



PARENT HANDOUT

We hope you enjoyed the film. Here are some of the science-backed takeaways from the movie to help kids thrive in our new digital age. Remember to reach out to other parents to share ideas about what is working and to get help when things are going wrong. We need each – after all, we are stronger together!

SOLUTIONS

Weekly Family Tech Talks (aka Tech Talk Tuesdays)

Weekly short family meetings about positive things about our digital age and then issues are important. (It does not have to be on Tuesdays but committing to one dinner time a week a great idea.) Starting with a positive about tech helps kids feel understood because they experience many positives and makes them more open to talking about limits. The biggest issue at the elementary age level is the sheer **time spent online because it is so captivating** — think video games, YouTube, shows, etc. Helping kids talk about media and issues in our digital age fosters critical thinking that is crucial for their journey to having healthy and balanced online lives. Go to screenagersmovie.com/blog to find hundreds of topics that Dr. Ruston has written about over the years.

Safeguarding Sleep

The science is clear - keeping devices out of kids' bedrooms during sleep time is one of the best rules we can have in our homes. Research shows that **not getting enough sleep as a child can have prolonged effects on the brain affecting cognitive and emotional development. Data shows that devices distract from sound sleep.** Ideally, keep device out of the bedroom - put them in your bedroom (as Dr. Ruston did with her daughter) or put them in a locked place such as a cabinet or bag (as a parent mentioned in the film). Consider a central place in the home for tech use to help kids resist trying to sneak to use devices. Kids will say they need their phone because it has an alarm clock, but a good old-fashioned alarm clock will work just fine.

Preventing and Responding to Meltdowns

Whether it's when saying the time is up for a video game or another online activity that may be met with great resistance from kids, **timers and mile markers** are good ways to help kids pull the plug. Remind them they have 20 minutes, then 10 minutes, and so on helps their brain prepare to wind down. It can still be hard for them to turn it off, so **tantrums are normal. Expect them.** Science says to **empathize** with their feelings while they're pleading for more time, but **do not give in.**

Video Games

Research shows violent video games have an impact on children's aggression.

- Keep violent video games out of the home as much as possible.
- Do "active mediation". This means **having discussions** and asking questions about what they are doing. "What would be the best way to handle a situation like this?" "What would be the worst way?"
- Co-playing can silently reinforce what is seen on the screen. It's important to help kids know **they can make choices based on their values — not the game's environment** — in a non-judgmental gaming environment.
- Choose prosocial games when possible.
- Keep headsets off and listen to the game playing so that you can have conversations about it as you play.
- Talk with your kids about what they see and feel when they play video games, especially violent ones.

Social Media

In the film, Jonathan Haidt states, **"Social media is the single worst part of a phone-based childhood."** Research shows that when adolescents moved their social lives onto social media, **anxiety and depression went up quickly.** Remember that YouTube, even YouTube Kids, has much of the same video content as social media like Instagram. For this reason, some parents do not allow YouTube unless supervised by the parent. **Delay access.** WaitUntil8th.org is an organization urging families not to give phones, smart devices, and social media access until eighth grade.

Safety First is a concept Dr. Ruston has taught to many parents and teens in her medical practice. It involves having parents let kids know that they won't reflexively take away devices whenever any issues are happening online. This helps kids feel safer in coming to parents about online problems that are occurring.

Talk to the parents of your kids' friends about delaying social media until they are at least 13. Based on research, many people, including Dr. Ruston, are suggesting 16.

The parents discussing this in the movie say:

"I've talked with a lot of Charlie's friends' moms, at least not until 16 ... there's also a group chat from where we've shared, 'I'm going to keep my kids off social media until 16, [and others say] 'yes I'm doing it too.'", "We're trying to avoid the one kid who had it, and then they all wish they had it."

Homework

When it comes to homework, **no distractions or devices are best**. Watching TV or playing a game while doing homework may seem like multitasking, but research shows that **concentrating on two things simultaneously tires the brain** resulting in poorer performance and concentration. If the homework is on a laptop or Chromebook, use parental controls or apps (there are several) to lock other tabs. The controls are usually already in place if it's a school-issued device.

No Devices at School – Away for the Day

The research is clear - devices at school equal lower academic performance and higher social-emotional incidents. Schools with **no-phones-from-bell-to-bell** policies report **increased emotional well-being, social connectedness and academic achievement**. Kids are either on board or complaining. If they're on board, support their stance. If they complain, empathize. If their school does not have a phone-free policy, encourage your child to start one. Free resources, including a tool kit for talking to the principal, are available at AwayForTheDay.org.

You can find additional resources including the Screenagers blog and podcast, the three other Screenagers films and all the studies cited in the film at screenagersmovie.com.

ADDITIONAL SCREENAGERS RESOURCES

TECH TALK TUESDAYS

Access a library of over 450 blogs from Screenagers' filmmaker Dr. Delaney Ruston, containing a wealth of information and advice for families. Sign up to receive this every Tuesday via email.



www.screenagersmovie.com/blog

THE SCREENAGERS PODCAST

Join Dr. Ruston and guests every 2 weeks for the Screenagers Podcast, where they explore in more detail the topics of our movies - Screen Time, Mental Health, Substances and much more.



www.screenagersmovie.com/podcast

BOOK - PARENTING IN THE SCREEN AGE

Written to help parent have calmer and more productive conversations with youth about tech and its impact upon their health, happiness and development. Read a free preview of the book at:



www.screenagersmovie.com/book

SCREENAGERS ON YOUTUBE

We publish new videos every week, featuring the experts from our movies, giving new and valuable parenting advice that wasn't in our movies, along with other resources.



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