

Like everything in life, using technology boils down to using healthy habits to enhance our lives and improve the relationships we value. When anything is used without boundaries and limits, it harms relationships.

## The Better Balance

Finding a balance between time on and off of your devices starts with establishing good habits. Research has shown that the best way to change or break a bad habit is to replace it with a good one.<sup>1</sup> Here are some good habits to consider:

- Decide on a maximum number of hours daily you will spend on your device, not including working or using it productively.
- Come up with a screen-time plan for you and your family
- Have designated unplugged family time.
- Turn off your screen when someone is having a conversation with you.

## The Boundaries

Start first by defining the goals that are most important to you, and then come up with the boundaries that allow both you and your family to protect those goals. Here are a few ideas:

### Goals and Boundaries

- Exercising more to stay healthy. The boundary to protect that: Replace one to two hours of screen-time with exercise. Limit screen-time usage to allow you to do more.
- Practicing good sleep hygiene. The boundary to protect that: No devices used in bed or shut devices off at least one hour before sleep. Have a set bedtime schedule and routine.
- Making more time for my kids. The boundary to protect that: Limiting amount daily screen-time. Scheduling activities to do with the kids.
- Spending quality time with family and friends. The boundary to protect that: No isolating from family while on devices and limiting daily screen-time usage. No devices at the dinner table.
- Being a better listener to my children and partner. The boundary to protect that: Screens get turned off and devices set down while people are talking to each other. Texts and notifications ignored during real conversations. If you're waiting on an important text, then communicate that.

## Time Management

**Keep track of how much time screen time you use in a day.**

Here are a few ideas for how you can use those "smart" capabilities to manage your screen time:

- Set timers for ending screen time an hour or two before bedtime.
- Set downtimes in your devices that schedule time away from the screen.
- Set a timer or time limits in your devices for apps that you know you get sucked into, such as games or social media.

## The Dangers

Your smart devices are easy to become addicted to. Being addicted to something means that stopping it causes trauma or stress.<sup>2</sup> According to research, one in eight Americans struggles with too much screen time.<sup>3</sup> Six to 10 percent of smartphone users show signs of addiction to the internet.<sup>4</sup> The question to ask yourself is whether you can set boundaries around your usage so that you and your relationships don't suffer.

Too much screen time in the evening delays your ability to fall asleep, hurts your quality of sleep, and throws off your biological clock.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, over using your screens can be harmful to your overall health. Research has shown that too much usage over time, such as excessive texting, social media, or video game use unnaturally over-stimulates and stresses our nervous system. This excessive stress can lead to poor health and sleep.

## Conclusion

If you do recognize that you have poor habits around your screen time, then develop good healthy alternatives. Remember, your screen time cannot replace the love, care, and connection you have with the people around you.

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