

SUMMER *of* CONNECTIONS

A SIMPLE SUMMER PLAN
FOR HEALTHIER, HAPPIER KIDS



"This short e-book is full of simple and powerful 'swaps' that any parent can make themselves."

Jonathan Haidt

"Brilliant and important. Every parent should read this."

Hugh Grant



HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR SAFER SCREENS

A message from

Dr Becky Foljambe

GP and Founder of Health Professionals for Safer Screens



Parenting small children is one of the hardest jobs there is. It's messy, noisy, relentless, and full of pressure from every direction. So let me start by saying this: we're on your side. You don't need more guilt. You deserve honest, supportive information to help you make the best choices for your family.

So let me be really honest with you. We are in the middle of a public health crisis. It's happening quietly in prams and playrooms, during mealtimes and meltdowns. It's not always obvious, but it's real. Think about seat belts. Think about smoking. Once we knew the harm, everything changed. We're at that same tipping point now, only this time, it's screens.

As a GP, I've seen the impact first-hand. And as a parent, I completely understand the instinct to hand over a phone or an iPad just to get through the day. But here's the truth: screens, especially smartphones, are not harmless, particularly in the early years. And yet, 27 percent of three- to four-year-olds in the UK now own their own smartphone, and 40% of children by age 2 own a tablet.

More and more evidence shows that regular screen use in the early years can quietly affect how children grow

'Parenting small children is one of the hardest jobs there is.'

and cope. It can make it harder for them to manage big feelings, build strong connections, and learn to calm themselves down. Phones and tablets might seem like a helpful way to keep them quiet, like a 'digital dummy', but over time, they can slowly chip away at a child's emotional resilience. And most parents simply haven't been told that.

Most parents have not been told about the screen impacts on children's sleep, speech and language and eyesight either, but we're going to change that.

I'm not anti-tech. Technology has a valuable place in our lives. But in young children's lives, its role should be small and carefully thought through. I truly believe that if parents had access to the right information, they would make different choices. And until they do, we can't expect them to carry the weight alone.

This e-book isn't about being perfect. It's about pausing, reflecting, and giving you the knowledge and tools to feel confident in a world that often makes that really difficult.

We can't rewind childhood but we can pause. We can learn. And we can choose to do things differently. Starting now. Starting this summer.

Follow us:



HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR SAFER SCREENS

Foreward by

Jo Frost

Global Parenting & Family Expert

As someone who has spent more than three decades walking alongside families from all walks of life, whether in their homes, classrooms, clinics, or communities, I have seen first-hand the pressures that modern life places on both parents and children. The truth is, our world is noisier than ever. The digital landscape has crept into nearly every corner of family life, often leaving less space for the kind of meaningful connection that children need to thrive.

What I've come to know through years of hands-on work is that parenting doesn't require perfection, it requires presence. And presence comes from our choices. Every time we put the phone down, look into our child's eyes, read their favourite book again (yes, again), or go on a walk simply to explore together, we are shaping their emotional world. These are the small but powerful actions that build trust, resilience, and joy.

That's why I am truly honoured to lend my voice to Summer of Connections, a free, thoughtful resource created with deep care by professionals who see the emotional toll of disconnection every day. It's a practical toolkit filled with ideas that make it easier for families to gently reduce screen time and create stronger, lasting bonds through play, curiosity, laughter, and presence.

This guide doesn't aim to shame or overwhelm parents. Instead, it offers real solutions grounded in empathy, common sense, and the belief that small steps make big change. It recognises that parenting in today's world is incredibly complex, but also reminds us that we are never powerless. We can reclaim the little moments. We can lead with love.



'I have seen first-hand the pressures that modern life places on both parents and children'

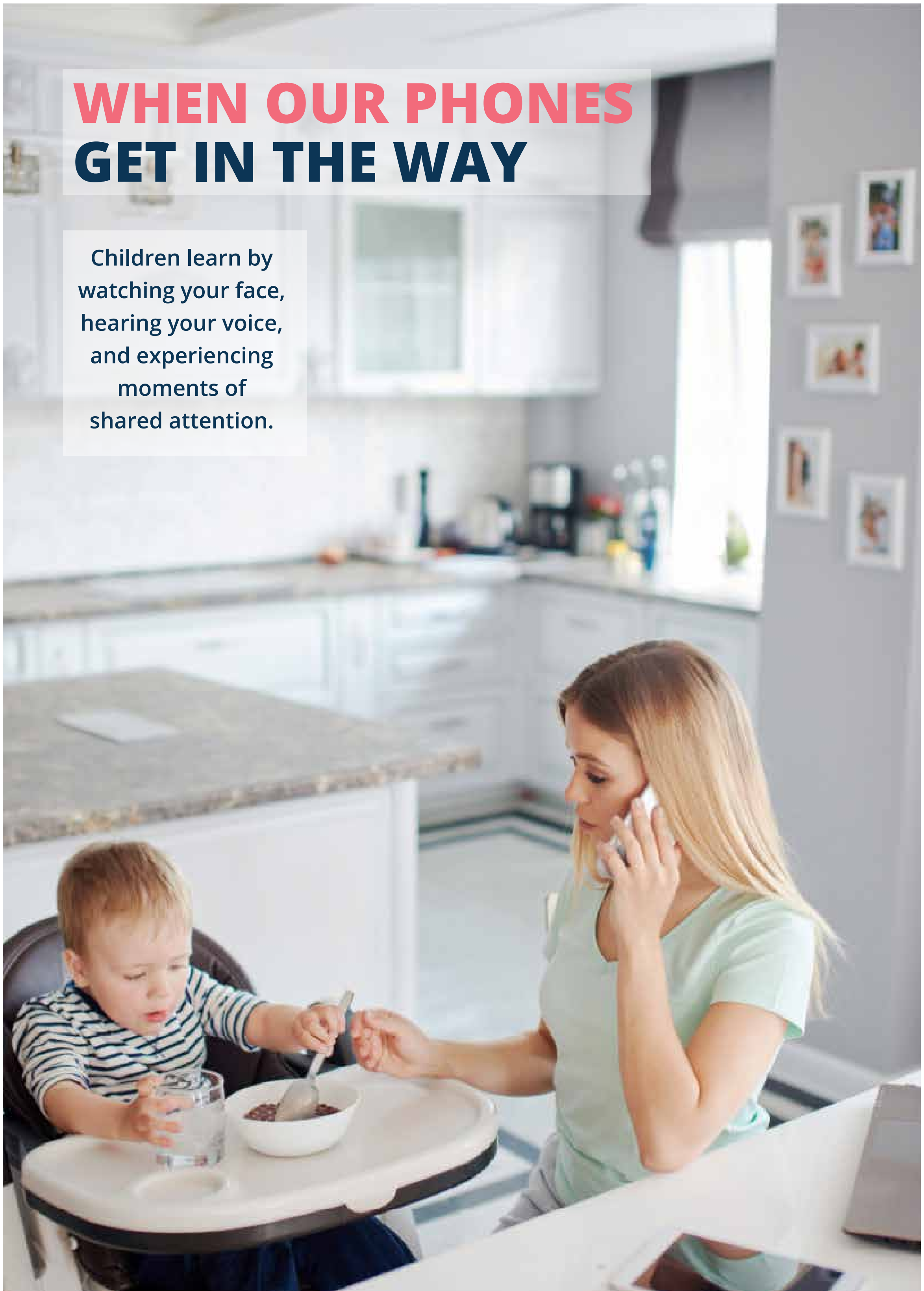
We can foster safe, secure environments where children feel deeply connected, valued, and seen.

I've always said that the most important work we do is often the work no one else sees: the quiet moments of showing up, again and again, for our kids. Summer of Connections celebrates that kind of parenting. It is an invitation to come back to what matters most.

With heartfelt gratitude to all the experts, organisations, and families who contributed to this campaign — thank you. Your work will help create a summer filled with not only less screen time, but more magic.

WHEN OUR PHONES GET IN THE WAY

Children learn by watching your face, hearing your voice, and experiencing moments of shared attention.





OUR
PHONES
ARE
DESIGNED TO
KEEP US HOOKED

Sometimes, the hardest truths are the ones closest to home. It's something many parents experience, but few talk about: how our own screen habits can quietly impact our children.

Technoference is the term used when digital devices, like smartphones, interfere with the precious, face-to-face time between parent and child.

Why change matters

Research shows that when adults are engrossed in their devices, their engagement with their children can drop without them even noticing. It might look like glancing at a message during breakfast, scrolling while your toddler plays nearby, or checking emails at the park. But what many parents don't realise is that these small, everyday moments of phone use can quietly have a lasting impact on a child's development.

Young children are wired for connection.

They learn by watching your face, hearing your voice, and experiencing moments of shared attention. That's how they build language skills, emotional regulation, and a sense of safety in the world.

Even used in short bursts it can:

Make us slower to respond to our child's needs, like missing their cues or not noticing when they're upset

Disrupt bonding moments, like cuddles, playtime, or mealtimes, when our attention matters most

Leave children feeling unsettled or stressed when they can't fully connect with us

Lead to more clinginess, meltdowns, or difficult behaviour as they try to get our attention

Expert Insight:

Professor Caroline Fitzpatrick, PhD
The Digital Lab, University of Sherbrooke

Professor Caroline Fitzpatrick is a leading expert in how digital environments impact child development

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“We all reach for our phones without thinking, it's a part of modern life. But when we're with our little ones, even small changes in how we use our phones can make a big difference. Children feel safest and happiest when they have our attention, our eye contact, and our presence. By putting our phones down, we can protect those everyday moments that matter most to them.”



Small Swaps, BIG IMPACT

This isn't about blame. It's about awareness. And once you know how much your presence matters, those little phone breaks become easier to spot, and easier to swap for something far more valuable.

CREATE SCREEN-FREE RITUALS

Mealtimes, bathtime, and bedtime are all golden moments for connection. Try making them phone-free for everyone.

TALK OUT LOUD

If you need to use your phone around your child, tell them why: "I'm just checking when your doctor's appointment is, then I'm all yours."

PUT
YOUR
PHONE OUT
OF REACH

LET THEM CATCH YOUR EYES

Making eye contact, smiling, and being emotionally available, even for a few minutes, helps children feel secure and seen.



PUT YOUR PHONE OUT OF REACH

When you're with your child, consider keeping your phone out of arm's reach or on silent so you're not tempted to check it.

DO A 'CONNECTION-FIRST'

Before reaching for your phone, pause and ask: Have I connected with my child in the last 10 minutes?

REMEMBER

The moments when your child has your full, focused attention are truly precious - they help them feel safe, supported, and ready to learn and grow. While life can be busy, the quality of your presence matters deeply, and makes a real difference in your child's development.

CHILDREN'S EYES NEED THE OUTSIDE

Just 2 hours of
outdoor play a day
can lower your
child's risk of
developing myopia
(short-sightedness)



You're juggling naps, snacks, meltdowns, and laundry. Smartphones, tablets, and screens are everywhere and when you've got a toddler who won't sit still, giving them a device can feel like survival. You're not lazy. You're doing your best.

This isn't about guilt. It's about giving you the facts, simply and honestly, so you can make the best choices for your family.

What is myopia?



IT USED TO START IN TEENAGERS. NOW, WE'RE SEEING IT IN CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 4 OR 5

Myopia means short-sightedness. It makes faraway things look blurry.

It's not just a minor issue corrected with glasses. When it starts early, it can progress and lead to serious eye conditions later in life, including retinal detachment and glaucoma. That's a problem because **early myopia often gets worse over time.**

Expert Insight:

Daniel Hardiman-McCartney MBE, FCOptom, FRSA, Optometrist
Clinical Advisor, The College of Optometrists

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Children's eyes are still growing. Lots of close-up screen time puts extra pressure on them. Getting outside, looking into the distance, and playing in natural light helps protect their vision. It's one of the best things you can do.

We must help families find a better balance — and that starts with awareness. Many parents don't realise the long-term impact of screen habits that begin in the toddler years.”

SCREEN
TIME
DISPLACES
OUTDOOR PLAY.
THE KEY PROTECTIVE
FACTOR AGAINST MYOPIA

More screen time = more time focusing close-up.

Less outdoor time = less natural light, less distance viewing.

The result = eyes that aren't developing the way they should.

For kids already diagnosed, an extra hour on a screen raises progression risk by 54%.

In the UK, 1 in 5 children now has short-sightedness.

“We need to champion the role of daylight, movement, and play — not because we expect perfection, but because small changes really do protect children's vision.”



6 Simple Swaps for Healthier Eyes

You just need the intention to swap 30 minutes of screen time for something real, active, and engaging — outside. Here are some free and easy wins:

POOH STICKS

Drop sticks in a stream and watch them float. It's old-school and brilliant for distance focus.



NATURE BINGO

Spot trees, animals, colours while out walking. Draw a simple sheet with pictures: a bird, tree, flower, puddle. Let your child spot them on a walk.

YOU DON'T NEED MONEY. YOU DON'T NEED SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

SHADOW TAG

Try to step on each other's shadows in the sun. It builds awareness, giggles, and gets them moving in sunlight.

Did you know ?

Just 2 hours of outdoor play a day can lower

your child's risk of developing myopia.



CLOUD WATCHING

Lie back and spot clouds, planes, birds. It slows the world down and encourages distant focus. Calming, imaginative, and good for the eyes.



TREASURE HUNT

Find five things that crunch, crawl, or shine. Keeps them looking beyond the screen and encourages movement and imagination.



BUILD A BIRD FEEDER OR BUG HOTEL

Build a Bird Feeder or Bug Hotel – Collect sticks, string, and pinecones, use old toilet rolls, leaves and petals. Watch who visits over time, you could even give your bugs names and create characters. An excellent daily visual routine and opens up their eyes to nature.

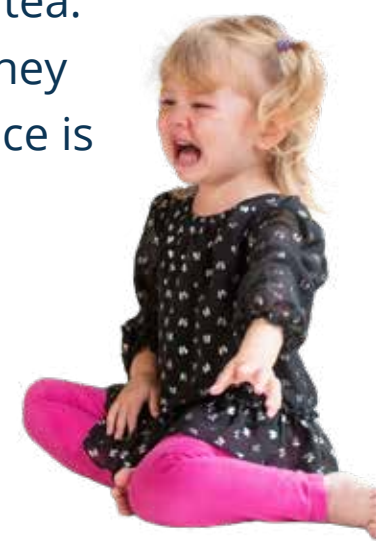
This summer, swap some screen time for sunlight. Their eyes will thank you.

TIME TO QUESTION THIS MOMENT OF PEACE

Children under five who have more than 1-2 hours of daily screen time are more likely to be restless, impulsive, and struggle to concentrate.



You hand over the phone. They're quiet. You can think. Maybe even finish your morning tea. You're not alone. You're not wrong. You're just surviving. Screens are everywhere, and they feel like the only thing that works sometimes. But what if the very thing that's giving you space is quietly making things harder?



What's happening behind the scenes?

Screens aren't neutral. They change how young brains develop, especially when it comes to focus, patience, and emotional control.

When children watch fast-moving or high-reward content, their brains get used to quick payoffs. So real life cannot even compete.

Here's what research is telling us:

Children under five who have more than 1–2 hours of daily screen time are more likely to be restless, impulsive, and struggle to concentrate. The more screen time, the worse the outcomes. This isn't about one show, it's about patterns over time.

Excessive exposure to screen time, especially a relentless stream of short videos, can result in children manifesting symptoms such as an inability to pay attention to non-screen activities, restlessness, agitation and behavioural problems. These symptoms can be mistaken for ADHD and in some cases result in a diagnosis and medication. This could have

**ADHD
DIAGNOSES
HAVE RISEN
BY 56%**

been prevented with a better relationship with screens.

Since smartphones became widespread, ADHD diagnoses have risen by 56%.

"DIGITAL DUMMIES" AND MELTDOWN MANAGEMENT

Using screens to soothe distressed toddlers has become common and understandable. But, it's not helping in the long run.

Studies show that giving screens to stop tantrums may reduce children's ability to self-soothe later on. And when we're on our phones around them, kids pick up on it. Parental screen use has been linked to lower connection and more behaviour challenges.

This doesn't mean you can't ever check your phone. It just means being aware matters.

Expert Insight:

Prof. Matthew Sadler
Consultant Psychiatrist

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Screens are designed to grab and hold attention in order to maximise viewing time and this leads the brain to expect constant stimulation. Screen time is passive and not challenging thus it feels easy. This makes activities that develop important life skills — waiting, turn taking, sharing and problem-solving — feel harder. It's not about judging parents. It's about understanding what's happening and supporting change.”

“Childhood is a time where we need to learn social and emotional skills that we rely on for the rest of our lives. The ability to think creatively, manage boredom, soothe frustration as well stay focused on activities that don't offer immediate rewards are all essential life skills but are harmed by excessive screen time.”



ACTIVE
PLAY HELPS
THE BRAIN
ORGANISE AND
RESET

Summer Swaps for Focus and Calm

Making thoughtful swaps, especially during high-impact times like morning, mealtime, and before bed, can make a real difference.

Here are some simple, low-cost ideas to support your child's ability to focus, calm down, and play independently:

SLOW CRAFTS

Threading beads, playdough, or sticker mosaics build focus and hand-eye coordination.



CALM-DOWN BOTTLES

Fill a bottle with glitter, water, and food colouring. Shaking and watching it settle can help children regulate.

LISTENING GAMES

Try "Simon Says," "Guess the Sound," or a "quiet walk" where you name what you hear instead of what you see. "Can you hear the wind? A bird? A dog?"



TOY ROTATION

Hide some toys for a week. Bringing them back out makes them feel new and encourages longer engagement.

OBSTACLE COURSES

Use pillows, chairs, or chalk outdoors. Active play helps the brain organise and reset.



ROUTINE RITUALS

Use a simple song or picture routine to support transitions e.g. "First we wash hands, then we eat!"



TIMED TOY TASKS

"How many blocks can you stack while I fold the washing - let's have a race!"

YOGA FOR LITTLES

Stretch like animals. "Be a cat! A tree! A sleepy mouse!"

FEELINGS WEATHER REPORT

"Are you cloudy, sunny, stormy today?" builds emotional vocabulary.

If your child struggles to focus or manage big feelings, you're not alone and you're not doing it wrong. Screens may offer quick calm, but they don't build lasting self-control.

A photograph of three children running away from the camera through a field of white flowers. The child on the left is a girl with a pink flower in her hair, wearing a blue patterned dress. The child in the middle is a boy wearing a blue and white striped shirt and blue shorts. The child on the right is a boy with curly hair wearing a grey and blue long-sleeved shirt and grey shorts. The background is a soft-focus field of white flowers under a bright sky.

GROWING BODIES NEED TO MOVE

Children aren't meant to sit still for hours. Their growing bodies and brains thrive on movement. It helps them to build strength, coordination, confidence, and even supports emotional regulation.

**1 IN 4
TEN-YEAR-OLDS
IN THE UK ARE
LIVING WITH
OBESITY**



Screens might keep kids calm for a while, but when movement takes a back seat, so does their health. The truth is: the more time kids spend sitting still with a screen, the less time they spend running, climbing, and exploring the world around them.

**CHILDREN
AREN'T MEANT
TO SIT STILL
FOR HOURS**

Why movement matters

Children aren't meant to sit still for hours. Their growing bodies and brains thrive on movement - big jumps, little wiggles, and everything in between. It helps them build strength, coordination, confidence, and even supports emotional regulation.

But here's the issue: screens can quietly crowd out all those good things. Nearly 1 in 4 ten-year-olds in the UK are living with obesity. It's a serious warning sign, and it starts earlier than many people realise.

**IT
BUILDS
CONFIDENCE
RESILIENCE AND
SELF-ESTEEM**

Research shows that more screen time, even in the early years, is linked to a higher risk of obesity. Daily screen time for toddlers and preschoolers can lead to bigger health problems later on, like diabetes, weight gain, and low fitness in adulthood.

It's not just about physical health. Being active also builds confidence, resilience, and self-esteem.

When we help young children move more and sit less, we're setting them up for a healthier, happier future.

Expert Insight:

Dr Sanjiv Nichani OBE
Senior Consultant Paediatrician
Leicester Children's Hospital

Dr Sanjiv Nichani has seen first hand how lifestyle habits in early childhood can shape a child's long-term health

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“Young children need to move every day. It's vital for their physical health, their development, and their happiness. But when screens take over, kids sit still for too long, miss out on play, and can start gaining unhealthy weight. I always say: more green time, less screen time. That means more time outdoors, running, climbing, exploring, and far less time glued to a screen.”



Easy Summer Wins for Moving

Getting kids moving doesn't need to be complicated. It's about building fun, active habits into everyday life. Here are some easy, fun and totally free (or nearly free) ways to build more activity into your summer:

PARK & PICNICS

Make a list of all the parks nearby and turn it into a summer mission to visit each one. Pack snacks, bring a ball, and let them run wild.

FREE LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Libraries, museums, and councils often run summer programs for little ones.

WALK
INSTEAD
OF DRIVE



NATURE WALKS AND SCAVENGER HUNTS

Whether it's a local trail or a walk around the block, set a challenge: can they spot a red door, a ladybird, a stick shaped like a Y?

WATER PLAY IN THE GARDEN

A bucket, a cup, a sponge. That's all you need. They'll pour, splash, run, and giggle their way to a nap-worthy level of tiredness.

OBSTACLE COURSES AT HOME

Cushions, chairs, boxes - whatever you've got. It's amazing how exciting an indoor 'ninja course' can be on a rainy day.

SMALL CHANGES TODAY
MEAN HEALTHIER, HAPPIER
KIDS TOMORROW

KITCHEN DANCE PARTIES

Put on some music and let them go full freestyle. (Bonus points if you join in.)



REAL TALK **BEATS SCREEN TALK**

Children learn best through interaction. You are their biggest influence, their role model.



Real talk beats screen talk when it comes to your child's development. You've probably handed your child a phone so you could cook, shower, or just breathe and we've all been there. This isn't

about blame. It's about helping you understand what your child really needs to build strong communication skills and how screens can quietly get in the way.

What's the problem?

Screens don't talk with children they talk at them. That means kids miss out on social human interaction, turn-taking, and real conversation, all key for communication and social skills. You are your child's biggest influence, their role model. So, the way you connect, listen and respond matters far more than anything a screen can teach.

**2 MILLION
UK CHILDREN
STRUGGLE WITH
SPEECH AND
LANGUAGE**



Research shows :

Children under 2 who have more screen time tend to speak fewer words.

2 million UK children now struggle with speech and language — a 27% rise in just 2 years.

Screen exposure over 2 hours a day doubles the risk of speech and language delays.

It's not just about what they watch, it's about what they're missing: social interaction with an engaged adult.

Even so-called "educational apps" reduce face-to-face interaction, which is critical for language development.

Expert Insight:

Sandy Chappell

Speech & Language Therapist

"From peekaboo to singing to silly chats in the supermarket, at bathtime or on bus rides, every small moment of interaction helps build your child's brain."

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"Screens talk at children. Real learning happens when someone talks with them. Face-to-face interaction is where language starts. Children need to connect and play with an engaged adult — not apps claiming to teach them."

"You don't need flashcards or fancy activities. You just need real-life moments, face-to-face, and a chance for your child to listen to you and try out language."

Easy Screen-free Language Booster

You don't need extra time or money—you just need to turn little moments into talking opportunities.

BOOKS AND STORIES

Simply share books, read the words or just talk about the pictures.

Make up stories about your child's day, or their favourite toys. Add funny voices or sounds. Make 'story-bags' of toys and objects that can be used with favourite books.



SONGS AND RHYMES

Sing songs and nursery rhymes throughout the day. Dance and use actions.

Make up songs about daily routines, such as bath-time: "This is the way we wash our face, wash our face, wash our face. With lots of soap and water". Make silly mistakes: "Twinkle, twinkle, little banana."

OUT AND ABOUT

Draw attention to sounds you can hear. How many dogs, trees, cars can you count?

Give clues: "I can see something with 2 wheels that you pedal. I can see the place with swings and a slide". Use pictures of things you want them to spot.



THIS SUMMER, CHOOSE CONNECTION. THEIR WORDS AND CONFIDENCE WILL GROW

HELP AROUND THE HOUSE

Give them a cloth or brush or a pile of laundry to sort. Use words such as clean/dirty, big/small, colours, and actions.

Give a bowl of water to wash plastic cups, spoons: "wet/dry, splash, pour". Ask them to find clothes from a pile: "Mummy's jumper, Daddy's red socks".



IN THE CAR

Simple I Spy: "Something green, something that says moo, something that flies". How many red cars can you see?"

Talk about each other's favourite food, animals, toys.

Use pictures of things that you want them to spot.



HIDE AND SEEK

Hide things around the house - red things, things to wear, things that are soft. Or, put some objects in a 'feely' bag - can they feel them, describe them and guess what they are? Use pictures of things that you want them to find.



AT THE SHOPS

Talk about what you can see - naming food; talk about colours, shapes, smells. Give them a shopping list of pictures - can they spot them? At home, make a toy shop with what you've bought.



**WHY
SLEEP
MATTERS
MORE
THAN WE
THINK**

Good sleep is like magic for young kids. It helps their brains grow, their bodies stay healthy, and their emotions stay (mostly!) in check. But here's the thing - screens and sleep don't go well together

TIRED KIDS TIRED PARENTS

Screens before bed might seem like an easy win, but they often lead to later nights, restless sleep, and grumpy mornings. The good news? There's a gentler, more effective way to help your child wind down and get the sleep they need.

Screens can:

Disrupt your child's natural sleep rhythms

Make it harder to fall, or stay, asleep

Keep their brains buzzing when they should be winding down

Sneak into bedrooms and disrupt sleep, even when they're not in use

SCREENS
CAN LEAD
TO LATER
NIGHTS



The result? Overtired little ones who are grumpy, wired, and struggling to focus or learn. And for you? Tougher evenings, harder mornings, and more exhaustion all round.

Professor Lisa Henderson

was one of the lead researchers behind the Channel 4 documentary *Swiped - The School That Banned Smartphones*. Her research highlighted how reducing screen time, especially around bedtime, can lead to dramatic improvements in children's sleep.

Expert Insight:

Professor Lisa Henderson

Department of Psychology at the University of York

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“Even among older children, we saw that less screen time before bed meant deeper, better-quality sleep. These findings matter just as much, if not more, for younger children. The early years are a critical time for brain development, learning, and emotional regulation. Helping little ones get consistent, restful sleep without the disruption of screens is one of the simplest and most powerful things a parent can do.”

Simple swaps that make a difference

We know screens can feel like a lifesaver at the end of a long day. But those quiet minutes now can mean wide-awake little ones later, and even more exhaustion tomorrow.



Here are some gentle swaps

to make bedtime a little easier and a lot more restful:

No screens in bedrooms – Even just having a device nearby can mess with sleep. Out of sight, out of mind.

Wind-down, screen-free routine – Think stories, cuddles, bath time, music...a calm, consistent flow that signals “sleep is coming.”

Lead by example – Kids copy what they see. If you’re glued to your phone before bed, they’ll want to be too. Show them that switching off is normal.

Small changes add up, and better sleep helps everyone feel a little more human.

Beloved Books for Bedtime^{z z Z}

These classic and contemporary favourites are perfect for little ones, and parents can’t help but come back to them.





Your Summer Screen-free Wind-down Routine

In a world full of beeps buzzes, and screens ...

**BOOKS
ARE YOUR
SECRET
WEAPON**

Bedtime reading isn't just about learning letters. It's about slowing down, feeling close, and helping your child's brain and body prepare for sleep. And yes, this starts way earlier than you might think. You don't have to wait until your child can talk.

IT HELPS THEM SLEEP

A calming story routine signals that it's time for rest. No flashing lights, no dopamine hits, just comfort and quiet.



IT BUILDS BRAINS

Reading aloud boosts language, listening, and memory skills. It's planting seeds now that will grow for years.

FREE ENTERTAINMENT

Take your child to the local library and let them pick out a book. With titles being replenished regularly, you'll always find something new.



IT BRINGS YOU CLOSER

Even ten minutes with a book can be the most connected moment of the day.

SWAP THE SCROLL FOR A STORY

Just a few minutes of one-on-one time with a book in hand and the phone out of sight.

Remember that if you're short on time (or patience), even one page or a poem counts.

A calm moment with your voice is better than a rushed screen-time fix.

20 Keepsake reminders

1



I know you feel tired, but your strength teaches your child's boredom isn't a crisis.

Hold the line you're building summer memories.

2

Every time you say no to the screen, you're saying yes to connection.

Their brain is thanking you dearly. I believe in you.

3



You're raising beautiful humans who will appreciate quiet and create joy.

You're doing something beautiful.

4

The less they rely on stimulation, the more they rely on imagination.

You rock! with your bold self giving them a real childhood.

5

You're exhausted because you care, I get it.

But giving in isn't going to teach self-care. Let them dance it off instead.

6



When you feel guilty remember screens will always wait. Childhood won't.

That's what I'm talking about parents!.

7

One day you'll look back and be so proud you didn't give in.

Because what came after the resistance was creativity. You did that :)

8



You're not boring them.

You're giving them space to become curious so screens don't take their spark.

11



You're building the muscle of self-control, for both of you.

Stay close. Stay calm. Stay clear.

12

They will push. You will pause. And then you will remember: you're stronger than an app.

And they are too.

9

The screen will soothe them now.

But it will short-circuit their coping later, you can do this.

10

Every parent needs a break but whilst you hold a cuppa don't hand them a habit you'll spend years trying to undo.

Give them a sippy cup.

15

You're rescuing their brain. And one day, they'll do the same for their child—because of you.

That's powerful parenting!

16



Pause. Breathe.

Then say:
"I'm the parent. I lead."
And lead them back in the garden for fun.

13

Screens offer silence.

You offer presence. That's the real deal, let's go!

14



When you say no to screens, you say yes to storybooks, messy play, silly questions.

Yes yes yes !

19



Hear that sound? that's the sound of the screen spell breaking.

Let it break Braveheart.

17

Screens don't need you—but your child does.

You're everything — their hero.

18

One hard moment doesn't mean you're weak. It means you're human. You're also the adult who sets the tone.

Stand tall. You're doing beautiful.

20

It's okay to rest. Just don't rest your values. Screens can wait.

But their childhood won't. You really make the difference.



ABOUT HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR SAFER SCREENS



In April 2024, Dr Rebecca Foljambe, an NHS GP and passionate campaigner for safer smartphone use in children, started a group to establish whether other health professionals felt as strongly about this issue.

The response was immediate, with consultant paediatricians, speech and language therapists, child psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists, public health consultants, social workers, dieticians, and GPs all sharing observations and concerns from their clinical practice regarding the impacts of children's addictive screen use and access to harmful content online. Health Professionals for Safer Screens was born.

OUR AIMS & MISSION

This group's ambition is to present the need for adopting the precautionary principle and help our colleagues understand that smartphones and screens are negative social and health determinants.

We will do this by:

1 EDUCATE

Educating the professional world about the risks of screens through evidenced-based briefings, resources and engagement with the Royal Colleges and the Chief Medical Officers.

2 RAISE AWARENESS

Support the public with a public health campaign. We will create resources that our health professionals can use to educate them. Use media opportunities to raise awareness.

3 SUPPORT

Support campaigns (as individuals and a group) which encourage safer screens.

OUR MEMBERS

Since our formation in April 2024, new health professionals have been joining our campaign: consultant paediatricians, speech and language therapists, child psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists, public health consultants, social workers, dieticians, and GPs, all sharing observations and concerns regarding the impacts of children's addictive screen use and access to harmful content online. Join Us!

Find us:



www.healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org

Follow us:



HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR SAFER SCREENS

ENDORSEMENTS

"Easy, helpful, kind and perfect."

Sophie Winkleman, Actress

"As an artist and advocate for digital well-being, I'm deeply moved by this vital resource. It speaks to parents with empathy, not judgement — and offers practical wisdom at a time we all need it most. The science is clear, but what makes this so powerful is how it helps us reconnect with what truly matters: presence, play, and protection. If we want our children to thrive in the real world, we must defend their right to live in it — free from digital distractions, and crucially, the knowledge that there is actually a choice about how digitally we choose to live. This guide is a lifeline. Every parent should read it."

Tim Arnold, Artist and Creator of the Multimedia Project Super Connected™

"Brilliant and important. Every parent should read this."

Hugh Grant

"Too many of us are either wilfully or innocently sleepwalking into this car crash — don't allow this to happen to your children."

Charlie Brooks, Children's Author

"Kids need to play, learn, and live in the real world, yet childhood has been moving inexorably onto screens for the past 15 years."

"This short e-book is full of simple and powerful "swaps" that any parent can make themselves to give their children, and themselves, more time enjoying each other and the healthy pleasures of life in three dimensions."

Jonathan Haidt, Social Psychologist and Author

"A vital resource empowering parents to protect their kids"

Justine Roberts Mumsnet Founder and CEO



RESOURCES

<https://www.jofrost.com/>

<https://50thingstodo.org/less-screen-time-more-play-time>

<https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/family-time-tips-free-childrens-activities-try>

<https://littleowls-premium.com/summer-holiday-activities>

<https://blog.brookespublishing.com/24-at-home-learning-activities-to-share-with-parents-of-young-children/>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/leaflets/look-say-sing-play-early-years-resources-parents>

<https://www.parentkind.org.uk/for-parents/parents-resources/activities>

<https://qrco.de/Littlemindsbigfutures>

<https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/resources/resources-for-parents/supporting-our-youngest-children/>

SOURCES

INTRODUCTION:

'And yet, 27 percent of three- to four-year-olds in the UK now own their own smartphone, and 40% of children by age 2 own a tablet.'

Source: *Children and parents: Media Use and Attitudes report 2024*. (2024). <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/media-habits-children/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2024/>

'Since smartphones became widespread, ADHD diagnoses have risen by 56%.'

Source: Danielson ML, et al. *Prevalence of Parent-Reported ADHD Diagnosis and Associated Treatment Among U.S. Children and Adolescents, 2016*. *J Clin Child Adolesc Psychol*. 2018;47(2):199-212. Smartphone adoption data: *Pew Research Center, 2007–2016*

EYESIGHT:

'For kids already diagnosed, an extra hour raises progression risk by 54%.'

Source: Lanca C, Saw SM. *The association between digital screen time and myopia: A systematic review*. *Ophthalmic Physiol Opt*. 2020 Jan;40(2):216-229.

'In the UK, 1 in 5 children now has myopia.'

Source: Cumberland PM, Bountziouka V, Rahi JS. *Impact of increasing prevalence of myopia on future NHS eye care workload in the UK*. *Br J Ophthalmol* 2021;105(4):570-574.

'By 2050, it is estimated that 50% of the world's population will be myopic.'

Source: Holden BA, Fricke TR, Wilson DA, et al. *Global Prevalence of Myopia and High Myopia and Temporal Trends from 2000 through 2050*. *Ophthalmology*. 2016 May;123(5):1036-42.

'Increased time spent on close-up screen use and reduced outdoor time are associated with higher risk of myopia development.'

Source: *World Health Organization. The Impact of Myopia and High Myopia: Report of the Joint World Health Organization–Brien Holden Vision Institute Global Scientific Meeting on Myopia*. 2015.

'Just 2 hours of outdoor play a day can lower your child's risk of developing myopia.'

Source: Rose KA et al. *Outdoor activity reduces the prevalence of myopia in children*. *Ophthalmology*. 2008 Aug;115(8):1279-85.

ATTENTION AND BEHAVIOUR

'Since smartphones became widespread, ADHD diagnoses have risen by 56%.'

Source: Danielson ML, et al. *Prevalence of Parent-Reported ADHD Diagnosis and Associated Treatment Among U.S. Children and Adolescents, 2016*. *J Clin Child Adolesc Psychol*. 2018;47(2):199-212.

Smartphone adoption data: *Pew Research Center, 2007–2016*

MOVEMENT MATTERS:

'Nearly 1 in 4 ten year olds in the UK are living with obesity.'

Source: *the National Child Measurement Programme 2023/24 School year from NHS England*

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE:

'Children under 2 who have more screen time tend to speak fewer words.'

Source: Madigan S, McArthur BA, Anhorn C, et al. *Associations Between Screen Use and Child Language Skills: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis*. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2020;174(7):665-675.

'2 million UK children now struggle with speech and language—a 27% rise in just 2 years.'

Source: *I CAN & Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), 2023*
Based on NHS and Department for Education SLCN service data.