each square — even ones that suggested yard work. Activities included planting seeds, baking, taking walks, hiking and sporting events. "I feel like the school has done a good job of making suggestions," Stelle said. For next year, she said she needs to "mentally prepare" for it earlier.

Canned activity lists are helpful, but you can make your own from scratch. "I definitely like the idea of getting with the kids and brainstorming," said Stelle. She imagines sitting down with her elementary and middle-school children and asking, "Hey, what could we do other than screens? Let's make it a family fun night."

Get everyone on board: Ask friends, family, bosses, and co-workers for their understanding and help. Explain that your availability will be limited. Some folks may be accustomed to frequent texting or count on you to check work email at night. Others may assume that you'll always read their social media posts.

Stelle was concerned that the adults couldn't or wouldn't change their own habits for a week. "We can't have the parents on their screens and then be asking the kids to be screen-free," she said. "That doesn't work. That wouldn't be fair."

Setting boundaries is essential. Enlisting someone's help can be more effective than laying down the law. For some, it may be useful to phrase this as, "I'd like your help with my family's screen-free week." Others might say, "I will no longer be answering personal texts and emails except on Wednesday afternoons," and leave it at that.

Get 'organazized': Technology makes it easier to make plans on the go and to be flexible. This can be handy for the improvisers among us, but endless last-minute changes can be a huge drag on our time. Back in the day, people promised to show up someplace at a certain time, and they mostly got themselves there for the occasion. Changing the plan was just too complicated.

If you're mostly off-phone for a week, it'll be tough to set up a meeting or play date. To quote Robert DeNiro in *Taxi Driver*: it's time to get organazized [sic]. Plan get-togethers in advance. Clarify with others that you won't be checking your phone for last-minute changes. Be specific. "I might look at my phone" leaves things too open-ended. Try, "I will look at my texts before setting out to pick you up at the airport Thursday, but not until then."

Compartmentalize: Most of us can no longer work without screens. Pay attention to how you slip from work to personal to family use of your device, from news to oh look at the kitten! Sit down with an analog piece of paper, and write down some ideas for how you'll corral your time and screen use. (Our family has found success with doing a digital Shabbat every Friday night through Saturday; more about that in a future installment.)

Extricate truly needed work screen time from the not-so-necessary stuff. For us freelancers, working parents, and gig economy jugglers, this can be a big challenge. Need inspiration? Find the book "Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World," by Cal Newport. Despite the fact that he seems to be naturally good at compartmentalizing his time — while some of us sure ain't — Newport's calm intelligence makes the effort seem manageable.

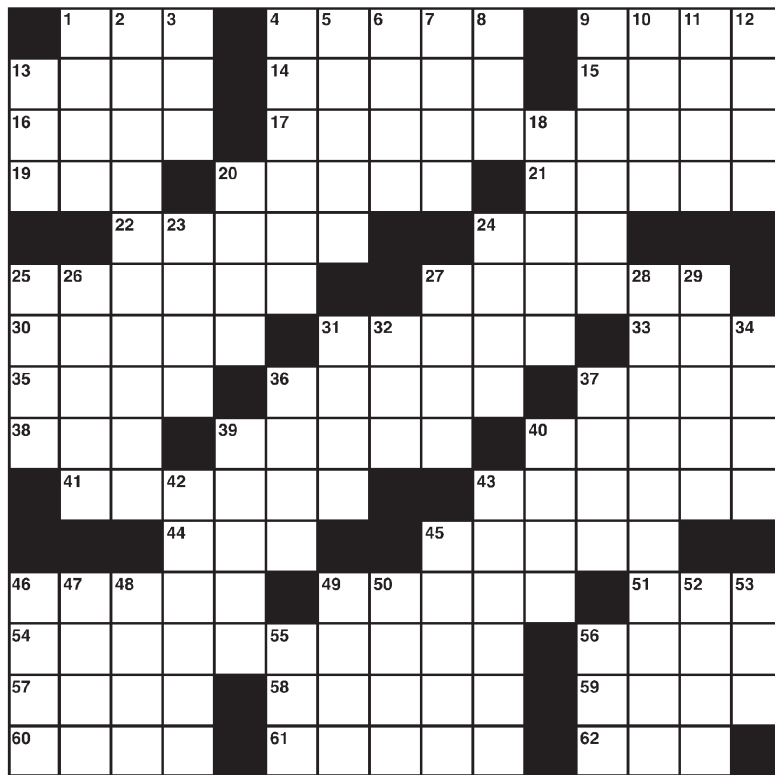
Good luck! And let us know how your own personal screen-free week turns out.

Part of an ongoing series about how screens affect our children, our families, our communities, and ourselves. Email: tiffany@plazm.com.

The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

- ACROSS**
- 1 Retirement acct.
 - 4 Disney deer
 - 9 Demonstrate
 - 13 Pebbles' pop
 - 14 Ended on ___ note; concluded unpleasantly
 - 15 Daddy
 - 16 Marshlands
 - 17 Squirrels away
 - 19 "Time ___ Bottle"; Jim Croce song
 - 20 Wire kitchen utensil
 - 21 Indoor stadium
 - 22 More unusual
 - 24 Prefix for school or caution
 - 25 Police IDs
 - 27 Like formal wear
 - 30 Steve or Tim
 - 31 Asks nosy questions
 - 33 Saloon
 - 35 Reclines
 - 36 Ram or ewe
 - 37 Running contest
 - 38 Dieter's concern: abbr.
 - 39 Witty remarks
 - 40 Quackers
 - 41 Magazine editions
 - 43 Saunters
 - 44 "El ___"; Charlton Heston film
 - 45 Outer garments
 - 46 Bit of land in the sea
 - 49 One of the vital signs
 - 51 Ho-___; boring
 - 54 Large horned animal
 - 56 Abounding
 - 57 Top-notch rating
 - 58 Bicker
 - 59 "Once ___ a time..."
 - 60 Hair bonnets
 - 61 Songs for two
 - 62 Feminine suffix



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

3/4/20

- DOWN**
- 1 Horseshoe material
 - 2 Nonetheless
 - 3 Billboards
 - 4 Bad-mouths
 - 5 Up and about
 - 6 Pasture cries

- 7 Dollar
- 8 Irritate
- 9 Steeples
- 10 Healthy
- 11 ___ up; speak candidly
- 12 "Fuzzy Wuzzy ___ bear..."
- 13 TV series for Sela Ward
- 18 ___ down; reduces
- 20 Songbird
- 23 "Rock of ___"; Christian hymn
- 24 Abbr. in some high school names
- 25 Formal dance
- 26 Excuse
- 27 Perishes
- 28 Rockets
- 29 Unpleasant; repugnant
- 31 Fraternity letters
- 32 House member: abbr.
- 34 Nickname for Elizabeth
- 36 Took to court
- 37 Hoax
- 39 Ecuador's capital

— Last Week's Puzzle Solved —

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W	E	D	S		S	T	A	Y			L	E	S	T		

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- 40 Idiot
- 42 Parts of an act in a play
- 43 Large groups of people
- 45 Influence; power
- 46 Middle East nation
- 47 Oxford, for one
- 48 Fuzzy residue
- 49 Neighbor of Colombia
- 50 Encourage
- 52 Martian vehicles, for short
- 53 Guys
- 55 Womanizer
- 56 McClanahan of "The Golden Girls"

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