

Tech temptation: Avoid *parental* device distraction

By JENNIFER COLTON

In 2015, a survey of more than 6,000 children found a third felt unimportant when their parents were distracted by cell phones and more than half felt their parents checked the devices too often. The statistics haven't improved and research shows more adults, teens and kids are becoming addicted to technology. Common Sense Media research reports more than 80 percent of teens and adults say technology is affecting their relationships.

How do you limit those effects in your own family? Here are a few suggestions:

Evaluate usage. How much time do you want your children spending on their electronic devices? How much time is okay for you? The amount of time you spend on your

phone, tablet, or computer is setting an example for your children.

Set boundaries. If you have a tech-addicted household, try starting small: Say no devices at the



dinner table, no devices – including television – while getting ready in the morning, or no devices after a certain time at night. Not only will this force you to find other activi-



Strategies

you aren't spending too much time on your own device, plan activities where no phones or tablets are allowed. Play a board game with no devices at the table; go on a picnic; build something together. When you keep yourself busy and engaged with your children, you'll be less tempted to turn to technology.

Lock it up. If that cell phone in your pocket is still too much of a temptation, put it somewhere completely out of reach. When you drive, put the phone in the glove box. When you are spending time with your children, put the phone in a drawer or in another room and let any calls go to voicemail. As a parent, model the behavior you want your children to learn from.

ties, but it might help you and your children have meaningful conversations, sleep better and streamline morning routines.

Remove temptation. If you know you have an Achilles heel of tech usage, try removing that temptation to see just how much time you spend with it. Are you in the habit of checking Facebook or Instagram multiple times a day? Remove the app and force yourself to log into the website instead of having it at your fingertips every minute. Do you have a guilty game pleasure like Candy Crush, Gardenscapes, or Farmville? Turn off the push notifications so you only log on when you know you have the time to. You might be surprised how much free time you have when you aren't giving up 5 or 10 minutes here and there for an app.

Plan activities. To reconnect with your family and make sure

Bonus: Celebrate Screen-Free Week. An annual movement, Screen-Free Week for 2018 is April 30 through May 6. Families are encouraged to unplug from digital entertainment. Under the "rules" of the week, you can still use technology for work and school assignments, but spend your entertainment time (yes, this includes social media and television) finding alternative activities to connect with family and friends. The Healthy Communities Coalition will be hosting local events in Umatilla County, including those partnering with local chambers of commerce. Find more at screenfree.org.

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