

Parenting in the Digital Age

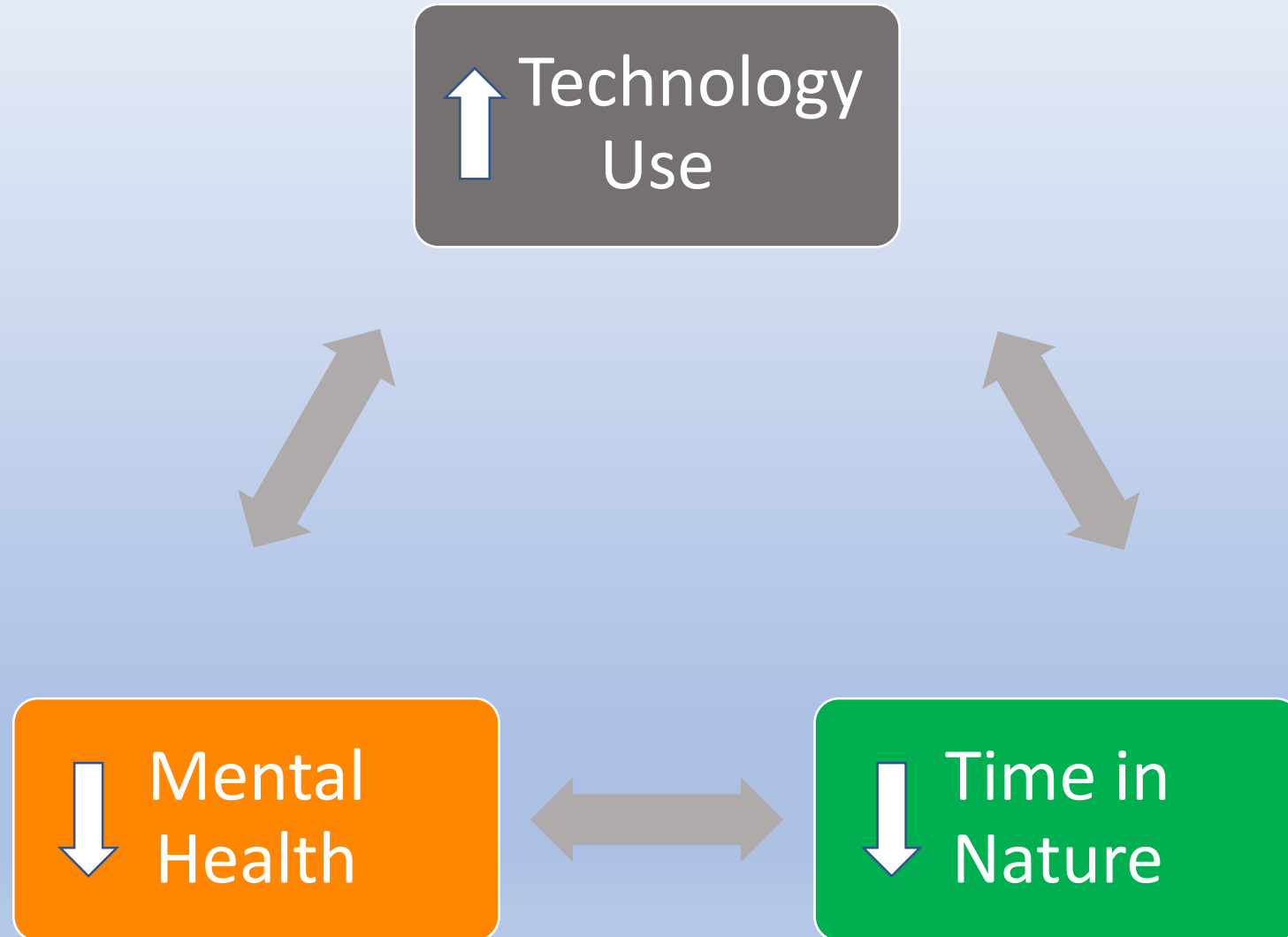
Matt Bukowski, LPC

Presented at Charlottesville Waldorf School

April 10, 2019



Overview – Related Trends



About Me

- Grew up in suburban/rural mix – 80's and 90's
- College: Liberal arts, philosophy, religion, anthropology
- Licensed Professional Counselor – Families
- Husband and father of 3 & 6-year old boys
- Earning PhD, research on mental health benefits of nature

My Childhood

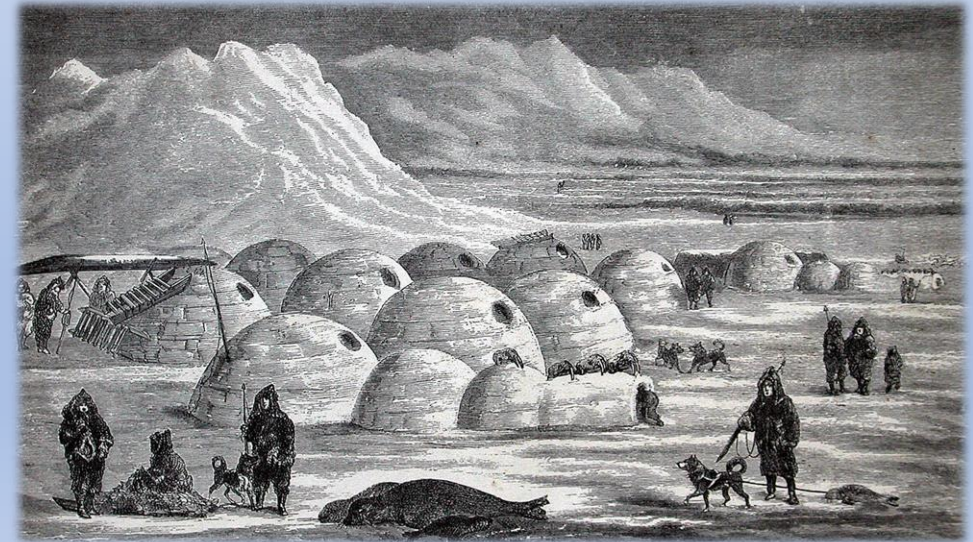


My Journey

- Fully immersed in early digital tech
- Increasing awareness of problematic trends and profit motives of proponents
- Relinquishment of all modern tech, conscientious objection to the internet
- 1997-2001: no television, movies, internet, new music
- Gradual adoption with limits, skepticism and intentionality
- Current love/hate, but peaceful enough relationship with tech...

Early Adulthood







Humans have a natural attraction to technology – it is one of our primary adaptive traits.

Technology can be:

- Independent*: Makers/users acquire, create, destroy freely
- Semi-dependent*: Mix of manufactured/imported and made
- Fully-dependent*: Goods acquired by users from centralized makers/owners

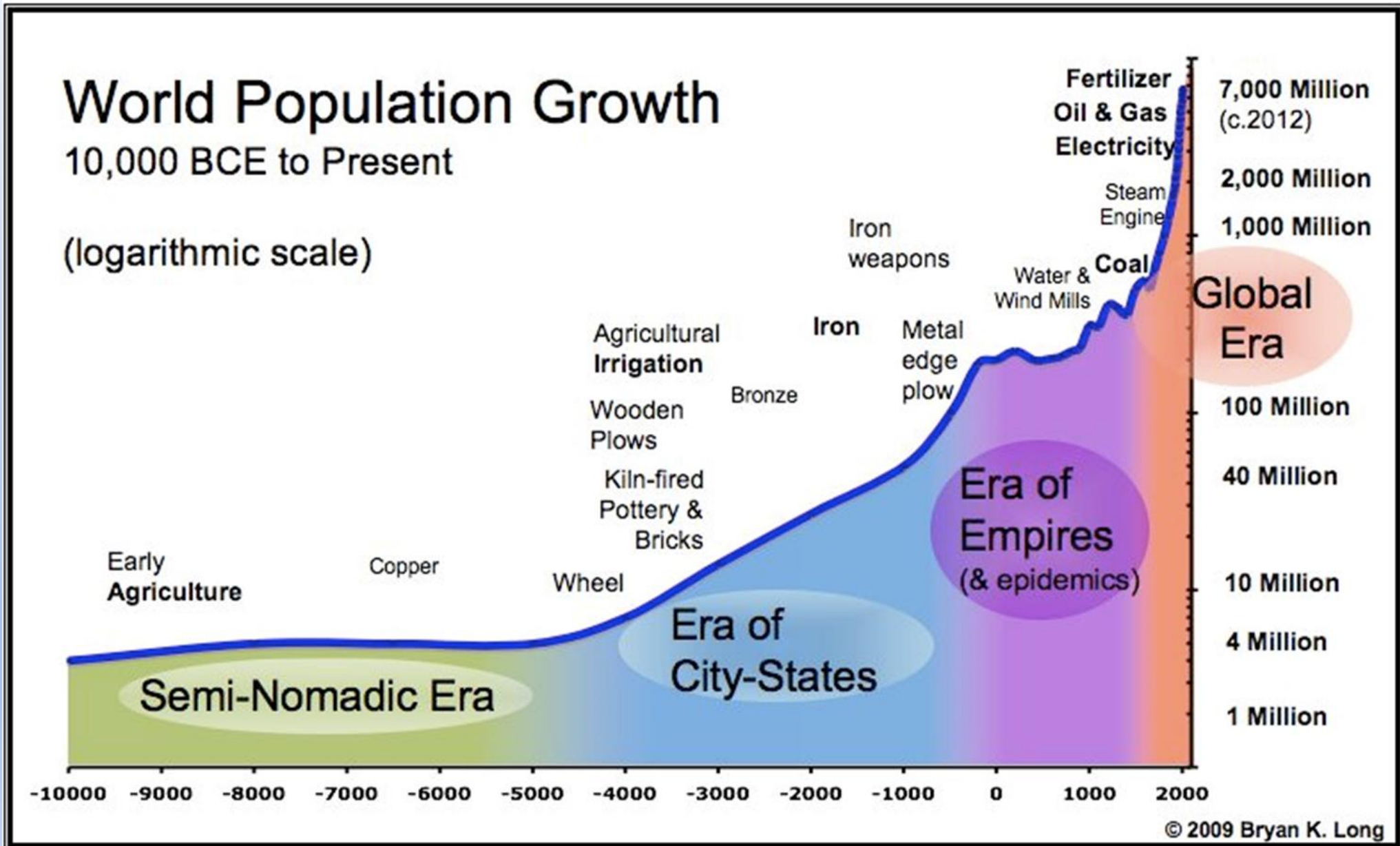
The New York Times

John Chau Wanted to Change Life on North Sentinel Island. Was He Wrong?

The death of a young American missionary on a tropical island at the hands of an indigenous group has left us to wonder: Are they better off with us or without us?



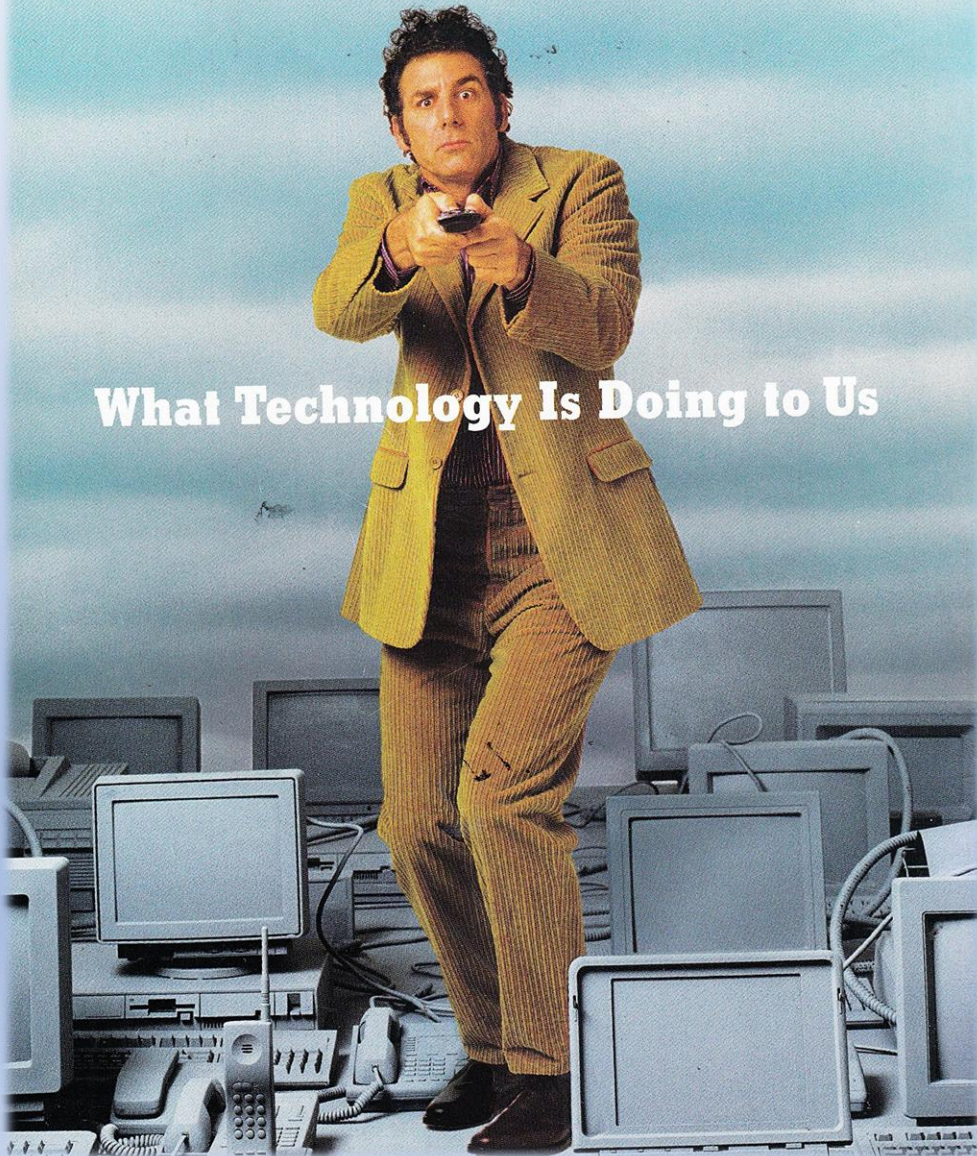
Historical Context



The New York Times Magazine

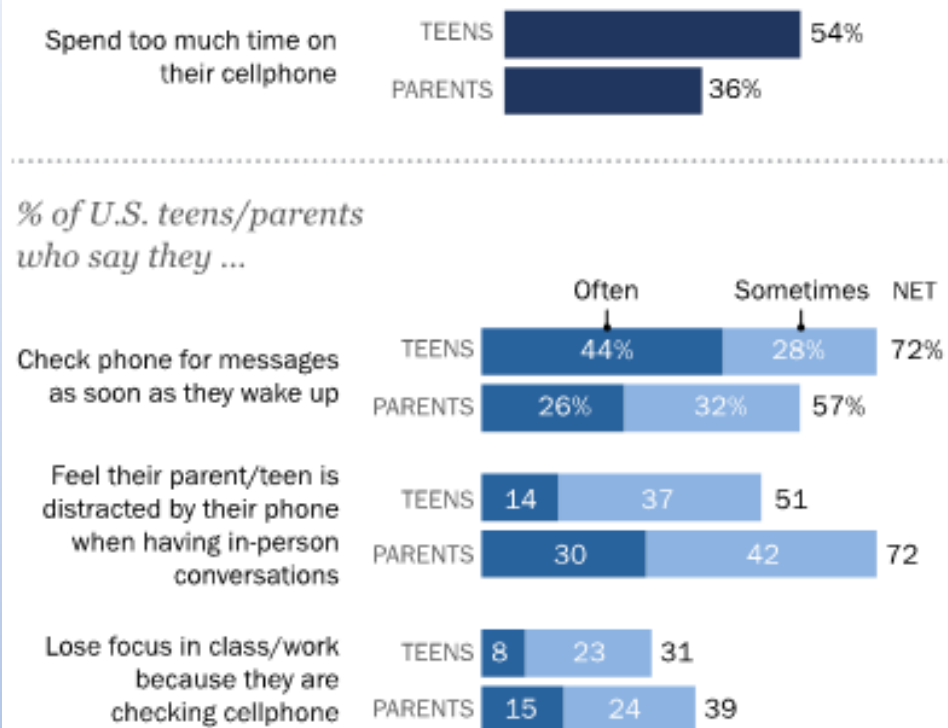
SEPTEMBER 28, 1997 / SECTION 6

What Technology Is Doing to Us



Parents and teens report varying levels of attachment, distraction due to their cellphones

% of U.S. teens/parents who say they ...



Note: Parents refer to parents of teens ages 13 to 17. Teens were asked how often they lose focus in class, whereas parents were asked how often they lose focus at work.

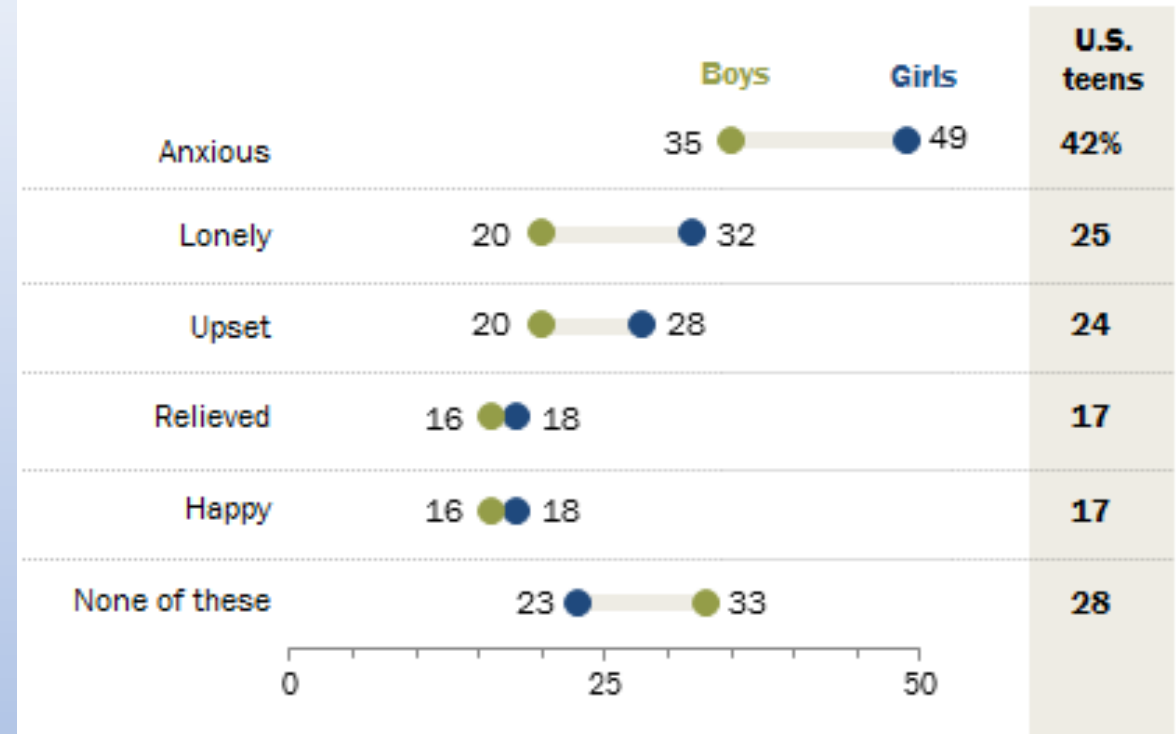
Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

"How Parents and Teens Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Girls are more likely than boys to feel anxious or lonely without their phone

% of U.S. teens who say they feel ___ when they do not have their cellphone



Note: Respondents could select multiple options.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

"How Parents and Teens Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

From a survey of 743 U.S. teens and 1,058 U.S. parents of teens conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

<https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/08/22/how-teens-and-parents-navigate-screen-time-and-device-distractions/>

Trustworthy Sources – Think Critically

- Look at the actual research article when possible
 - What kind of study/method?
 - Who conducted it?
 - What population/size?
- Examine the source's bias – how biased is it?
 - Even scientific sources are biased by funding and institutional priorities
- Is the headline supported by the evidence?



SCIENCE —

Video games may protect mental health and avert trauma, addiction

Short games of *Tetris* ward off cravings and dash distressing flashbacks.

BETH MOLE - 3/29/2017, 7:00 AM



- L lyadurai, et al. (2018). *Preventing intrusive memories after trauma via a brief intervention involving Tetris computer game play in the emergency department: a proof-of-concept randomized controlled trial* Molecular Psychiatry, 23: pp674–682
- 71 Participants who experienced/witnessed car accidents – at one week mean # of intrusive memories was ½ for Tetris vs. control group.

UT CHEMISTS DISCOVER HOW BLUE LIGHT SPEEDS BLINDNESS

By Christine Billau : August 8th, 2018

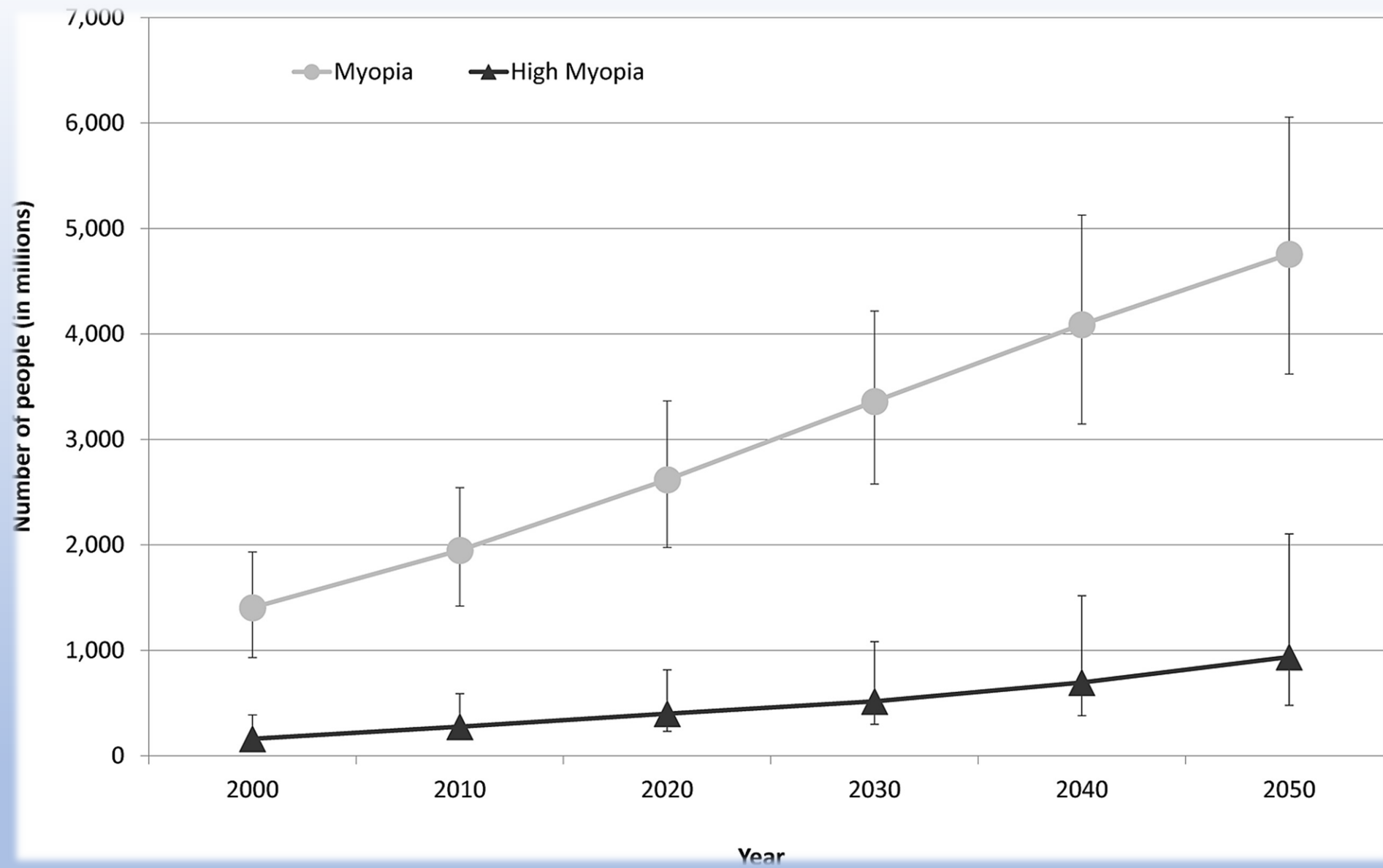


Blue light from digital devices and the sun transforms vital molecules in the eye's retina, according to new optical chemistry research at The University of Toledo.

The process outlined in the study, which was recently published in the journal *Scientific Data*, shows that blue light speeds up the process of macular degeneration, a leading cause of blindness in the United States.

"We are being exposed to blue light continuously, and the eye's cornea and





Global Prevalence of Myopia and High Myopia and Temporal Trends from 2000 through 2050
Holden, Brien A. et al.
Ophthalmology , Volume 123 , Issue 5 , 1036 - 1042

2016 APA Screen Time Recommendations

- 0-18 months: Only video-chat with relatives
- 18-24 months: Only high-quality videos, parents watch with kids
- 2-5 years: Less than one-hour per day, parents should co-watch and discuss how it relates to the world around them
- 6+ Years: "Place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health."
- "Designate media-free times together, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms."

From: apa.org

Associations between 24 hour movement behaviours and global cognition in US children: a cross-sectional observational study

- Canadian 24-hour movement guidelines for children ages 8-11:
 - 60 Minutes of physical activity
 - Less than 2 hours screen time
 - Average 9-11 Hours of sleep
- Findings for 4,520 US Children
 - 51% met sleep recommendation
 - 37% met screen time recommendation
 - 18% met physical activity recommendation
 - **ONLY 5% MET ALL THREE**



Age, period, and cohort trends in mood disorder indicators and suicide-related outcomes in a nationally representative dataset, 2005–2017.

© Request Permissions

Twenge, Jean M., Cooper, A. Bell, Joiner, Thomas E., Duffy, Mary E., Binau, Sarah G.
Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Vol 128(3), Apr 2019, 185-199

- 611,880 US adolescents and adults since early 2000's
- Rates of major depressive episode in the last year increased 52% 2005–2017 (from 8.7% to 13.2%) among adolescents aged 12 to 17 and 63% 2009–2017 (from 8.1% to 13.2%) among young adults 18–25.
- 71% increase in serious psychological distress
- Cultural trends contributing to an increase in mood disorders and suicidal thoughts and behaviors since the mid-2000s, **including the rise of electronic communication and digital media and declines in sleep duration**, may have had a larger impact on younger people, creating a cohort effect.

The New York Times

DISRUPTIONS

Steve Jobs Was a Low-Tech Parent



The Washington Post

“Phones and apps aren’t good or bad by themselves, but ... they can exacerbate the difficulties of growing up.”

MELINDA GATES



BUSINESS INSIDER

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Silicon Valley parents are raising their kids tech-free — and it should be a red flag

Chris Weller Feb. 18, 2018, 8:00 AM



YOUR BRAIN ON APPS

AMERICAN EXPRESS TRAVEL

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2X MEMBERSHIP REWARDSSM POINTS
AT AMEXTRAVEL.COM ON TOP OF FREQUENT FLYER MILES

BOOK NOW

Benefits/fear advertised to parents

- How will your child learn necessary skills?
- How will your child be competitive for a high-paying job?
- How will your child fit in with peers?
- How will our child exercise their creativity and innovative spirit?





(August 6, 2018)

7 Job skills of the future (that AI and robots can't do better than humans)

- 1) Empathy and communication
- 2) Critical Thinking
- 3) Creativity
- 4) Strategy
- 5) **Technological Management, Upkeep and Installation**
- 6) Physical Skills
- 7) Imagination and Vision

Only **one** of these requires any interaction with technology

BBC Trending

'You are being programmed,' former Facebook executive warns

By Rozina Sini
BBC News

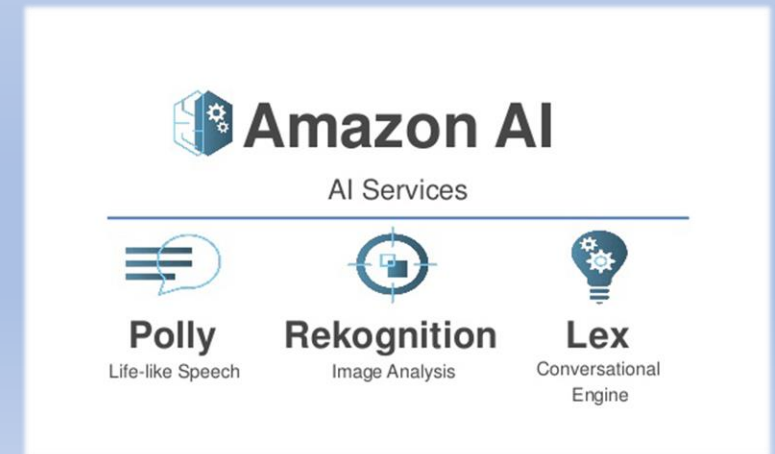
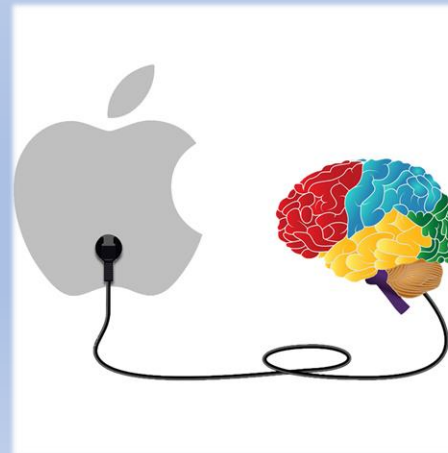
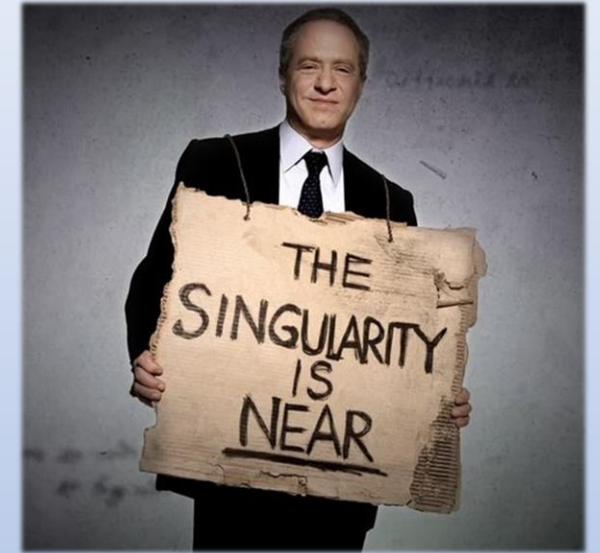
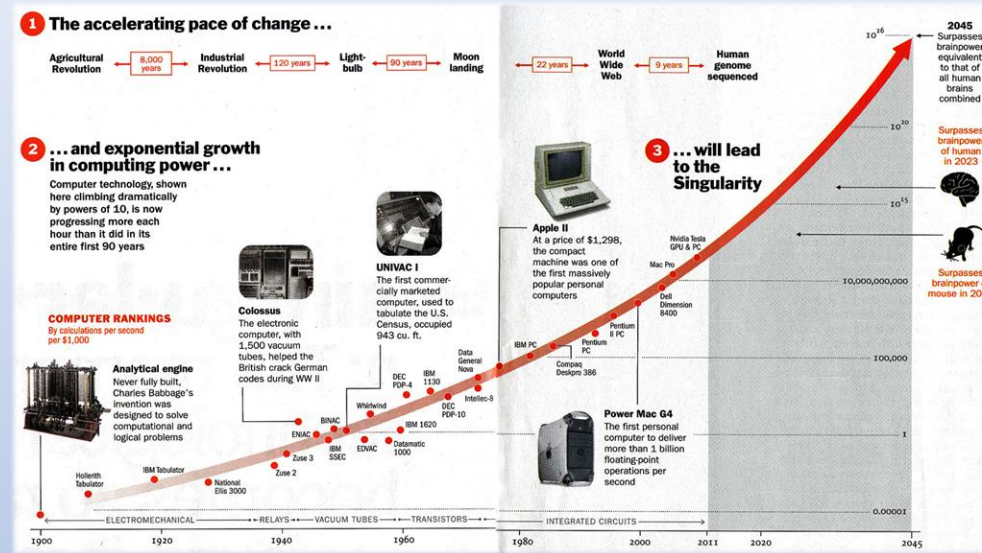
🕒 12 December 2017



 Share



If it feels like technology is taking over your brain...there's a reason for that...



What Is Transhumanism?

Transhumanism is a movement that aims to use technology to enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capabilities.



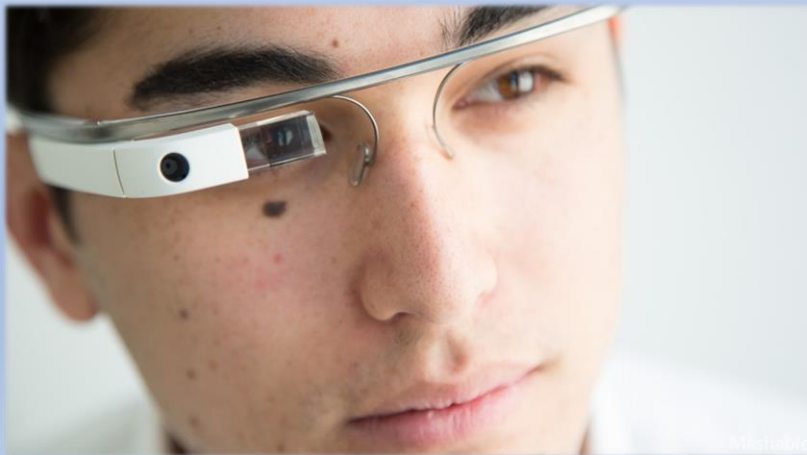
This can be achieved through anything from brain implants and bionic eyes, to stem cell technology and exoskeleton body suits.



Terms

- **Technocratic Paradigm** – The implicit assumption that modern technology (industrial, digital) is responsible for positive quality of life, and holds the promise to solve modern problems and increase quality of life in the future.
- **Transhumanism** – An ideological movement that seeks to overcome human mental and physical limitations through integration with digital and nano-technology.
- **Technological Singularity** – The envisioned future time when AI and robotics will eclipse human capabilities and humanity will become physically and mentally integrated with technological infrastructure.

What is here now...



What's coming next

Mon, Apr 08, 2019

Newsweek

U.S. | World | Business | Tech & Science | Culture | Sports | Health | Op

TECH & SCIENCE

DARPA WANTS TO PUT AI ELECTRICAL IMPLANTS IN PEOPLE'S BRAINS TO TREAT DEPRESSION

BY JOSEPH FRANKEL ON 11/30/17 AT 11:51 AM EST



LATEST
News Gets New

It's Now Possible To Telepathically Communicate with a Drone Swarm



AA FONT SIZE + PRINT

AP PHOTO/NATI HARNIK



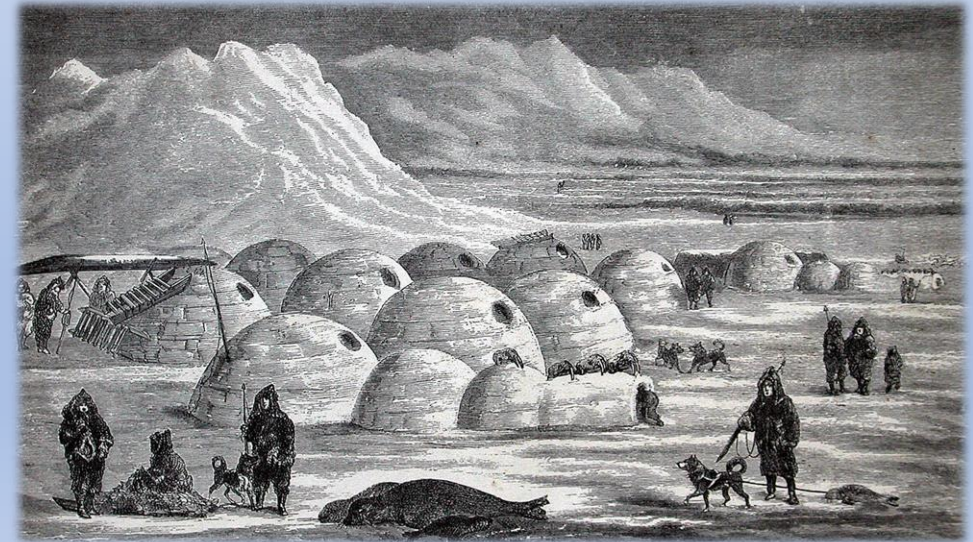
BY PATRICK TUCKER
TECHNOLOGY EDITOR

[READ BIO](#)



DARPA's new research in brain-computer interfaces is allowing a pilot to control multiple simulated aircraft at once.

A person with a brain chip can now pilot a swarm of drones — or even advanced fighter jets, thanks to research funded by the



“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn.”

— **John Muir**





NEW RESEARCH IN

Physical Sciences

Social Sciences

Biological Sciences

Residential green space in childhood is associated with lower risk of psychiatric disorders from adolescence into adulthood



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Mendeley

- Approx. 1 Million Danish citizens
- Residential green space correlated with mental health data longitudinally
- People with lowest amount of green space had **55% higher risk** of developing a mental health disorder *after* controlling for other known risk factors (SES, family history, parental age, regional economy).
- Green space at ages 3-4 appeared to be especially protective

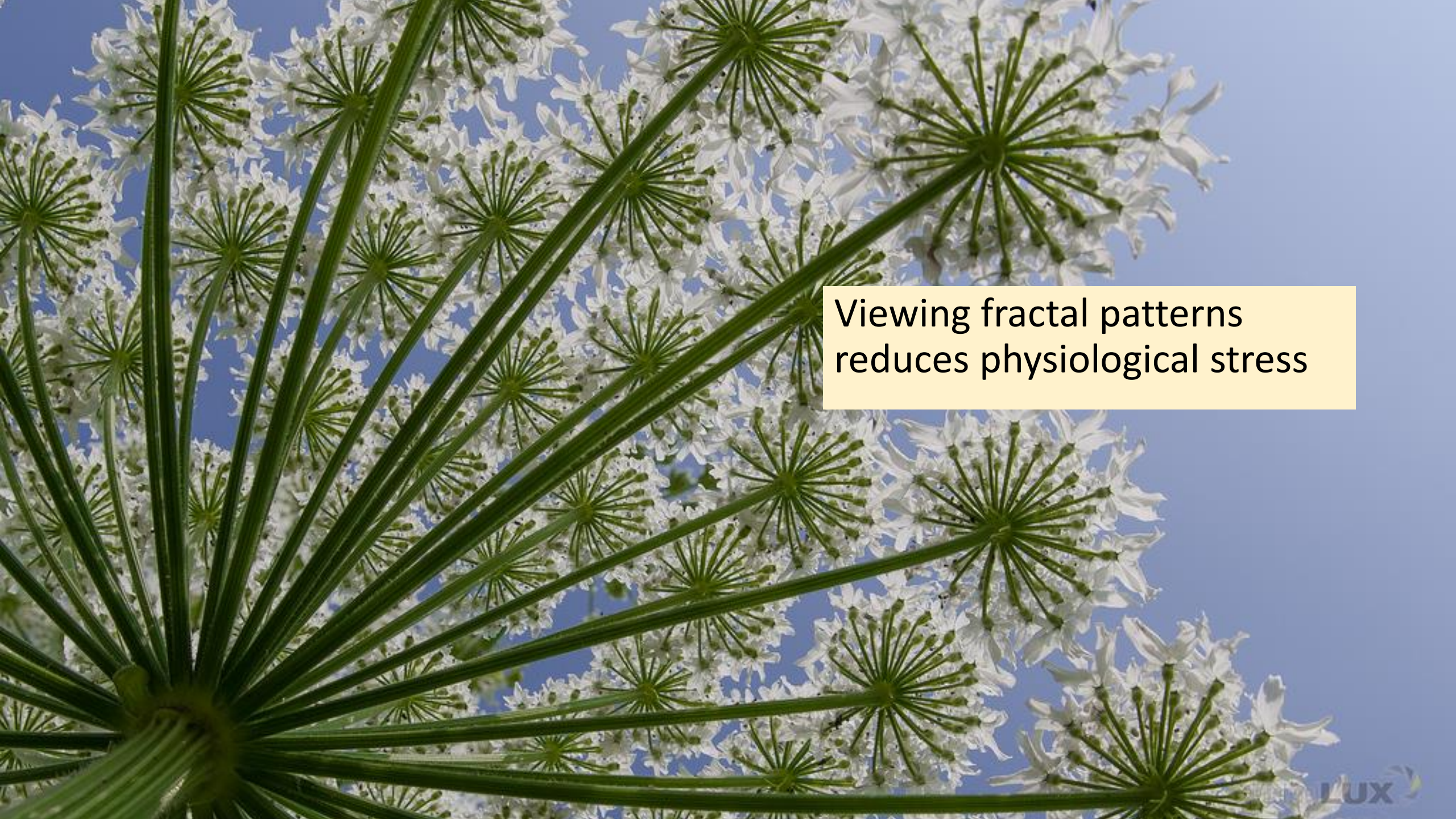
How does nature work?

- Restorative effects
 - Default mode functioning
 - Attention restoration theory
 - Increased parasympathetic nervous system activity (Berto, 2014)
 - Decreased ruminative thinking (Bratman, Hamilton, Hahn, Daily & Gross, 2015)

How do forests work?

- Phytoncides/Turpenes
 - Chemical messengers released by trees for communication
 - Stimulate and calm the human body when breathed in
- Soil Microbacteria
 - Increase Natural Killer (NK) cell production when breathed in, stimulate immune function.
 - NK production stays higher for 30 days after a 2-hour nature trip (Li, 2018).



A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a large, white, multi-stemmed flower, likely a Queen Anne's Lace. The flower's structure is highly symmetrical and fractal-like, with numerous green stems radiating from a central point and ending in small, white, five-petaled flowers. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The overall effect is one of natural complexity and symmetry.

Viewing fractal patterns
reduces physiological stress

Natural sounds reduce stress
(Ross & Mason, 2017)

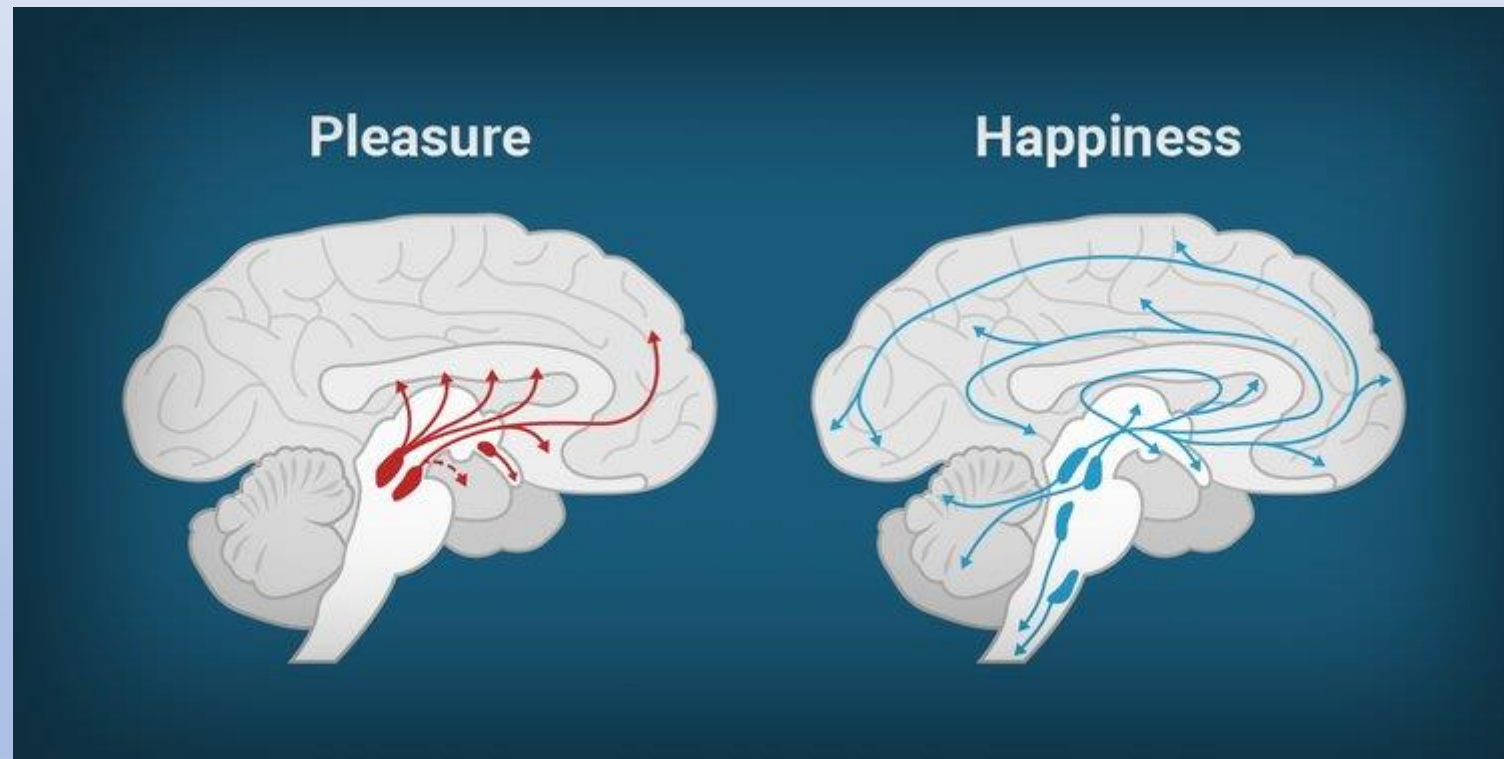


Create your family culture

- What is important to you? What do you want to be important to your children and their children?
 - Keeping up with your neighbors? Always having the latest technology?
 - Money?
 - Or something more timeless and universal?



Is digital media technology addictive? Yes.





**Realigning
technology
with humanity's
best interests.**

As featured in

60
MINUTES

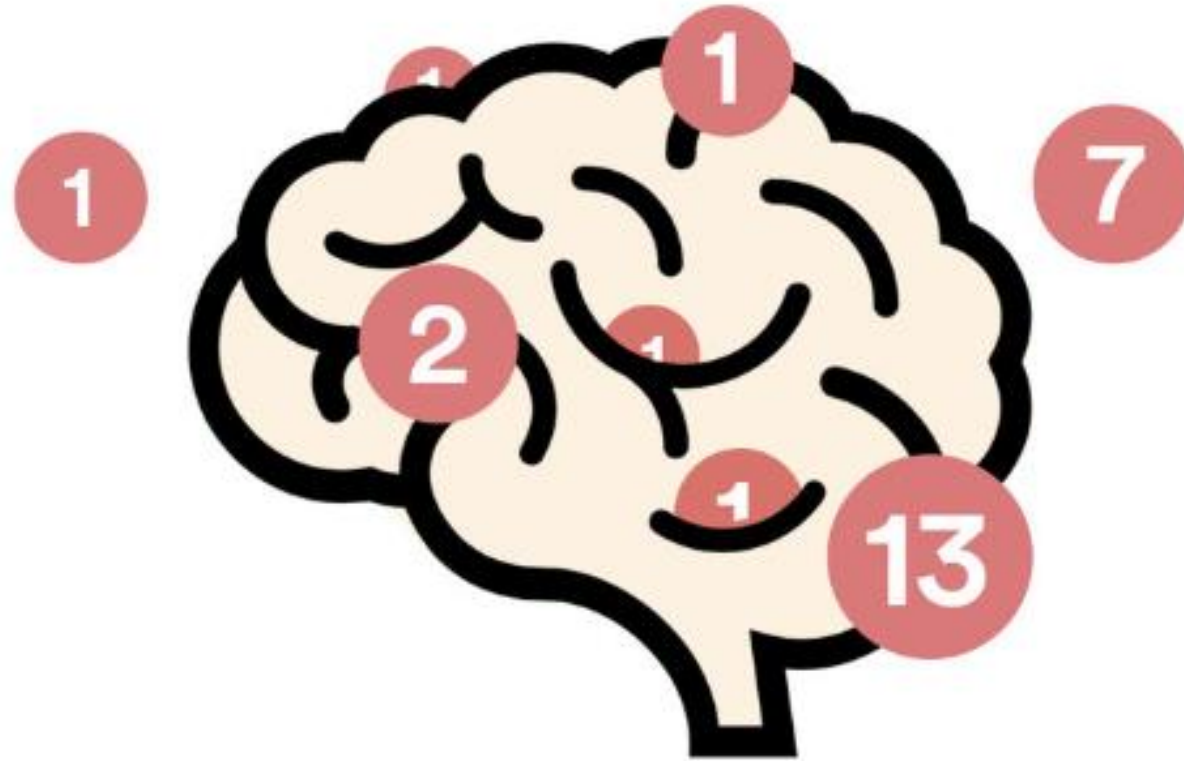
The
New York
Times

REAL TIME
WITH
BILL MAHER

recode

Our society is being hijacked by technology.

What began as a race to monetize our attention is now eroding the pillars of our society: mental health, democracy, social relationships, and our children.



What kind of future do you want?



VS



Our Rules as Parents

- No games on the phone – use free time creatively/productively
- Phones are generally for communication, news, research
- VERY LIGHT social media use
 - I post something 3-4x/year, my wife probably 1x/week
 - Usually the posts are about a project we are involved in or support
- Engage in relationships in real life
- If I want to use social media I will like other people's posts...spread love
- We don't tie our mental rewards and social feedback to electronics, so it's easy to put them down
- TV, Movies, Books for entertainment

Our Family Culture

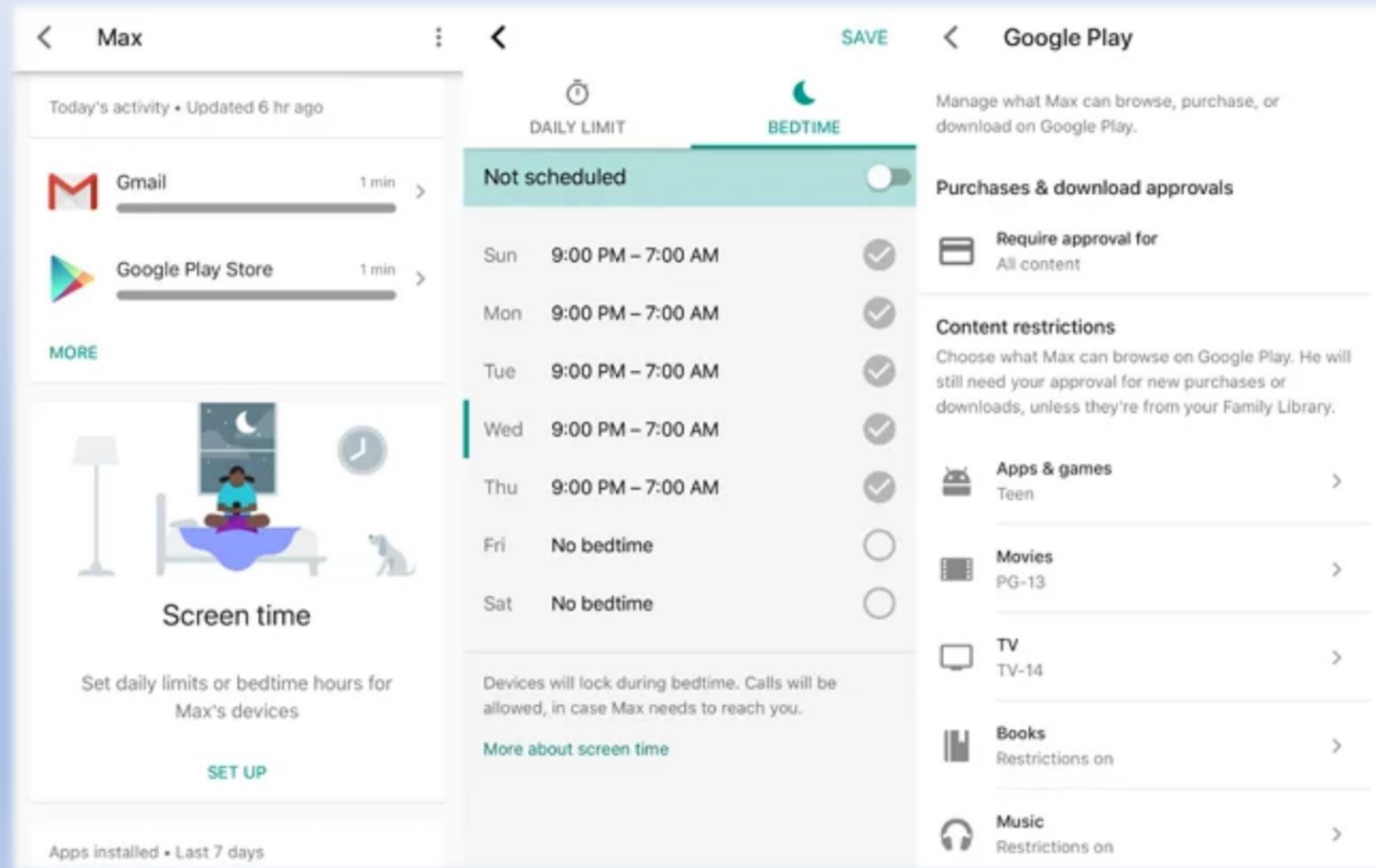
- Kids can have free access to books, art supplies, toys, outdoors
- Outdoor time daily, as a family at least one outing per week
- No tablets in the house
- Kids don't use computers
- Kids don't have phones
- Kids can't use our phones – ever, for anything
- Kids can't access the tv independently – we coordinate what/when/where they watch tv
- We have total control and often have to set the limits and deal with the (generally short-lived) tantrums.
- Long stretches (1 hr+) of TV time are for family movies or times parents need to work

Quinn's Story

- Met a new friend at martial arts class
- Was invited to go to a coffee shop after
- Upon arrival all kids are on own tables/phones
- Quinn watches other kids play, is offered/taught games
- Later, Quinn remarked how uninteresting the play was because everyone was on a tablet

THE POINT: Electronics may be a helpful activity to occupy kids when parents need to work or socialize, but groups of kids should play screen free.

Beware of solutions provided by the companies creating the problem



Strategies for Reducing Technology Use

- Think Critically
 - Before adopting any behavior change (using a new app for example), ask: is this necessary? What skills/abilities might I lose by using this technology?
- Choose lower-tech and older versions of essential devices
 - Less expensive, less addictive, still functional
 - Avoid the automatic upgrades and sales tactics
- Practice Abstinence/Fasting
 - When possible/practical leave your phone in the car.
 - Turn the phone off sometimes when you don't need it.

Strategies for Reducing Technology Use

- Set limits whenever you feel they are healthy for you and your children
 - Don't second guess yourself or wait for someone else to tell you it's ok
 - Children are highly adaptable...they will complain, pout, and mope for a while, and after they realize that you are not changing, they will find a way to deal with the limit
- Be selective and intentional about your screen time
 - Remove apps and games that distract you and lure you in to waste time
 - Set manageable, achievable goals (an hour less a day).
- Be highly selective and intentional about social media use
 - Understand how social media re-wires our brains to crave "likes" and novel content.
 - Ask yourself if time spent on social media truly enriches your life

National/Regional Movements

- Commonsensemedia.org
- Humanetech.com
- Screenfree.com
- Actionforhealthykids.org
- Commercialfreechildhood.org
- Screenfreeparenting.com
- Childrenandnature.org

Local Resources

- livingearthva.com



- Wildrock.org



Conclusions

- It will always be possible to generate research on either side – read the details and think critically.
- Families should feel empowered to think independently and not motivated to change their culture by social forces or fear of career failure.
- Rather than focus on screen time alone, focus on the type and purpose of screen time, and how these activities are balanced with healthier and more developmental activities.

Contact Me

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For counseling, family consultation, organization support and research, public presentation.

