



**C**urrent global studies have found that over the last 18 months children, teenagers and young people have turned to technology (social media, smartphone apps, games, education and online forums) to ease confinement, boredom and social isolation (Serra et al. 2021). However, the increase in screen time has been a burgeoning problem for several years. This information helps to inform parents on how and why we need to address the effects of heavy screen usage on children.

**Did You Know?** Based on child development research, the World Health Organization suggests different screen time caps for different age groups. Today however, research tells us that spending **any** time on screens is detrimental.

- 0h** > Screen time for toddlers - It's advised that children **younger than two** don't have any screen time at all.
- 1h** > Screen time for young children **Two to five year olds** should have no more than one hour per day.
- 2hs** > Screen time for teenagers **Five to 18 year olds** should have no more than two hours per day.

**C**hildren who over-use technology can seem "wired" and "tired," agitated but exhausted, which limits capacity to make healthy choices. Being highly stimulated by technology impacts memory, cognitive functioning, and the ability to relate to and empathise with others. Children who are left unregulated can "struggle academically and socially" (Dunckley, 2015.) (Spizer, 2012.)

Children and young teenagers who over-use screen time, gadgets and electronic games, can often be misdiagnosed as having major depression, bipolar disorder or ADHD and offered treatments that won't often work says Author Victoria Dunckley. Her suggestion to regulate moods is for children to have an electronic or digital "fast" to enable the nervous system to "reset".

She believes these improve sleep and help encourage more "face to face contact" with others.

**Reducing Tech at These Four Times Can Be Beneficial in Helping to "Screen-Wean"** says Dr Meghan Owenz from screenfreeparenting.com:

- **BEFORE SCHOOL**
- **MEAL TIMES**
- **IN THE CAR**
- **BED TIME**



**N**eurologist and Author Manfred Spitzer claimed that younger children are now relying on technology for play activities which greatly limit the "challenges" that aids a child's sensory and motor development. He saw this as having a negative impact on the more imaginative, creative intuitive and emotional right side of the brain, causing an imbalance, leading to a number of problems i.e.

- **Difficulty in Concentrating**
- **Short Attention Span**
- **Short Term Memory Loss**
- **Emotional Disturbances – leading to Depression**

## Digital Dementia

Researchers tell us that the addictive appeal of technology, caused by the dopamine "hit", can limit capacity to make healthy choices, due to the brain's cognitive muscle-use falling by the wayside. **An important new study published in June 2021, documented that children's working memory is affected with increased mobile phone use. Children were less able to recall information they had learned 20 MINUTES earlier!** As well as this, other cognitive impairment, concentration levels, ability to think and insightful action have all been shown to be affected. (Supper and Teuchert-Noodt. 2021)

**In 2017 the World Health Organisation were concerned enough to include Gaming Disorder in the revision of International Classification of Diseases.**



## Technology & Wireless Radiation

**Did you know?** "There are **no** studies showing that microwave radiation exposure in children is safe and **no** studies show that continuous exposure from mobile phones, phone masts, antennas, radio/TV towers, radar, cordless phones, Wi-Fi routers, baby monitors are safe." EHTrust.org

**Independent Studies show** that harmful microv radiation emitted from Wi-Fi and phones etc. penetrates proportionally deeper into the brain of children aged 5 and 10, compared to adults brains (Gandhi et al. 1996). However, simply by hardwiring wi-fi with the use of a cheap and accessible ethernet cable helps significantly reduce the adverse health effect.

See: <https://ehtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/EHT-Reduce-Cell-Phone-and-Wireless-Exposure-2-Page-PDF-1.pdf>



# Technoference: Distracted Parenting

## "SCREEN TIME DISCONNECTS US" (BO, MUM)

Researchers McDaniel and Radesky (2018) indicate parent digital technology use can damage parent-child relationships and can be linked to challenging behaviours. Focusing on a gadget, and not your child, may:

- Stunt your child's emotional growth.
- Make your child feel insignificant.
- Delay your child's brain growth.
- Hinder your child's development of communication, language and social skills.
- Mean that your child doesn't develop empathy (allprodad.com).

## But There Are Simple Solutions!

Research shows that the following simple activities can be used to repair the damage caused by screens. When used repeatedly throughout a child's day and week, sensory inputs help to calm their lower brain systems and provide a foundation for social connection/engagement and higher-level thinking (reason).

Examples of sensory inputs include:

- TRAMPOLINING, SWIMMING, MOST SPORTS,
- READING
- SINGING
- STORYTELLING
- BOARD GAMES
- DANCING
- DRAWING, PAINTING OR "MESSY PLAY"
- READING BOOKS AND
- UNDIRECTED PLAY



## Repairing Parent-Child Relationships

*"The phone can wait; precious moments with your children cannot."*

### Working with Parents

Practitioners can advise parents on how to re connect and build better bonds with their child. Helping improve behaviours by rebuilding damaged and fraught relationships, in particular, the PCAP course focuses on re connecting, validating, building confidence and improving understanding of the child through, observation, communication and listening skills. Other interventions such as Play Therapy work directly with children and are beneficial in helping screen saturated/addicted children to regulate behaviours, re-engage and focus in the classroom, while improving relationships with family and peers.

**Back in 2016, the Guardian newspaper reported that children are nature deficit and spend less time outdoors than prisoners!** Today we spend far more time inside, on screens than we did in 2016.

We face an "Extinction of Experience," warn Soga and Gaston (2016) who say that sensitivity and connection to the unhurried natural cycles of nature is being lost and is being replaced by addictive electronic stimulation and virtual experience.

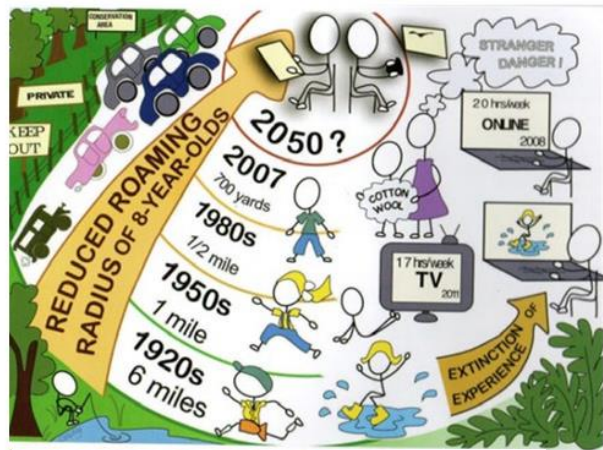


Illustration by Susan Kelly

Reduced Roaming Radius of 8yr olds  
Learning with Nature by Marina Robb, Victoria Mew  
and Anna Richardson  
published by Green Books [www.greenbooks.co.uk](http://www.greenbooks.co.uk)

**Being in Blue and Green spaces** has been scientifically proven to bring health and well-being benefits, even when just walking or exercising in parks, near lakes and ponds and near trees. When outside, "Grounding", messy play using nature's toolbox, body awareness, rhythmical movements, dancing, singing, stretching, pulling, and walking barefoot connects directly with the land and it's sensory, tactile, calming properties. (Macairt, 2018).

**By re-introducing children to the sensory immersiveness of the outdoors, natural immune boosters and mood enhancers are readily available!**

Sitting or lying on the earth or grass ensures self-regulation, uses all of the body's senses, calms the lower brain systems and has the additional benefits of direct contact with the earth's health-enhancing, natural electromagnetic frequencies. Being in nature enables children to take a break from using digital devices and helps them to be fully present in the here and now!

To find out more, please see:

<https://creative-me-playtherapy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Children-and-Young-Persons-Mental-Health-During-and-After-the-Pandemic.pdf>

<https://www.allprodad.com/5-dangers-of-distracted-parenting/>

<https://www.clear-sky.org.uk/> see for PCAP Practitioners.

<https://ehtrust.org/resources-to-share/printable-resources/>

<https://www.emf-portal.org/en/study-overviews>

Dunkley, V. L. (2015). Screenshot-is-making-kids-moody-crazy-and-lazy. Psychology Today [Online] Blog. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/mental-wealth/201508/screenshot-is-making-kids-moody-crazy-and-lazy>

<https://familyman.movember.com/articles/screen-time>.

Macairt, K. LandPlay See "Creative Spark."

<https://playtherapy.org.uk/>

<https://www.saferemr.com/2019/07/recent-research.html>

<https://www.screenfreeparenting.com>

McDaniel, B., Radesky, J. "Technoference" (2018) doi:10.1038/s41390-018-0052-6.

Serra, G., Lo Scalzo, L., Giuffrè, M. et al. Smartphone use and addiction during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic: cohort study on 184 Italian children and adolescents. *Ital J Pediatr* **47**, 150 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13052-021-01102-8>.

Soga, M., Gaston, K. "Extinction of experience: the loss of human-nature interactions" (2016) *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.1225>.

Supper A, Teuchert-Noodt G. "How learning doesn't work" Children evaluate their cell phone use – An empirical pilot study. *Neurol Neurosci*. 2021; 2(2):1-9

Spitzer, M. (2012). *Demencia Digital*. Ediciones.

