Screen Time in the Mean Time

GKIS HOME STARTER WORKBOOK

DR. TRACY BENNETT

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For Brad whose patience and generosity is never ending

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Screen Time in the Mean Time: GKIS Home Starter Workbook

By Dr. Tracy Bennett

Parents tell me all the time that they feel worried and ashamed that their kids are in the driver's seat when it comes to screen use. It's an epidemic issue. Parenting these days is part bliss and part guilt. For the first time in history, digital native kids know more than their digital immigrant parents. It can seem impossible to stay ahead of them.

No more. The GKIS Home Starter Workbook will change that. Today you are getting started with a home staging program that will set up a system of safety, accountability, and cooperative negotiation. "Home staging" refers to the fact that this course sets up, or *stages*, your home for optimal success. With common understanding, sensible rules, parenting strategies, tech tools, and safer screen use stations, you'll optimize balance and healthiest habits.

Not only will Home Starter setups fix the slips that are happening now, it will also launch habits that will pay off for years to come. You are no longer alone. When it comes to justifying the step-by-step changes to your kids, you can speak with utter confidence that you know what you're doing, and your directives will lead to positive changes. No more shame. No more blame.

Your Free Weekly GKIS Blog Articles

Currently GKIS weekly articles are scheduled to arrive Sundays at 2:00. I figured that may be the time you are committed to rest after eating Sunday lunch. **Because you signed up for real change, I challenge you to identify one 20-minute window a week for self-reflection about your parenting.**

Maybe your well-deserved quiet reflection will be Sunday afternoons after you get your GKIS article in your email, or maybe you'll choose another day with fewer

distractions. It's up to you. During your reflection, cozy up with hot tea and the reading you've bookmarked to reflect and journal.

Whether you choose to write memoir style or create a bullet list of topics to discuss during your GKIS Family Meeting, **make this weekly moment a sacred, guilt-free habit.**

The overriding goal is to strengthen your relationship with your kids with fun, supportive, and loving guidance and encouragement. When they're little, you'll teach them during snuggles and story time. As they get older, you will sneak in negotiate discussions while you're taking them to school or throwing together a snack. Whatever magic moments you create to nurture yourself and your family, GKIS encourages you to guide them through their nonvirtual AND virtual worlds. They need it and, let's face it, so do we!

Dr. Bennett's GKIS Story

Although I tend to be a fairly private person, I'd like to share with you why I became passionate about preventing digital injury and founded GetKidsInternetSafe. Six years ago, I unexpectedly lost my dad to a heart attack brought on by complications with pneumonia. I was absolutely crushed. Although he lived a thousand miles away from me, he had always been my go-to person about everything in my life. Even at my age of 44 years old, he was the first person I called when I was excited, ashamed, or overwhelmed. He was particularly brilliant at knowing how to reassure me and make me feel loved. His loss was profound for me.

To make matters worse, my mom, who lived two miles away from me, was suffering from debilitating signs of dementia. We had always had a complicated relationship, partly due to her alcoholism and my desperate attempts to get her to stop. Like most families, I was left to watch her deteriorate slowly without much influence on her personal decisions. While I worked through the complications of managing my dad's estate, my mom was driving around town looking for children she thought she'd lost. I was terrified for her safety and the safety of her neighbors. I had to go to court to finally get her the help she needed. It was really tough.

So there I was, calling lawyers, accountants, and doctors trying to settle my dad's very complicated estate while trying to get help sheltering my uncooperative and confused mom. I was fighting a lawsuit self-represented in a state 1,000 miles away, trying to reassure freaked-out family members, and grieving the loss of both of my parents.

Tragic enough? Well hold on, there's more. Within a year of my dad's death, my sweet stepmother was diagnosed with stage 4 oral cancer. As she spoke to me about her devastating grief over the loss of my dad, the love of her life, she was also struggling to stay alive. We were waiting until she needed the help for me to fly to Idaho to help her pass on with as much dignity and comfort as we could manage. I barely made it to her side six weeks later as she passed away. She and my sister had been in conflict over property. This, along with other issues, contributed to a brutal estrangement from my only sister. That's four primary family members gone within a two-year period with me left to pick up the pieces single-handedly.

One day during that time, I was feeling particularly crushed and overwhelmed, and I looked up from my computer and reflected on what my dad would think about the job I was doing trying to take care of everybody. After all, my dad was a caregiver and psychologist throughout his adult life too. At that moment I recall hearing my two little ones giggling in the back room playing Mine Craft. I was flooded with gratitude, love, and also fear thinking about my parenting at that moment in time. Too overwhelmed to be my best self, I became frightened about how much I was relying on screens to distract the kids. While they were distracted, I was treating families just like mine for really scary stuff related to screens, including cyberbullying, online predators, and porn addiction. I realized at that moment, we could be next.

I got myself out of that computer chair that day, sunk into the couch behind the kids, and started to make a plan that would allow safer screen time and also help me bond with my family so I would be their go-to person when they needed me, a bond that would be so strong that they would still be calling me at 44 years old to discuss life challenges.

That is how GKIS was born. As I pulled together the know-how I'd earned from my many years of private practice and teaching, I got increasingly passionate about how GKIS programs worked. My clients were raving, and my kids and clients were building resiliency. From there, I launched a mission of moving beyond treatment and committing to the prevention of digital injury using the huge reach of the Internet for help.

Getting Started

In Chapter 1, we will start by assessing where you are now and where you want to be when you've completed the course with your GKIS Parent Report Card and GKIS Home Starter Plan. That way you'll be fully informed, organized, and can track change as you move forward. Once you've completed your ten easy chapters, you will be able to look back and recognize that you've followed through and achieved true success with digital parenting initiatives.

In this course, the overall problem to solve is unmanaged, unsupervised, and unsafe screen use in the home.

What does this look like for you currently?

Do your kids have open access to apps, games, and Internet content?

Are time or situational parameters set up for smart and safe use?

Perhaps you've seen hints that there is an already a problem in your home. If you have young kids you may be noticing they are too enthusiastic about getting on their screens, begging to get on and having tantrums when they get off. You wonder if they are at risk for addiction or missing out on critical nonvirtual learning tasks like socialization, creative three-dimensional play, or physical exercise. If your kids are school age, tweens, or teens, maybe you've found inappropriate content on the browser history, digital photo album, or in instant messaging or texts. Maybe there's no sign of risk, but you worry about it. Or you know there's more you can do but can't figure out where to start or can't seem to get your kids' buy-in or find follow-through impossible.

No more! Today you are getting started with a program that will set up a system of safety, accountability, and cooperative negotiation. Step-by-step, we are going to make real change that will establish habits that will last for years! As a pre-test, post-test,

take a minute to complete your GKIS Parent Report Card. When you've finished your 10 Home Starter steps, you can take it again to see how far you've come!

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Parent Report Card

		NO 0	1	2	3	4	YES 5
1	Are you confident you've made good parenting decisions about screen media devices?	O	O	O	O	O	O
2	Are you confident you've made good parenting decisions about games & websites?	O	O	O	O	O	O
3	Are you good about not using screen media as a babysitter?	O	O	O	O	O	O
4	Have you set a clear screen media use day & time agreement & stuck with it?	O	O	O	O	O	O
5	Do you know exactly what screen media activities your kids engage in?	O	O	O	O	O	O
6	Do you follow the GKIS Elementary Screen Use Guidelines of no more than 3 hrs/day?	O	O	O	O	O	O
7	Do you have a firm no screens behind closed doors policy?	O	O	O	O	O	O
8	Do you have GKIS Family Meetings to discuss screen media policy?	O	O	O	O	O	O
9	Have you adopted a digital contract to fill screen media safety gaps?	O	O	O	O	O	O
10	Are you confident your kids will come to you if they have a screen media problem?	O	O	O	O	O	O
11	Have you taught your kids about Screen Media Netiquette so they're kind on- & offline?	O	O	O	O	O	O
12	Are you knowledgeable about screen media risks that can cause digital injuries?	O	O	O	O	O	O
13	Do you have parental controls programmed on all screen devices, through ISP & software?	O	O	O	O	O	O
14	Have you covered Screen Smarts like protecting personal information & not oversharing?	O	O	O	O	O	O
15	Have you set up a GKIS Community Docking Station & a GKIS Community Work Station?	O	O	O	O	O	O
16	Are you familiar with cybersecurity terms like firewalls, geo-tagging, phishing, & malware?	O	O	O	O	O	O
17	Do you practice GKIS #NoTechTuesday? Or NoTechAnyday?	O	O	O	O	O	O
18	Has your family ever taken a screen media free vacation for at least 48 hours?	O	O	O	O	O	O
19	Do you have a GKIS Master List of all usernames & passwords?	O	O	O	O	O	O
20	Are you confident your kids do not text or chat with people they don't know personally?	O	O	O	O	O	O
21	Can you be sure that your kids are being age appropriate with their screen media content?	O	O	O	O	O	O
22	Are you certain your kids would never accept cyberbullying in silence or cyberbully others?	O	O	O	O	O	O
23	Are you confident that your kids have not seen explicitly violent or sexual content online?	O	O	O	O	O	O
24	Do you know everybody on your kids' buddy lists?	O	O	O	O	O	O
25	Are you confident that online predators have zero access to your kids?	O	O	O	O	O	O

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Chapter 1: The GKIS Home Starter Plan

Screen Risk and Digital Injury

We've all heard the news reports detailing child victimization due to online predators and cyberbullies. But there are other risks you should be aware of in order to keep an eye out. GKIS tools were created with these risks in mind:

Exploitation for Profit

- Product marketing
- Cybersecurity and privacy
- Violence
- Online pornography

Interpersonal Exploitation

- Cyberbullying
- Destructive digital footprint and online reputation
- Self-produced pornography and sexting
- Sexual predators

Health Risks

- Distraction from and replacement of healthy nonvirtual relationships
- Unhealthy self-comparison, shame, and identity exploration
- Online radicalization and recruitment into cult or hate group
- Distraction from and replacement of healthy nonvirtual activities (sleep, mindful eating, 3-dimensional play)
- Injury, distraction, and performance deficits (wi-fi exposure, repetitive strain and distraction injuries, multitasking and attention-deficit)
- Screen addiction

Why not go screen-free?

I'm a fan of choosing to keep infants and toddlers away from screens. However, this is not realistic for most families. Keeping little ones from screens means parents would need to go screen-free as well. Can you imagine living without television, computers, tablets, or smart phones? Most of us cannot.

Furthermore, screens are increasingly being adopted as a mandatory part of school instruction. Digital literacy is a critical skill to master for academic and career candidacy. With that in mind, here are some screen benefits you may not have considered:

- Entertainment
- Effective, ecological, economical learning tool
- Communication: access, clarity, immediacy, and dissemination

- Crowdsourcing
- Documentation and storage
- Safety: monitors, tracking, and data gathering
- Innovation and discovery: virtual reality, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and automation
- All of the benefits we haven't even discovered yet!

In my psychology practice, I'm hired to facilitate my client's success with the goals we identify together during the first session. To assess progress, we develop *a treatment plan*.

A treatment plan consists of:

- **identifying screen-related problem(s),**
- **setting goals,**
- **developing effective strategies,**
- **tracking success, and**
- **graduation.**

With this structure, there's a defined beginning (identifying the problems and setting goals), a middle (developing effective strategies and tracking success), and a clear result (graduation). With the GKIS Home Starter Workbook, you graduate once you've completed your ten easy chapters and your plan is in motion. By clarifying your intentions and setting your goals now, you'll invite real change and commit to follow-through.

To keep you accountable, print out your GKIS Home Starter Plan to commit to your home starter goals, identify screen-related problems, set up supportive resources, and check off your accomplishments throughout the Home Starter Course.

HOME STARTER PLAN

To achieve success, one must start by opening oneself up for learning. Learning doesn't happen *to* students, it happens *by* students. To get the most out of this course, create your intention for change and new ideas. Some ideas will come from this course, some from your creativity, and some from your kids. By committing to success, you will cast a net and find that more great ideas fall into it. When you have a learning mindset, positive change is imminent.

Complete this brief worksheet exercise to set your intention for healthier screen habits and a more fun, creative parent-child alliance.

Commitment

INTENTION
Why did you purchase the GKIS Home Starter Workbook?

_____
_____
_____

SUCCESS
What will home starter graduation look like for your family?

_____
_____
_____

Identify Screen-Related Problems

Examples of typical problems:

- **AUTHORITY IMBALANCE: The parental unit has lost track of app and game downloads, and the kids are in control of device use.**

We don't have established screen use rules. We are shut out and out-maneuvered.

- **RULES: We haven't decided WHEN OR WHERE screen use is okay and when it isn't.**
- **CONTENT: Our kids are viewing content on the Internet and using apps and games we don't approve of.**
- **SCREEN TIME: They are on their screens way too often.**

LIST THE TOP 5 SCREEN-RELATED PROBLEMS YOU'RE HAVING AT YOUR HOUSE:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

GKIS Home Starter Accountability Checklist

Chapter 1 – The GKIS Home Starter Plan

- ☐ **Pat yourself on the back for getting started.**
- ☐ **Fill out your GKIS Parent Report Card.**
- ☐ **Schedule ten minutes a week for quiet, cozy reflection and research in service of positive change.**
- ☐ **Subscribe to GetKidsInternetSafe.com for free weekly parenting articles.**
- ☐ **Acknowledge the risks from screen use that can lead to digital injury, including exploitation for profit, interpersonal exploitation, and health risks.**
- ☐ **Review the benefits of screen use.**
- ☐ **Set goals with your GKIS Home Starter Plan.**

Chapter 2 – Your GKIS Family Living Agreement

- ☐ **Implement your GKIS Living Agreement, starting with cooperative dialogue and easy inventory.**
- ☐ **Build a warm, cooperative parent-child alliance with fair, empowering negotiations. Child resilience is the goal, not blind obedience.**

Chapter 3 – Set Your GKIS Screen-Free Zones

- ☐ **List your screen-free zones in your GKIS Living Agreement and slowly introduce them into family life.**
- ☐ **Commit to warm greetings to strengthen attachment.**

Chapter 4 – Protect Rejuvenating Sleep

- ☐ **Communicate to your family that getting enough sleep is a priority, and explain why.**
- ☐ **Stage the bedrooms to promote good quality sleep.**

Chapter 5 - Promote Screen-Free Dinners

- ☐ **Address mindful eating strategies with your family.**
- ☐ **Introduce your GKIS Screen Basket and keep it on the kitchen table.**
- ☐ **Learn fun conversation hacks and create enriching non-screen learning opportunities, even for hard-to-manage teens.**
- ☐ **Have your first GKIS Family Meeting.**

Chapter 6 - Create Co-Work Stations

- ☐ **Identify quiet corners in your house that have potential.**
- ☐ **Source second-hand cheap furniture.**

- ☐ **Paint and accessorize using Pinterest for inspiration.**
- ☐ **Set up smart co-work stations for sibling cooperation and optimum supervision.**

Chapter 7 – GKIS Creativity Kits & Makerspaces

- ☐ **Assess your co-work stations for body healthy ergonomics.**
- ☐ **Consider if your family needs a screen detox lite.**
- ☐ **Build your GKIS creativity kits and makerspaces to make digital literacy fun and promote the integration of 3-dimensional and online play.**

Chapter 8 – GKIS Family Docking Stations

- ☐ **Secure time limits and accountability with GKIS Community Docking Stations.**
- ☐ **Integrate Dr. B's five powerful life hacks for success to optimize self-care.**

Chapter 9 – Establish Blackout Times

- ☐ **Set up blackout times like #NoTechTuesday.**
- ☐ **Apply GKIS Screen Guidelines as they apply in your home.**
- ☐ **Schedule some fun family screen-free activities.**
- ☐ **LOVE & PROTECT.**

Chapter 10 – GKIS Sensible Guide for Digital Safety Products

- ☐ **Create your GKIS Digital Toolbox.**
- ☐ **Complete your GKIS Parent Report Card.**
- ☐ **GRADUATE!**

Chapter 2: Your GKIS Family Living Agreement

The **GKIS Family Living Agreement** is a valuable, comprehensive tool I developed and tested over many years of clinical practice (and with my own family). It not only addresses smart, safe screen management, it also covers the values and morals that support good digital citizenship and independent problem solving.

With the GKIS Family Living Agreement, you'll cover:

- **Commitment**
- **Love & Protect**
- **Honesty & Transparency**
- **Screen Smarts & Digital Permanence**
- **Cybersecurity**
- **Digital Citizenship, Online Reputation, & Netiquette**
- **GKIS Launch Techniques**
- **Friends Lists**
- **Screen-Free Zones & Blackout Situations & Times**
- **Social Media Apps & Instant Messaging**

Although the agreement is designed for easy implementation and looks straight-forward, there are tons of opportunities for learning here. Rather than rush through it like a miserable business meeting, work through it gradually over several get-togethers. By taking this journey a thoughtful step at a time, you'll create the space for

mutual storytelling, information gathering, skill application, and fun negotiation. That's where the good stuff comes in, strengthening your family relationships.

To work optimally, you have to be ninja to get your family's full buy-in. That means approach them honestly and ready to listen with an open heart and mind toward success. Firm yes, but also fun and negotiative. Keep in mind that your cooperative, fun working alliance is FAR more important than any rule or guideline.

If the discussion gets contentious or heavy, be prepared to take a time out and come back to it after everybody has thought about their options. By lightly negotiating the details, your kids will learn how to better problem solve and feel respected. If they get credit for co-authorship, they'll also be more likely to cooperate. Child resilience is the goal, not blind obedience.

If your kids are little, you may choose to skip some sections at the beginning. That is why I call it a "living" agreement, because it changes with each developmental level and circumstance. Expect to work through it many times over the years rather than just at the beginning.

Take Inventory with Your GKIS Living Agreement

Keeping your screen device/app/game/activity lists comprehensive and current will establish that **you're the administrative authority over screens and screen activities**, not kids. I recommend you buy all devices, games, and apps so it is evident that you have direct administrative ownership.

Here are a few additional things to consider as you take inventory:

- List every screen device in use for each child.
- List every game, app, and activity (like website subscriptions) in use for each child (taking the time to inventory is likely to inspire your to do your research. Safety risks are difficult to intuit).
- Include credentials, like usernames, passwords, and passcodes.
- Include an * if there is no monitoring possible (like social media apps or activities with instant/direct messaging available).
- Make notes of any contact information or safety parameters you need to keep in mind, like parental control and reporting options/contacts.
- Keep it current by crossing off discarded apps and adding new ones.

Chapter 2 Accountability Checklist:

- ☐ **Implement your GKIS Living Agreement, starting with cooperative dialogue and easy inventory.**
- ☐ **Build a warm, cooperative parent-child alliance with fair, empowering negotiations. Child resilience is the goal, not blind obedience.**

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FAMILY LIVING AGREEMENT

This is a guide to get our family started with cooperative dialogue and sensible screen media rules. We can revisit and change this agreement any time.

Commitment

- ☐ **This agreement applies to all screen media use everywhere, including home, school, in the car, and at a friend's house.**
- ☐ **If you want something changed, we can discuss it. This is a starting point. Your opinions and values matter too. I want to hear them.**

Love & Protect

- ☐ **We promise to honor and respect each other online just like we do offline.**
- ☐ **We promise to use good judgment, kindness, and discretion when posting. We will not post embarrassing photos or quotes of each other or share private information.**
- ☐ **We will answer each other's texts and calls quickly and politely.**
- ☐ **We will talk to each other instead of getting lost on our screens. We will keep track of each other's interests and occasionally share screen activities (videos, articles, games) together.**
- ☐ **Everybody makes mistakes, especially kids. If you feel uncomfortable, come to me for help. We will work it out instead of lecture or punish. We are a family and have each other's backs, 100%, always.**

- ☐ **Identify one adult, other than a parent, that you feel you can approach about any online issue that comes up.**

Honesty & Transparency

- ☐ **All screen devices, apps, games, and software are owned by parents, not kids. We will purchase them, track all usernames and passwords, and give permission about use.**

- ☐ **We agree to be open and honest about online activities. We will not delete browser history without permission.**

- ☐ **We will never disable or deliberately work around parental controls.**

- ☐ **We agree to dock our screens every night at _____weekdays and _____ weekends.**

- ☐ **There is no exclusive right to privacy with screen activities. Adults in authority (parents, school staff, law enforcement) may check any screen content at any time. However, we promise to monitor for safety rather than violate our mutual trust or be overly intrusive between you and your friends.**

- ☐ **We agree to follow screen rules (ours & hosts) whenever we're at somebody else's house or at school. We are aware that schools and workplaces often require passwords to social media accounts.**

Screen Smarts & Digital Permanence

- ☐ **We will listen to our instincts and trust our gut online just as we do offline.**

- ☐ **Anything online may be shared or altered without permission. There are no take-backs. Even disappearing or deleted images are stored on a server somewhere. We agree to think ahead and use good judgment before browsing, texting, commenting, or posting online.**

- ☐ **We agree to never share personal identifying information online via text or photos on public posts (like name, age, or location) and be careful of photos with clothing or backgrounds with school logos.**

- ☐ **We won't over-share, including with photos, texts, or questionnaires (quizzes).**

- ☐ **We will use anonymous user and screen names if our content will be viewed by anybody off of our approved friends lists.**

- ☐ **We will turn off geo-tags and face recognition when possible.**

- ☐ **We will not chat with strangers online. We understand that nobody can be trusted online even if they tell us differently, even if we think it's fun or we're feeling brave.**

Cybersecurity

- ☐ **We will support our family's cybersecurity measures, including:**
    - **Activating firewalls**
    - **Updating protective software and parental controls**
    - **Never sharing passwords and regularly changing them**
    - **Not joining unknown Wi-Fi connections**
    - **Never opening unknown emails or downloading, copying, or installing unknown attachments**
    - **Frequently backing up data**

- ☐ **We are aware of cybersecurity risks: tracking, malware (viruses, adware, spyware, Trojan horses), scamming, phishing, hacking, and identity theft.**

Digital Citizenship, Online Reputation, & Netiquette

- ☐ **We agree to be kind online just as we are offline.**

- ☐ **If a difficult situation comes up, we can resolve it together. Parents agree not to take over, unless the situation is dangerous and needs immediate intervention.**

- ☐ **We will apply the GKIS SCHOOL ASSEMBLY TEST prior to texting or posting anything. This means you would be fine with any post or text being viewed in public. If you aren't comfortable with that, don't post it.**

- ☐ **We won't participate in cyberbullying actively or passively. It hurts people deeply. We won't ever be cruel online, even when we think the person deserves it.**

- ☐ **We will not view or participate in porn, sexy photos, cruel humor, or excessive violence. Ever. Once images or texts are in cyberspace, you lose control over what happens to them.**

- ☐ **We will make a serious effort to be present and experience real life and face-to-face relationships instead of only virtual ones.**

- ☐ **We will be considerate of our safety and of those around us when using screens. No texting and driving!**

- ☐ **Be kind online just as you are offline. If a difficult situation leaves you worried or confused, come to me. I'll help you through it and won't take over unless the situation is dangerous for you or somebody else.**

GKIS Launch Techniques

- ☐ **I agree to create and present a Persuasive Powerpoint if I want a new device, app, game, or Internet activity. My research will include an overview of the product, cost, ratings, privacy settings, reviews, and safety and reporting features.**

- ☐ **I promise to only adopt one new digital activity at a time.**

- ☐ **We will setup the new technology together with an eye on privacy and safety features.**

- ☐ **We understand that the first several weeks with a new screen activity are probationary. We may need to retire it if something unexpected comes up.**

Friends Lists

- ☐ **We agree to occasionally go through friends lists to make sure that you know each person.**
- ☐ **We agree to allow parents on friend lists.**

Screen-Free Zones & Blackout Situations & Times

We agree to follow these GKIS SCREEN-FREE ZONES:

- **While driving**
- **During short car rides**
- **Behind closed doors**
- **In your bedroom**
- **In the bathroom**
- **During meal time**
- **While doing homework or studying**
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

We agree to follow these GKIS BLACKOUT TIMES:

- **Mornings before school**
- **90 minutes after home from school**
- **30 minutes before lights out**
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Social Media Apps & Instant Messaging

- ☐ **I will supply all usernames and passwords.**
- ☐ **I will not use instant messaging**
  - ☐ **At all**
  - ☐ **Outside your buddy list**
  - ☐ **Without good judgment**

Approved screen media devices (with passwords) (* if has webcam):

Approved apps, games, and activities (with passwords) (* if has instant messaging):

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Chapter 3: Set Your GKIS Screen-Free Zones

Excessive screen use and inappropriate content has been linked to increased risk for child obesity and diabetes, sensitivity to stress, irritability, depression, impulsivity, aggression, attention problems, motor problems, and sleep issues.

Research shows that three of the biggest contributors to unhealthy amounts of screen time are:

- screens in the bedroom,
- background television, and
- a lack of rules and regulations around screen use.

Parents often make the mistake of letting little kids use their screens everywhere. But as they get older and more capable of browser searches and private messaging, they take those privileges away. Sudden restrictions may spark child resentment, sneaking, lying, and defiance. Avoid the damage to your relationship by starting restrictive from the beginning and loosening up as your child earns independence.

Why Screen-Free Zones?

Our virtual lives get so much of our attention that it's easy to neglect our nonvirtual selves. By setting boundaries with screen free zones, we teach our kids how to protect their psychological and spiritual health and best develop who they are.

As I detail in my book, **Screen Time in the Mean Time: A Parent Guide to Get Kids and Teens Internet Safe**, young brains are constantly remodeling and develop with a use-it-or-lose-it strategy. For kids to independently problem-solve and self-soothe, they must have ample opportunities for solitude to overcome boredom and upset. Quiet, screen-free spaces optimize critical mental fitness training just as mindfulness, imagery, and meditation do. **Learning to be alone with our thoughts and feelings is a critical skill set for healthy balance.**

This learning does not come easily for all kids. Don't be surprised if your kids don't readily agree to this. Screen time is so captivating, the urgency they feel to be on-screen is a form of anxiety. Kids can be frankly defiant in order to avoid those feelings. How can you introduce screen-free zones in your home?

Do Your Prep

During one of your self-reflective moments, list screen-free zones in your GKIS Living Agreement so you have a clear idea what makes sense for your family.

Examples include:

- While driving
- During short car rides
- Behind closed doors
- In your bedroom
- In your bathroom
- During meal time
- While doing homework or studying

Sprinkle in Screen-Free Zone Conversation

Rather than abruptly setting down a new law and implementing change all at once, sprinkle in comments into everyday conversation about the goals of achieving balance and prioritizing family relationships. Ask your kids if they've ever been frustrated by somebody else's screen time. Point out when you see screen time interfering with family conversations among the customers around you at a restaurant. Gently lead them to take a stand on what they think about screens

distracting people from friend discourse. Ask them to explain what balance really looks like.

Starting the conversation might sound something like this:

"Have you ever noticed how some people completely ignore those around them and hyper focus on their phone? Do you think it's rude or just the way it is these days? Maybe we should keep an eye out for each other – make sure we're not overdoing it at the expense of our family relationships."

Slowly Introduce Screen-Free Expectation Room-by-Room, Situation-by-Situation

The over-riding goal of GKIS is to protect and build the parent-child alliance while implementing gradual change. That means going slowly with explanations and firm expectation. Without your warm encouragement and support, your kids won't always understand the importance of balance. After all, if left to their own devices they'd eat cookies for every meal if we let them!

Don't over-explain or plead. Tell them once then gently require compliance. I call this "**eye-to-comply**," which means stating an expectation and keeping your eyes on them until they have started to comply with it. Turning away before they've started to comply is a sure invitation for them to blow you off.

Stay firm and follow through day by day, all the while positively acknowledging your kids' efforts toward connection and kindness. In our family we call this "LOVE AND PROTECT" and believe there's nothing more important than that. ❤️

Model Loving Attachment Behaviors

Courtesy and civility aren't innate, they are learned. Teach your kids kind gestures that build family attachment by modeling it every day. One simple gesture is to make sure you greet your kids when you walk in the room and say goodbye when you walk out. Greetings upon entering must include eye contact, verbal acknowledgment, and emotional engagement. During the time in between, sit down and take the time to soak them in.

Ask the same attention of them, gently with respect and patience. To get into this habit, put a post-it on your bedroom door reminding you to make a deliberate commitment every morning before walking out your door. "Greet everybody with warmth and patience. No yelling!" You'll find that deliberate intention each day can lead to real change. Parents set the tone of the house. Yelling demands is not the way to feed a loving parent-child alliance. Lighting up when you see them and being genuinely

interested in what they think builds attachment and shows them their worth. They will learn to look forward to your arrival as they feel that oxytocin hit when you light up for them. Super important stuff!

Why Judgment Fails Us in Intimate Spaces

Not only will screen-free zones protect your kids from digital injury, they can also protect them from exploitation from strangers and peers or inappropriate sexual sharing. Bedrooms and bathrooms are where we take our clothes off and let our guards down. Snuggling into bed or slipping into a soothing hot shower has trained us to consider bedrooms and bathrooms *intimate spaces*. If we are already conditioned to shut down our prefrontal brain regions and chill in intimate spaces, our judgement goes offline too. Accept that this is a risk for all kids and teens, and stay tough.

You may not think location parameters are necessary for younger kids, but sooner than parents think, kids engage in sneaky and potentially dangerous screen habits, like viewing online pornography. Setting parameters from the beginning increases supervision opportunity, builds habit, and encourages compliance later on.

If your kids are already used to using their screens in their bedrooms, go slow. Take the time to explain your reasons, from distraction to sleep interference to safety risks. For younger kids a hard and fast rule makes sense. For older teens, maybe daytime use is more acceptable. You can also limit nighttime use with docking stations and parental controls.

Chapter 3 – Set Your GKIS Screen-Free Zones

- ☐ **List your screen-free zones in your GKIS Living Agreement and slowly introduce them into family life.**
- ☐ **Commit to warm greetings to strengthen attachment.**

Chapter 4: Protect Rejuvenating Sleep

I consider sleep deprivation the number one threat to mental health today. Too often, distracting and overly-arousing screen activities are main contributors to poor quality or too little sleep. Parents tell me their kids' phones are beeping until 2 am every school night. Many parents have given up and let kids manage their screen use independently. But kids, with their focus on social connection, eagerly trade precious sleep to avoid the fear of missing out. The sense of urgency that phones trigger in us too often overcomes our better judgement, especially among teens. Digital devices are designed to capture our attention like this.

Have you ever wondered why sleep is so important?

During sleep our brains conduct general housekeeping and memory strengthening duties. Housekeeping tasks necessary for neurological health include the pruning, repair, and regeneration of neurons and the removal of toxins. Memory strengthening, called memory consolidation, occurs by stabilizing memory traces that were acquired while awake. Memory consolidation occurs with both fact-based and how-to information.

When we don't get enough sleep (under nine hours for kids and teens), our brain's housekeeping and memory consolidation tasks remain undone, leaving us unable to efficiently acquire or retrieve information. Sleep deprivation not only stunts learning,

it can also cause mood volatility, negative mood states like depression, irritability, and anxiety; fatigue, confusion, attention problems, motor impairment, and overall impaired cognitive performance. Furthermore, sleep deprived individuals often fail to recognize impairment. In other words, they don't realize the costs and keep burning the candle at both ends.

Most of us need eight to ten hours of sleep a night. However, it's also important that kids learn to listen to their body to determine how much sleep is best for them. Missing out on much-needed sleep and staying up all night on screens is called **vamping**. Teens with chronic sleep deprivation also demonstrate lower achievement motivation, more teacher-child relationship problems, a poorer academic self-concept, and poorer school performance.

How to Stop Vamping and Encourage Healthy Sleep

Stage the Room to be Restful

I know it's nearly impossible to motivate kids to declutter their rooms. But a soothing environment contributes to a soothed mind. Offer your support by helping your child create a more restful environment with a fresh bedroom makeover. Light paint colors, soft textures, organized closets and bedside tables, soft lighting, white noise makers, and yummy smells can turn a chaotic hovel into a relaxing paradise.

Recognize That Nutrition, Exercise, and Screen Content Impacts the Quality of Sleep

Research has demonstrated that young children who watch violent television content have more sleep problems, particularly delayed onset of sleep, than children who view age-appropriate content. Furthermore, kids who get adequate nutrition and exercise, especially outdoor exercise because of sunlight setting circadian rhythm, also get better quality sleep. In

practice I find that teens, in particular, benefit from the mood benefits of regular cardio and cooperative team play.

No Screens in the Bedroom

Why? Because screens wake up our brain! The blue LED light from the screen stimulates the photo sensors in the retina that signal the brain to suppress melatonin production (our sleep-regulating hormone) and makes us more alert. Less melatonin disrupts our natural circadian rhythms, which can lead to sleep during the day and wakefulness during the night. Using screens before bedtime has been found to cause people to go to bed later, prolong the time it takes to fall asleep, delays the timing of REM sleep, reduces the amount of REM sleep and sleep overall, reduces alertness in the morning, and causes more daytime sleepiness.

Use alarm clocks with red-lighted numbers in bedrooms rather than screens for time keeping.

Screens also condition us to be awake in bed. If we are often awake in bed, our bodies will automatically be *conditioned to cue*, or believe that the bed is an "awake-only" zone. Alternatively, if we only rest and sleep in bed, our bodies will be cued that bed is a "sleep-only" zone. In psychology, we call this type of cued learning *classical conditioning*. By these principals, we must resist the urge to do anything in bed but sleep to develop good expectation and habit.

Make the *No Screens in the Bedroom Rule* BEFORE it's necessary.

It's asking a lot to say no TV, video games, tablets, or smartphones in the bedroom, but vamping leads to sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation leads to impulsivity and risk-taking. Impulsivity while in intimate spaces leads to intimate gestures like sexting and viewing inappropriate online content. Parents are the last to know.

Encourage a Soothing Nighttime Ritual

We are creatures of habit. Habitual activity during the thirty-minute bedtime wind-down signals the body to anticipate rest. Components of a soothing ritual may include soft lighting; quiet, repetitive, or white noise sounds; and comforting activities. Sticking to a consistent bedtime schedule is also important.

Screens Off Thirty Minutes Before Lights Out

One of the most disabling features of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), an impairing anxiety disorder that results from trauma, is the sleep deprivation that results from nightmares. As I suggested before, while we are sleeping our brains sort through the data gathered throughout the day from our senses. As it sorts through our memory cache, information is

prioritized to either forget or remember. Because experiences that trigger emotion are typically important, evolution has shaped our brains to prioritize memories infused with emotion. Based on cognitive science theories, looping on a troubling experience is thought to be the cause of nightmares.

Just like the response to fright when we're awake, stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline dump into our bloodstream when we have nightmares. If we are troubled upon falling asleep, agitated dreaming and tossing and turning may result, leaving us tired, irritable, and cognitively scrambled the next day. Over time, this can seriously impair mental health. Although emotionally triggering and arousing screen activities like gaming, texting, or viewing activating content aren't as troubling as real-life trauma, they still stimulate the same brain regions activated with chronic stress, often for hours at a time. This is particularly relevant for social media users who feel hurt because they're left out of fun group activities or fear they may be targeted or see a friend targeted by cyberbullying. The hangover from chronic stress has been referred to as *mental brownout*.

Limiting activating screen activities at night and giving your children time to soothe prior to bedtime will result in better quality sleep overall and pave the way for healthy learning during the day. **Particularly avoid eating, triggering discussions, social media browsing, video gaming, and intense exercise before bed.**

Teach Sophisticated Self-Soothing Strategies

For young kids, the opportunity to spend time with a relaxed parent is extremely potent for self-soothing. From birth, a child's breathing, heart rate, and brain waves synchronize with a responsive parent. Eye contact, narrative moment-to-moment comments with emotion words, and general conversation teaches kids what emotions are and how to deal with them. We cannot provide this kind of syncing and teaching if we are focused on screens instead of each other. That means we need to make every effort to practice what we preach and set limits with our own screen use.

Acceptance

Also, if you don't sleep well one night don't stress about it. Getting anxious or angry will wake you up more. Most of us get poor sleep here and there and simply make it up later. Cognitive-behavioral exercises like diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle

relaxation, mindfulness, imagery, and cognitive restructuring can fend off even the most persistent sleep disorders. Exercising one's mind to relax is critical to self-soothing.

Naps

Another option for overcoming some of the negative effects of sleep deprivation is napping. A full cycle of sleep takes about ninety minutes and provides the cognitive rejuvenation that improves procedural memory and creativity with no *sleep inertia* (grogginess). Sixty to thirty minutes is good for *slow wave* sleep, which helps with fact memory and retrieval, but may still result in grogginess. Twenty to ten-minute *power naps* are shown to increase alertness and energy. If you have time to nap, it's best to spend ninety minutes to complete a sleep cycle or just power nap for ten.

Chapter 4 – Protect Rejuvenating Sleep

- ☐ **Communicate to your family that getting enough sleep is a priority, and explain why.**
- ☐ **Stage the bedrooms to promote good quality sleep.**

Chapter 5: Promote Screen-Free Dinners

Although it's a no-brainer that old-fashioned meals around the dinner table promote healthy discussion and bring families closer, anybody with a busy family knows it's not easy to get it done several times a week. With homework, chores, and after school activities, most families struggle to find quality time together. But the truth is, it's worth the struggle.

Mindful Eating

Old-school family dinners have been found to decrease the risk of adolescent mental health issues and cyberbully victimization. Device-free dinners lead to fun, engaging family discussion and *mindful eating*, which refers to attention to food choice, quantity, and taste as well as kinesthetic awareness of the sensations of being hungry and satiated. If your mindful about your eating you're more likely not to overeat and to enjoy mealtime. Mindful eating builds body-brain connection.

GKIS Basket

Screens at mealtime are also associated with poorer family communication and poorer nutrition choices overall. When parents teach kids that watching screens at the dinner table or when somebody is available to talk is rude, kids learn important rules of etiquette. Also, by practicing tolerance when transitioning between tasks and switching off screens, kids learn important emotional soothing skills. This makes for more polite, social, and overall emotionally resilient kids who are attached to devoted parents. There is no down side.

Putting a screen collection basket on the table is an effective way to trigger compliance.

A motivator for putting screen in the GKIS Basket, is that excessive screen time has been linked to:

- increased risk for obesity and diabetes,
- increased sensitivity to stress, irritability, and depression,
- decreased attention, impulsivity, and aggression,
- motor problems,
- and sleep problems.

It's Time to Stage Your First GKIS Family Meeting

Now that you have your introduction to digital contracting and the importance of setting a home structure that optimizes safe screen use and closer family relationships, **it's time to have your first GKIS Family Meeting.** In our family, this isn't a defined event. Instead, I do a little bit of research on a topic I think my kids need to learn about, and I bring it up subtly during a screen-free dinner. If I sit down and act all serious and business-like, they get a little freaked out and fun banter dies. I've even asked them about it. They say I have a "serious tone" that makes them feel like they're in trouble, like when I'm talking about the importance of good grades or chore responsibilities.

Instead of freaking them out, just toss in a topic during family banter to bait them into fun discussion and independent thinking. This is important in that I believe blind obedience is dangerous for children, instead thoughtful agreeability is key to resilience. Problem solving and civil discussion must be taught, which is our job as parents!

Keep in mind that nobody, even kids, like to be told what to do. Instead bring a topic up, address it quickly suggesting your opinion, then leave it be. Pick it up another time, then leave it be. Eventually set the rule. I call this the "**hit and run method**." By sprinkling it into the conversation, you are engaging them in the topic and avoiding opportunity for resistance.

Here's an example of how to get started:

"Hey guys, I learned something new today. Did you know that if you use your screens in bed, it can interfere with your sleep? In other words, by playing with your screen devices in bed, you train your body to be awake in bed. … The light from the screen also tells our brain it's daytime, making it harder to fall asleep. Have you ever noticed that screen time makes you more alert?" (Of course, use words that match your child's developmental level).

Another day mention that you tested it and ask if they did. Ask what they think (inviting independent problem solving and initiative).

Another time mention, "To help us all fall asleep better, I've decided we will try out no screens in the bedroom to avoid the risks. Let's talk about where you CAN use your screens."

Remember not to overdo it by doing too much too fast; the goal is to strengthen your relationship while you close risk gaps. At a loss for things to talk about? The GKIS articles being delivered weekly to your email are great topic ideas. You can also use the search bar on the blog page to look for articles about particular topics with a search word, like "cyberbully." "sexting," or "the Google Effect."

Your GKIS Starter Conversation Tips will also help you establish your new role as credible screen expert. By impressing your kids with advanced screen issue knowledge and your openness to learn from them, you are even closer to becoming their go-to expert when they need you. Isn't that really what we all want? To be THEIR PERSON, the person they trust to go to when they're lost, confused, hurt, or celebrating? Make it fun and even outrageous tonight over their favorite foods. Healthier eating awareness, better communication and problem-solving skills, and social and emotional resilience are on their way to your family's dinner table!

Chapter 5 - Promote Screen-Free Dinners

- ☐ **Address mindful eating strategies with your family.**
- ☐ **Introduce your GKIS Screen Basket and keep it on the kitchen table.**
- ☐ **Learn fun conversation hacks and create enriching non-screen learning opportunities, even for hard-to-manage teens.**
- ☐ **Have your first GKIS Family Meeting.**

10 GKIS GetKidsInternetSafe

STARTER CONVERSATION TIPS

1 CREATE A FUN, OPEN ENVIRONMENT

Have a sense of humor. Encourage different perspectives. Don't shame, scold, or mock.

2 PLAY HIGH-LOW

Everybody tells the best part of their day & the worst.

3 GET SAVVY

Stay up on current devices/apps/games/events. (GKIS blog perfect for this). "Did you hear about ..."

4 DON'T DUMB IT DOWN

You'll have to be more brave than our parents were. Appropriate topics, complex discussions.

5 SHARE FUN STUFF TOO

Teach safety & screen smarts AND throw in stupid cat videos. Kids will share back. The BEST!

6 LISTEN

Your digital natives have a ton to teach you. Don't be prideful. Encourage sharing. Don't lecture.

7 PRAISE

Never pass up an opportunity to tell your kids how impressed you are. Love them shamelessly.

8 "NOT YET"

Rather than say "NO," offer justification & allow room for opportunity. Different ages, different freedoms.

9 SCARE TACTICS DON'T WORK

Maintain your credibility by keeping it accurate. Kids sniff out exaggerated claims.

10 EVERYBODY *IS* DOING IT

It's tempting to mock kids when they say "everybody else's parents let them..." They're right. You're more on the ball than others. They'll appreciate it one day.

Chapter 6: Create Co-Work Stations

Computer screens placed in work stations near each other and facing the middle of the room optimizes supervision and cooperative interaction. Not only does this setup allow parents to keep an eye on screen activities, but neighboring siblings often enforce expectations and, in more difficult situations, tip parents off about sneaking and lying.

Even more importantly, co-work stations encourage healthy socialization and contribute to healthy sibling friendships. Popular online activities and games, like Minecraft, often allow co-play. Siblings with screens next to each other share emotional response during cooperative problem solving and fun sabotage. Independently working through disagreements is critical for healthy social and cognitive development. It's better having kids work that stuff out with parents as coaches rather than going it alone with strangers online.

Mobile devices pose a problem if your kids are allowed to take their screens wherever they want. Consider making a rule that certain screen activities, especially those that require extended screen time like homework or video gaming, must occur at the co-work stations.

Research Potential Co-Work Station Locations

Take a moment now to walk around your house with pen and paper in hand. Look for the potential for co-work setup in quiet corners. Consider comfort elements like light, texture, and color. Imagine the noise level in these potential co-work sites at different times of the day. Will the temperature be moderate? Is there a source for recharging?

Once you've identified potential places, measure what you'd need for work surfaces. Craigslist and second-hand stores are great resources for desks. Keep in mind you can always paint them to make them cool or create a desk surface of your own with scrap granite or stone from a kitchen store. The desks in the lead image that my kids are using were free from neighbors unloading their 80s oak furniture. Start by assessing functionality potential. You can always fix it up with paint and accessories that you source out on Pinterest.

Chapter 6 - Create Co-Work Stations

- ☐ **Identify quiet corners in your house that have potential.**
- ☐ **Source second-hand cheap furniture.**
- ☐ **Paint and accessorize using Pinterest for inspiration.**
- ☐ **Set up smart co-work stations for sibling cooperation and optimum supervision.**

Chapter 7: GKIS Creativity Kits & Makerspaces

Body Healthy Ergonomics

Have you heard of *text neck*? Text neck refers to premature degeneration and malformation of the neck and spine from looking down at the screen for texting. In the past, these types of injuries were only seen among sixty-year-old dentists and welders. Now physicians are seeing these injuries in teens!

Hanging your head at a sixty-degree angle while texting places sixty pounds of force on the neck. This is far beyond the ten pounds of force your neck is designed to support when your head is in the neutral position. Poor texting posture can be particularly problematic for young users whose spines are still developing and could lead to arthritic changes in the spine, bone spurs, or muscle deformities. Other repetitive strain injuries from excessive screen use include tendonitis in the shoulder, elbow, forearm, wrist, or hand, back or neck strain, carpal tunnel syndrome, hearing loss, and eye strain.

To avoid painful and costly repetitive strain injuries, setup your *GKIS Co-Work Station* with body-healthy ergonomics. Teach your kids to be aware for awkward or

twisted body placement, slouching, loud earphones, high glare screen settings, or pounding the keyboard or gripping the mouse. Recognize that sitting and texting is particularly problematic.

Also show them strategies for proper setup, awareness, and frequent breaks and stretches. Finally, have a discussion how texting distracts one from being aware of their environment. The Internet abounds with videos of people walking into traffic, fountains, and even bears while texting. Avoiding injuries due to repetitive screen use and distraction is a perfect GKIS family dinner topic.

Ergonomically Sound Co-Work Stations

- Eyes level with the top of screen
- Head and neck balanced and in-line with torso
- Shoulders relaxed
- Elbows close to body and supported
- Wrists and hands in-line with forearms
- Feet flat on the floor
- Overhead lighting dim to prevent glare
- Take microbreaks for twenty seconds for every twenty minutes of screen time to rest upper and lower extremities, back, neck, and eyes.
- Either switch tasks every thirty minutes or take a fifteen-minute standup or walk break for every forty-five minutes of screen use.
- For laptops, consider roller desks or exer-desks, which include treadmill, bike, or standing desks.
- Download an app or provide a simple kitchen timer to comply with time limits and body-healthy rest and stretch breaks.

Stretches and Exercises

Without stretches and exercise that provide blood and nutrients to working muscles and tissues, kids can develop musculoskeletal disorders like *carpal tunnel syndrome* and *postural kyphosis*, a hunchback condition due to slouching and poor posture. Teach kids to keep their back straight, bending at the waist like a table rather than slouching your back and neck like a cashew. Here are a few quick stretches to teach your kids to prevent injury.

EYES

Break out of the repetitive movement loop by pretending you're looking at a clock and move your eyes from 1 to 12. Also look around the room to refocus at several depths.

NECK, BACK, AND SHOULDERS

Stand up with your feet hip distance apart. Grasp your left wrist with your right hand behind your back. Gently straighten the left arm and pull it away from the body. Slowly lower your right ear to your shoulder. Stay in pose for 30 seconds. Switch arms.

Other useful stretches include shoulder rolls, shoulder shrugs, and shoulder pinches. Never roll your head backward. Best lower back stretch? – Child's pose.

WRISTS AND HANDS

Clench hands and then spread your fingers repeatedly and roll your wrists. Another easy exercise is to put your hands flatly together at chin level, then lower your hands slowly peeling them apart. Reverse.

Ideas to Break Out-of-Control Screen Use

Now that you're more than half-way through your GKIS Home Starter Course, are you wondering if your family could use a screen use adjustment? Here are some immediately doable measures to slow you down between tech vacations. The trick is to break the compulsive use habits by making your screens less attention-grabbing and interrupt the mind-mesmerizing techniques that Silicon Valley has captured us with. Consider it *screen-detox lite*.

Cut buddy lists to 150. Rather than take your teen's social media account away if they are over-checking, ask them to reduce the number of people on their friend list. By requiring them to only focus on closer friends, you reduce the risk they'll be interacting with strangers and maybe even save them time.

Dull the mind-piercing colors and go grayscale. On your iPhone, you have the option to toggle between colors and grayscale by going to Settings > General > Accessibility > Display Accommodations. Turn on the Accessibility Shortcut to triple tap colors on and off.

Turn off autoplay. Autoplay can keep you passively consuming endless content dished up without specific selection. YouTube, Facebook, Hulu, and Amazon Prime allow you to turn it off in settings and preferences.

Hide apps with eye-catching notifications on your second phone screen. That way you will have to sideways swipe to see them and can batch check them when it's convenient rather than exhaust yourself by frequently fracturing your attention.

Rotate your social media apps. Rather than juggle many social media platforms at once, keep only one active at a time. Better yet, retire some forever.

Opt for communications that resemble best communication practices without ads and news. For instance, Whatsapp, FB Messenger, Marco Polo, and audio notes rely exclusively on people-to-people communications, which is why we're on social media apps in the first place.

Adopt helper apps. There are so many to choose from, including those that help you track time spent, block specific websites and apps, turn off flashy features, and eradicate or blur newsfeeds, sidebars, and notifications. Three great ones are Forest, Freedom, and Moment.

Most importantly, make a deal to accept each other's bids for attention and put the screens away, preferably in a different room altogether!

GKIS Creativity Kits and Maker Spaces

Screen content is so compelling it's difficult for kids to look away. To entice kids to self-select brain-enriching nonscreen activities, inspire them with creativity kits and makerspaces. Creative play spaces next to computer work stations encourage a blending of nonvirtual and virtual elements for creation like dress up wardrobes, play kitchens, workbenches, green screens for movie making, and software and building materials for architecture and design. Minecraft castles leads to medieval knight costumes and swordplay, virtual horse care spills into ranch and stable design, and cooking videos launch restaurant management.

The sky's the limit with fun creative materials, which can include three-dimensional model building with blocks, Legos, clock or industrial parts, wood, repurposed computer parts, or cardboard; programming and hacking; sewing or knitting; and drawing, writing, or music composing. Screenwriting to movie-making, logo design to business-building, and fashion design to marketing can even lead to impressive portfolios that may translate into unexpected life opportunities. Social media as a display of talent and creative potential is a better digital footprint launch than duck lips and sexy videos.

Chapter 7 – GKIS Creativity Kits & Makerspaces

- ☐ **Assess your co-work stations for body healthy ergonomics.**
- ☐ **Consider if your family needs a screen detox lite.**
- ☐ **Build your GKIS creativity kits and makerspaces to make digital literacy fun and promote the integration of 3-dimensional and online play.**

GKIS
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Maker Spaces Optimize
2D & 3D Learning

GKIS advocates for balanced screen and three-dimensional play. With developing brain circuitry and a blank canvas of possibility, kids and teens are creative and boundless in their approach to tasks. Tearing down can be as educational as building up. Still devoid of set ideas, rigid rules, and shaming learning experiences, kids are capable of thinking-outside-of-the-box creating. My young clients have even patented their inventions! That is why we at GetKidsInternetSafe encourage parents to offer creative, educational activities that are virtual, nonvirtual, and a hybrid between the two.

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One of our favorite concepts to enrich opportunity and encourage exploration, problem solving, and creativity is ***maker spaces***. Maker spaces are areas or workshops equipped with a variety of repurposed, craft, mechanical, and digital items ready for the making, no blueprints, no instructions. A cool element for enriching home staging, maker spaces that live near screens will entice your child to step away from captivating virtual activities to do something totally different or even link their virtual and nonvirtual lives. See a cool image on screen? Sketch it at your maker space. Build a cloud castle with fire waterfalls on Minecraft? Build it with paper towel rolls and ribbon. View a funny magic video on YouTube? Write a screenplay, film it, and edit one of your own in your maker space. The sky's the limit for creativity. Read on to learn how to create a maker space in your home, as well as groove on some exceptional places around the United States that provide maker spaces for their community.

Step 1: Identify a work area for your maker space.

Your maker space work area may be in a corner or its own room. Have fun with it. You will find that the adults like it almost as much as the kids!

Maker spaces tend to be cluttered, so make sure you choose a spot that doesn't need to be kept tidy. You'll need room for your work table, tools, and materials. We recommend a spot where kids have access to their screens for effortless toggling between virtual and nonvirtual play.

Step 2: Set up your maker space work surface.

The key to a good work surface is durability and functionality. Any surface works, as long as you recognize it's going to get trashed. The goal is to create a space of possibility and fun; not to build yet another area you have to supervise and hypermanage.

Scope cheap finds on Craigslist or make your own work table by putting a door on sawhorses. We made a makerspace desk at our house by picking up a cheap desk at a garage sale and topping it with scrap granite from a kitchen supply store. To preserve the surface, tape cardboard on top. A roll-out table for a mouse and keyboard is a bonus.

Step 3: Assemble your maker space toolbox.

HIGH-TECH TOOLS

- 3D printer
- Soldering iron
- Screen devices
- Production apps for PC or iPad

With a 3D printer your child can make their own toys and even make them edible

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NO-TECH TOOLS

- Writing, drawing, and art supplies
- Scissors
- Masking Tape
- Hot Glue Gun
- Sewing machine
- Wrenches
- Pliers
- Hammer
- Level
- Drill

Using cardboard, string, scissors, and a hot glue gun, your child can make different masks

Step 4: Gather building materials.

When gathering materials, consider your budget and how much space you have. Not only can you purchase materials, but you can also scavenge from community resources. Broken mechanical devices and electronics are gold mines.

Reuse stores: Stores that accept reusable building materials and hardware and sell them back at discounted prices.

Thrift stores: Here you can find a multitude of cheap appliances and toys that can be disassembled and used

Local recycling centers: Ask for permission first. Look for cardboard boxes, plastic bottles, and recycled paper.

Tile and granite stores: We bought odd tiles for pennies at a tile store and arranged them into beautiful table tops.

Other: 99cent and dollar stores, leaves and flowers in your yard, garage sales

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NO-TECH MATERIALS

- Legos
- Tissues, paper towels, toilet paper rolls
- Egg cartons
- Jars, boxes, and tins
- Popsicle sticks
- Corks
- Small wooden blocks
- Paperclips, rubber bands, cable ties
- Craft supplies, paper
- Cardboard
- Paint
- Knitting and crochet supplies
- Tinker Toys
- Plastic materials
- Styrofoam
- Collage materials
- Cotton balls
- Dried flowers, dried leaves, sticks, rocks

TECH MATERIALS

- Motors
- LED Lights
- Electric keyboard
- Old electronics
- OSMO
- Cubelet Robots
- Video production: green screen, lighting
- Makey Makey
- LittleBits
- Broken watch or car parts

Step 5: Organize your space.

Now that you have your tools and materials, it's time to find a place for them. For tools, there are lots of online options for pegboard organizers. You can also use buckets, bins, and shelves. For materials, craft storage drawers or clear plastic bins are great options.

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Step 6: Inspire your child.

Consider how to best get your child's buy in. If they're independent, set them loose with minimal guidelines for safety. If they love cooperative learning or prefer some guidance, let your enthusiasm lead. Remember to minimize commands and maximize openness and flexibility. The Internet, particularly Pinterest, is a gold mine for ideas. Below are a few examples of different crafts and activities.

Woodworking

- Homemade Catapult
- DIY Nail String Art
- Birdhouse
- Lego Coat Rack
- Picture Frame
- Pen and Pencil Holder
- Candy Dispenser
- Boat
- Wittle, woodburning

Knitting or crochet

- Cowl Scarf
- Teddy Bear
- Bag
- Baby Bib
- Dishcloth
- Leg Warmers
- Gloves
- Bracelet
- Necklace

Baking or cooking

- Cookies
- Rice Crispy Treats
- Honey Bread
- Monkey Bread
- Banana or zucchini bread
- Cake or cupcakes
- Candy
- Pizza
- Slime or play dough

Electronics

- Pocket flashlight
- Simple circuit game
- Bat symbol flashlight
- Simple electric motor
- Cyborg light painting gloves
- Paper Circuits
- Motorized Coloring Machine
- Push Button LED
- FM transmitter

Programming

- Building and Controlling a Tank Robot
- Traffic Light Controller
- Arduino Alarm System
- Arduino Avoiding Obstacles Robot
- Electronic Pinwheel

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Amazing Makerspaces Near You

Maker spaces have caught on at schools, community spaces, and in the for-profit sector. They are a great use of unused library or multi-purpose room spaces. Check out these cool spots!

Vocademy

Riverside, CA

Activities: Fabrication, Construction, Electronics, Welding, Programming

Price: Memberships/ Classes , Ages: 11 and up

The Crucible

Oakland California

Activities: Construction, Welding, Pottery, Glass Blowing, Blacksmithing

Price: $80 hour/ Memberships, Ages: 8 and up

HeatSync Labs

Mesa, AZ

Activities: Coding, 3D printing, Robotics

Price: Free, Ages: All Ages

Harold Washington Library Center

Chicago, IL

Activities: Programming, Laser Cutting, 3D printing, Soldering

Price: Free, Ages: 8 and up

FamiLab

Longwood, FL

Activities: Hardware, Soldering, Circuitry

Price: Free Public Classes/ Memberships, Ages: 12 and up

The Children's Museum

Easton, MA

Activities: Collaborative Project Building, Crafting

Price: $9 admission/ Memberships, Ages: All Ages

Genspace

Location: Brooklyn, NY

Activities: Biohacking, Synthetic biology

Price: Memberships/ Classes, Ages: 13 and up

Sector67

Location: Madison, WI

Activities: Programming, Electronics, Chemistry

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Chapter 8: GKIS Family Docking Stations

Docking devices thirty minutes before lights out avoids screen use in bedrooms after hours. To avoid sneaking, set up your **GKIS Family Docking Station** in the parents' room. Parental controls, software, and apps from your GKIS Digital Toolbox (Chapter 10) can help with devices off at bedtime. Docking devices also helps form habit and accountability. To help kids calm at night, parents must teach them how to rest, rejuvenate, and take care of themselves screen-free.

Telling yourself that docking isn't necessary? Many parents slip on this rule thinking that kids can be trusted with their screens since they use it for white noise at night to fall asleep or use it as their alarm in the morning. But remember that screen activities are designed to be appealing and time consuming. The more successful programmers are at enticing and keeping kids on games, the more gaming companies make. Even if your kids aren't sneaking on screen at night, someday they will.

To avoid digital injuries that can happen without your realizing it, set habit now and don't test children's will power. Smart kids will sneak…don't give them the opportunity and dock their screens at night starting as young as possible. Not only do you have to teach them what they need to avoid to achieve success (like late vamping), you also have to teach them what they need to do to achieve success.

Dr. Bennett's Five Powerful Life Hacks for Success

1. **Model healthy balance and self-care.**

   As a caregiver at heart, this is admittedly a constant struggle for me. I hate disappointing people and too often put myself as the last priority. But there is one thing that motivates me to selfishly take a step back and meet my own needs; that is the realization that my kids are watching and modeling their lives after mine. I really do not want them putting themselves last now, or when they are parents themselves.

   To avoid parent burnout while also teaching your child responsibility and work ethic, assign chores. By adolescence, they are old enough to occasionally clean up, make meals, and do their own laundry. You will have to accept a job not up to your standards. But it's important that they learn, and you go hang out with friends and have a life of your own on occasion. Good sleep, exercise, and good nutrition are key to health. Also try to put your screens down when your kids are around and engage one-to-one in the present. Time alone with your kids is increasingly precious, and they need to know more than ever that they are unconditionally loved.

2. **Teach work before play.**

   Research demonstrates that a consequence of screen multitasking is losing the ability to prioritize tasks. Kids must be taught how to set a goal then reward its completion. Binge-watching videos, movies, and television is epidemic among students. They rationalize that they deserve entertainment viewing prior to, during, and after homework. An immediate gratification expectation comes from caving to addictive screen cravings and indulgent parenting, which leads to procrastination and poor performance overall.

Teach them to buckle down then reward themselves for a job well done. Sometimes the anticipation of the reward is what gets you through the task. Reward can be as simple as getting a drink of water, taking a walk, or fifteen minutes talking to a friend. There are amazing time management apps that can help. On occasion, you may also need to practice the "give me your phone until your task is done" technique to manage follow-through.

3. **Attitude is everything.**

Positive, can-do thinking leads to confidence and achievement. Negative, stinking thinking leads to feelings of hopelessness and quitting. There is an old conundrum in psychology that questions, "Do people get depressed because of negative thinking or does negative thinking cause depression?" It turns out that both are true. Mood disorders are a combination of interacting factors.

Habitual thinking forms neurological pathways and changes brain structure. If you engage in a lot of negative thinking, then those pathways predominate over others. If we get too negative, put forth deliberate effort and lighten up! *Cognitive restructuring* is the act of changing negative thinking to positive thinking.

LOVE OPENLY AND OFTEN! Snuggles, belly laughs, hugs, and encouragement. NOTHING is more important than that!

4. **Practice mindfulness and diaphragmatic breathing.**

To make sound decisions, one must remain emotionally neutral and willing and able to listen. If you get too stressed or anxious, the autonomic nervous system triggers the *flight or fight response*. This response is made up of a series of physiological responses designed for defense. Fight or flight allows escape from danger, but it interferes with good decision-making and can be frightening or uncomfortable. Anchoring into the here and now by attending to everything you see, feel, hear, and smell is the first step to calming fear and worry. From there, try the cognitive behavioral technique, *diaphragmatic breathing*. It calms the mind and the body.

5. **Take time out for imagery and meditation.**

Imagery is as simple as closing your eyes and building a relaxing scene in your imagination by constructing everything you would see, hear, smell, and feel. If your mind drifts away, gently guide it back to the scene. Let the scene wash over you and bring peace and calm. I encourage clients to build a library of scenes, both real and fantastical. Some people even like to imagine their favorite people or spiritual beings with them for security and protection. Need more structure to keep your mind on

track? There are a variety of guided imagery and meditation apps proven to bring rejuvenating energy and peace.

Chapter 8 – GKIS Family Docking Stations

- ☐ **Secure time limits and accountability with GKIS Community Docking Stations.**
- ☐ **Integrate Dr. B's five powerful life hacks for success to optimize self-care.**

Chapter 9: Establish Blackout Times

Screen-free days when my kids were little were the days they created adventures. Tech-free days pushed them to the limits of their creativity and encouraged offline skills like initiating projects, cooperation with neighborhood kids, fort building, and tree climbing. Be warned though; these are also the days my kids unburied coyote dens and learned how to fight and negotiate. Their hands and feet got dirty!

Initially, we started with #NoTechTuesday and #NoTech Thursday. They worked great! But as they got older, I let them choose their no-tech days. I allowed any day, even if it was already occupied by sports, church, study, or club practice. In order to avoid long screen hours, they often chose those days. I believe they stayed in outside activities longer as a result, reasoning, "I might as well keep playing soccer if it's a no-screen day anyway." Those extra few years of choosing enriching non-virtual activities offered more fitness, team-building skills, and brain wiring.

Now that my kids are teens, they carve out windows of no screen time on their own without my prompting. My 14-year-old son shocked me this year by announcing that he and his friend decided to opt out of video games Mondays thru Thursdays in order to improve their grades. I'm not kidding! He decided on his own! They also self-select no-screen activities often since they have become familiar with nonvirtual fun

since they were young. My 16-year-old daughter loves to run around playing with her pets and hitting volleyballs with her brother; and my son spends time swimming, playing fetch with the dog, and shooting hoops in the driveway. It's as if we created fun time habits early on, and they continue to pay off today. Protip – create fun kid spaces inside and out. GKIS Screen Guidelines and your GKIS Digital Toolbox will also help with boundary setting**.**

Whole days aren't the only useful blackout periods. Reasonable blackout screen times also include:

- In the morning before school (avoid tardies), ninety minutes after school (so they don't rush through their homework), and thirty minutes before bedtime (to prep the brain for restful slumber).
- I also wouldn't allow screens until a reasonable time on weekend mornings to avoid early morning wakening.

Take the time now to list blackout times and days on your GKIS Family Living Agreement (for example, #NoTechTuesday, #NoTechThursday).

Chapter 9 – Establish Blackout Times

- ☐ **Set up blackout times like #NoTechTuesday.**
- ☐ **Apply GKIS Screen Guidelines as they apply in your home.**
- ☐ **Schedule some fun family screen-free activities.**
- ☐ **LOVE & PROTECT.**

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Screen Guidelines & the Importance of Attachment

During certain developmental periods, the brain is ripe to learn if stimulated appropriately. However, if the learning-receptive window closes without appropriate experiential stimulation, learning that skill is much more difficult, and, in extreme cases, may be impossible. Kids and teens need buckets of face-to-face interaction and three-dimensional and group play experiences to grow the neurological wiring necessary for multi-skill mastery. Too much screen time takes the place of critical learning experiences. There's a good reason tech developers like Bill Gates restrict screen use with their kids.

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Parenting is seriously hard work, even in the digital age. After all, we not only have to supervise their offline worlds, we must monitor their online worlds as well. Prying little eyes off screens with delicious content is tough stuff. It's impossible to attend to every tiny aspect of our children's and teens' lives, including what they are exposed to on televisions, computers, smartphones, and tablets. Furthermore, it's not only screens that interact with our kids. Today's "connected" and "smart" toys provide data, gather data, and even learn data in order to offer customized, consumable content to keep our kids playing (and buying). Fun cartoons, entertaining apps, and talking dinosaurs and Barbies are designed to keep little kids happy. YouTube videos delivered on an endless loop curated from topic-specific algorithms and social media and messaging apps captivate older kids. Sometimes these activities are so expertly designed kids will even choose these activities over one-to-one time with parents and friends. We know allowing kids to sit in front of a screen or smart toy for hours at a time can be detrimental to their intellectual and emotional development. How exactly should we "limit" exposure without triggering resentment, defiance, and fear-of-missing-out anxiety?

GKIS Screen Media Guidelines

GKIS Screen Media Guidelines for Ages Newborn to Two

No screen time before one year of age.

From one to two years old, limit screen exposure to brief intervals with the most age-appropriate, calm, and interactive content. No more than three episodes of thirty minutes a day of screen use for toddlers.

Nothing replaces the benefits of sensible parenting. Our brains do not work like computers. Our memories aren't sequences of X's and O's, and our hardware is not replaceable. At birth our brains are prepared to learn. We are specially wired to make social connections. When we learn, multiple areas of our brains activate, making each brain and each experience unique only to us. Parents are best equipped to evaluate and respond to a young child's fluctuating attention and nuanced motivational states with soothing joy and warmth. By providing a variety of learning activities throughout the day rather than relying on the screen to babysit, you are optimizing healthy brain development. Just because the baby reaches for it, does not mean it is in her best interest to have it.

People get bored quickly. To keep a baby's brain engaged, they need dynamic, enriching interaction. To develop motor coordination, they need lots of opportunity for movement and interaction with three-dimensional objects. For socioemotional development, they need caregivers who look in their eyes and narrate the constant happenings of the world. This offers progressive bi-directional adaptation of language and gesture, which gently leads the child to an increasingly complex understanding of temporal and causal aspects of a situation, including self-reflection and metacognition (thinking about thinking). When a child's request for interaction is consistently met, he learns to trust the world enough to keep asking questions and practicing new and challenging skills. Caregivers must be eager to reward attempts at learning rather than punish them with neglect. Child learning is primarily a social experience, not an academic one. Simply put, screens do not provide the responsive enrichment that a loving caregiver does.

Infants and toddlers are demanding of attention for excellent reason–they need it for healthy brain development. Also, parents lose time (and don't realize it) when they get lost in the vortex of technology. So, moms and dads need to keep an eye on their own screen diet as well. If you are feeling guilty about attending too much to your screens instead of your child, trust your gut and adjust. Infancy flies by and critical learning windows close. You will miss it when it's gone, and your child may too in the form of developmental delay.

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GKIS Screen Media Guidelines for Ages Three to Six

No more than two hours/day of screen time on weekdays and three hours/day on weekends.

Preschool- through first-grade-kids need a lot of running around and pretend, three-dimensional play for healthy development. Depending on maturity and use factors, some kids do well with limited screen time; whereas others do not. If your child can meet his or her responsibilities and maintain healthy friend and family relationships, two to three hours of screen time per day may be a reasonable guideline. However, for busy kids or kids who show pre-addiction signs, parents may want to block screen time completely during the school week, or even all of the time, until the child demonstrates better screen management skills.

Educational programming and software are a go.

Psychology research demonstrates that educational software can be beneficial with children this age. Content balance is critically important to optimize benefit.

Hold off on gaming systems, smartphones, or social media.

It's easy for little ones to get dependent on mobile technology due to undeveloped nervous systems. Limited use of tablets with only email, video conferencing, and edutainment activities makes sense, but hold off on gaming systems or smartphones until later. Let your kids have the opportunity to get used to school and group socialization, as well as further brain development, before allowing screen activities that are embedded with content designed to shape compulsive use patterns, like social media and immersive video games.

GKIS Screen Media Guidelines for Ages Seven to Eleven

No more than two hours per weekday and four hours per Saturday or Sunday of screen time.

This guideline is rough estimate for the average family, but everybody is different. What is more important is type of engagement and appropriateness of content for the individual child.

Gaming devices are a go! But still no smartphones or social media.

The average age for smartphone ownership is now eight years old; too young in my clinical opinion. Because school-age kids are already experts with touch screens and computers, most are already benefitting from online learning with Wi-Fi-assisted parental supervision. Smartphones work with 4G, outside of Wi-Fi range, making the Internet accessible for kids 24/7. Even if you think you will monitor a smartphone consistently, you probably won't based on survey statistics. Compulsive-use patterns often emerge with smartphones. Additionally, the younger the child, the more mobile screen use replaces important learning opportunity. A caveat to the rule of phone ownership before middle school is a need to contact parents due to extracurricular activities, divorce, or medical conditions. In these cases, I recommend the adoption of a child-safe mobile phone without Internet access.

Set up cybersecurity

School age kids no longer look to parents to guide Internet exploration. They are now exploring, creating, collaborating, and sharing online. Their autonomy is awesome, but it also increases exposure to cybersecurity risks. Now is the time to invest in cybersecurity safeguards.

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Prep for filtering and monitoring

Filtering refers to blocking online access to inappropriate content like pornography, violence, and hate. *Monitoring* refers to tracking keystrokes, searches, and usage as well as allowing parents to read social media posts and texts. Filtering and monitoring can be setup through child-safe browsers and search sites, by programming the parental controls on devices and through your Internet Service Provider (ISP) (e.g., Comcast, AT&T, Time Warner, Verizon, Frontier), on individual websites and social media platforms, and through parental control software and routers.

Not only do parental controls block inappropriate online websites, apps, and games, they can also be used to set rules and time schedules, monitor browser searches and online activities, record screen grabs, and even record online talking with a voice-activated sound recorder. Many programs provide remote notification and management, which allows parents to watch use from their online dashboard and override the child's system for blocking, unblocking, and extended time limits.

A controversial issue in screen safety is whether to tell your kids you are monitoring their screen activities. Critics say that "spying" on your kids undermines trust and is destructive for the parent-child relationship. Those in favor of monitoring say it is essential to supervise your child's activities to provide teaching opportunities and stay aware of their activities for safety reasons. I recommend that you let your child know you will be monitoring and talk about it on occasion to highlight how important it is that they remain aware of their online judgment. After all, you are unlikely to be the only adult reading your children's chats. Other parents and school administrators regularly view device content, as well. Kids should be informed of this fact from the beginning.

Although many parents are afraid to admit to their kids that they monitor their screen activity, dishonesty is costlier than letting your child know from the beginning that you engage and supervise their online behavior. Parents are starting to agree. In a 2016 survey conducted by Common Sense Media, 67% of parents surveyed said that monitoring is more important than protecting their children's privacy. It is a myth that kids will hate you for supervising their online activities. In a 2011 survey of teens and their parents, fewer than half of the teens surveyed said were bothered by their parents close monitoring. In fact, 32% said they were "not that bothered," and 22% said there "were not at all bothered." These findings are exactly what I see in my office. If parents are honest, justified in what they do, and warm and supportive of their child's efforts, kids and teens welcome parent involvement and generally understand the need for supervision. In fact, what bothers kids the most is feeling unimportant and unloved.

GKIS Screen Media Guidelines for Ages Twelve to Seventeen

Smartphones are a go.

I recommend holding off on smartphones after their first semester of middle school. By then most kids have phones to socialize and make plans. Start with a mobile phone that doesn't connect to the Internet if they need it before twelve years old. Middle and high school teachers often recommend academic apps and encourage kids to use phones in the classroom.

Once teens have smartphones in hand, strict time limits are more difficult to enforce, but location parameters are still critically important.

Teen academics and social interaction is almost entirely online these days. Your teen has officially transformed into a cyborg. Offer enticing alternatives to phone time like fun outings, binge watching TV together, and offering to host friends for adventures. Still enforce no screens in bedrooms, bathrooms, or behind closed doors as well as situations like mealtime and short car trips to optimize safety and family engagement. Docking devices at night is extremely important, as teens are too often up chatting til early hours of the morning, even on school nights!

Social media is a go.

Until the advent of Facebook's Messenger Kids, thirteen was the official magic age for social media in compliance with The Children's Online Privacy Act. Despite this new availability, I recommend no new adoptions until your child has demonstrated they can manage the increased expectations of middle school, and then only one at a time. Instagram has traditionally been the gateway app. But it is no longer safer than Snapchat with its disappearing storyline and instant message capacity. Keep in mind that public social media posts can usually be monitored but instant messaging cannot. Most social media platforms allow instant messaging and have shut out third party app monitoring. Furthermore, early adoption of social media exposes your child's brain to dopamine-fueled feedback loops which replace real-life experience. Although it will be challenging, hold off social media adoption until mid-middle school. If your teen is demonstrating dangerous signs of addiction potential, wait even longer.

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33 Fun Family Screen-Free Activity Ideas

1. Take a two-hour trail ride on horseback.

2. Go bowling.

3. Take a bus or train to a neighboring community for a day trip.

4. Go roller skating or ice skating.

5. Visit a museum.

6. Take a hike or rent bicycles and search out a new trail.

7. Buy ladybugs online & release them.

8. Set up a lemonade stand.

9. Plant anything.

10. Run through the sprinklers.

11. Go to an antique store on a scavenger hunt.

12. Take a night hike.

13. Pack a picnic.

14. Frisbee!

15. Movie night.

16. Play board games.

17. Go to the zoo.

18. Volunteer at the local animal shelter.

19. Serve a meal at a homeless shelter.

20. Take a firehouse tour.

21. Eat at a new restaurant, maybe even with food from a different culture.

22. Make a fort!

23. Go for drive.

24. Learn the lyrics to a song.

25. Visit local churches, temples, and synagogues.

26. Go swimming!

27. Build something.

28. Make a mix tape.

29. Visit the local library or bookstore.

30. Arts & Crafts day!

31. Farmers market

32. Cook or bake something

33. Do nothing.

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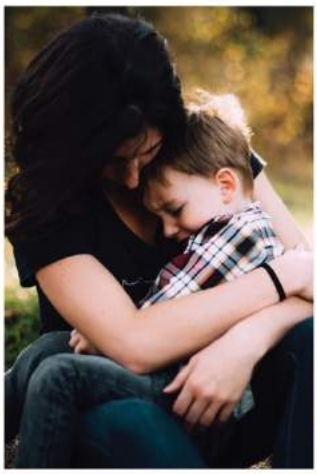

Love & Protect

Although parenting is deeply fulfilling, it's also hard! Everything is a moving target. Our kids are growing up so quickly, while at the same time, we also face new, unexpected adult developmental milestones. This while school, work, sports, and friendships throw us challenges. We are constantly impacting each other and reworking our parent-child synchronized dance of love and communication. Parents with kids of varying personalities recognize that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all parenting strategy. For that reason, I typically teach parenting models instead of offering situational tips, so parents can expertly tweak strategies real time rather than becoming dependent on my day-to-day advice. The truth is, parenting is a journey full of hits and misses. The keys to success are to have an open heart, keep learning and re-evaluating, and soak in every imperfect moment as it is, whether it be the noisy chaos of toddlerhood or the eye-rolling hilarity of adolescence. A sense of humor about yourself and about your kids is the number one requirement.

Other things you can do to strengthen your parent-child relationship is engage in strategies that demonstrate to your children that they are loved. For example, when you walk into the room take a few seconds to look directly at them with warm acknowledgement. Keep track of the things that are important to them and ask how it's going day to day. Cook their favorite foods and take the time to thank them when they help out or ask about you. Don't be subtle. Tell them often how important they are to you, how proud you are of them, and how much you love them. Welcome their friends into your home and take the time to relax and have fun. We can remind them of the things that need to be done without a mind-numbing lecture or threatening. Kids love to be spoken to just as you would a friend, with respect and warmth. At the end of the day, we just need to treat them like we like to be treated.

For more ideas to safely manage screens and strengthen your parent-child relationship, check out my book Screen Time: A Parenting Guide to Get Kids and Teens Internet Safe.

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Chapter 10: GKIS Sensible Guide for Digital Safety Products

We at GetKidsInternetSafe recommend the use of filtering, monitoring, and management digital tools for child and teen online safety. Just like with nonvirtual supervision, younger kids need more eyes-on and a walled virtual garden for Internet exploration; older kids need less supervision and more freedom to explore the virtual landscape with safety in mind.

Consistent with forming a cooperative family alliance, we strongly encourage you to be honest about their activities from the beginning. By openly explaining your reasons for using digital safety products, you invite healthy discussion and negotiation. As long as parent strategies are justified, most kids "get" the necessity for parental controls. However, there are often work-arounds for digital tools. Make sure your kids know that it is against the rules to sabotage controls, like turning off their location or deleting the apps. Be sure to keep the product names in your digital toolbox and username and password credentials private from your kids.

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Digital Toolbox

We researched and collaborated with experts to identify the best tried-and-true digital services for you family. Great digital tools for filtering and monitoring are constantly entering the market, but they can be expensive and difficult to onboard. Also, social media platforms and Apple's IOS systems are not always cooperative with allowing third-party software to access their customers' private digital domains. As a result, the effectiveness of particular digital tools wax and wane.

Please do your own research before you make any decisions. These tools may fit for some families and not for others. Issues to consider include the devices and activities your kids use and their ages as well as ease of onboard and expense. Apple and Google recently offered new free parenting tools of their own (finally)! I recommend you start with those and branch out from there.

Free Apps & Settings

Google Family Link-for Android

By creating a free Google account for your child, you can manage app adoption, monitor screen time, and remotely lock your child's device. They also offer tips for families and the Google Safety Center for families.

Apple Families-for iOS

Free tools offered by Apple include:

- Check out our GKIS article on the new iOS12 upgrade. The Screen Time feature allows you to track notifications and time spent on apps and activities and set limits on apps, categories, and time spent. Downtime shuts down some activities but not others. And Content and Privacy Restrictions also offer monitoring options. Free!
- The "Kids Section" in the App Store that is curated by age range for age-appropriate app selections.
- The Ask and Buy feature allows you to approve app selection and even turn off the Safari web browser. It's on by default for anyone under the age of 13, and you can enable it for any family member under 18. When your

child makes a buy request, a pop up will appear on your phone for approval.
- Child in-app purchases and the installation and deleting of apps can be blocked by going to Settings>General>Restrictions.
- Filter web browsing by going to Restrictions>Allowed Content>Websites. You can also filter by age range for music, podcasts, & news, movies, TV shows, books, Apps, and Siri.
- Map your child's location using the free Find My Friends app. Also, if you have a family group message in Messages, if you tap the "i" you can see where everybody is.
- Find lost iPhones with Find My iPhone (can play a sound even in silent mode for lost iPhones, display a lost message onscreen, and erase data remotely if it gets stolen).
- If you have a teen driver, Apple offers the Do Not Disturb while driving feature that you can lock in as "Don't Allow Changes" in Restrictions.
- Other safety features include Medical ID, Emergency SOS, and Privacy Controls.
- Health features include Night Shift which turns down the blue light when the sun goes down, Do Not Disturb that blocks calls and notifications (like during mealtimes or homework), and Classroom that allows teachers to have access to student controls.

YouTube Kids– for Android and iOS

A free world of learning and fun made just for kids. Its features include:

- Kid profiles
- Blocking
- Watch history
- Search control
- Timer
- Video reporting
- Watch on TV

YouTube RESTRICTED MODE filters out potentially objectionable videos and comments. It must be enabled for each browser and each user profile on that browser. If you turn it on for that browser, you have the option to lock it for everybody using that browser (tap menu icon at the top to get to Settings).

Private Third-Party Apps

Disney's Circle– for Android and iOS

Manage content and screen time for every device on your network, wired and wireless…home and away! Its features include:

- Set time limits for apps and websites
- Set individual filter levels
- Reward your kids by bumping up their time limits
- Set Bedtimes for every family member
- Pause the internet for an individual family member and their devices, or the whole network with one single tap.
- Use OffTimes to schedule internet –free times throughout the day or week.
- Track usage by user

As of June, 2018, Disney's Circle costs $99 one-time purchase hardware, $9.95/month subscription.

Net Nanny– for Android and iOS

Block apps, filter websites and monitor your kids on any device. Features included per their website:

- Parental controls
- Internet filter
- Pornography blocking
- Time management
- Profanity masking
- Social media marketing
- Alerts and reporting
- Remote administration
- User profiles and settings

As of June, 2018, Net Nanny costs $39 annual subscription for one device, $12 per device up to 5, or $9 per device up to 10.

OpenDNS– for your home Internet

An easy way to make your Internet safer, faster, and more reliable. Its features include:

- OpenDNS Family Shield which blocks adult content – Free
- OpenDNS Home which has customizable filtering and identity theft protection- Free
- OpenDNS Home VIP is the home package plus one year of usage stats and white-list mode- $19.95/yr (as of June, 2018).
- OpenDNS Premium Prosumer which protects personal devices on or off-network via our Windows or Mac agents- $20/user/year.

MamaBear– for Android and iOS

Make parenting easier, protect your kids and enjoy peace of mind with the MamaBear App with an easy set-up. Its features include:

- A 24/7 newsfeed of your child's social media activity, with previews of Instagram photos and details about Twitter and Instagram followers, YouTube viewing history, Tumblr and Facebook posts.
- Receive notifications of new friends, restricted words from your customizable restricted word list, uploaded photos and tags.
- Track your child's location.
- Receive notifications of your child's arrival and departure from school, home, and sports practice with their Safe Places feature.
- Get notified of an unsafe driving speed while they are in a moving vehicle.
- Your kids will also have One-Touch Panic Button that alerts parents of an emergency.

MamaBear has a free subscription option. As of June, 2018, there is also a premium version that adds the feature of text monitoring for Android users for $5.99 for 1 month, 14.99 for 3 months, and a 6 month premium account for $24.99 which adds a feature that allows set up of safe or restricted for arrival and departure notifications.

Bark– for Android, iOS, and Amazon devices

Connect your child's accounts and get a notification if and when there is a potential issue. Its features include:

- Bark detects messages containing cyberbullying, sexting, signs of depression, or suicidal thoughts, without having to spend hours reading through all of your child's messages.
- Supports dozens of popular social media platforms, along with email, and text messaging.

As of June, 2018, you can subscribe to Bark for $9/mo. or 99/yr.

OurPact– for Android and iOS

A simple family locator and parental control app that allows parents to locate family members and limit screen time by blocking internet and app access. Its features include:

- App Blocker which blocks internet and apps.
- Schedule screen time throughout the day or week.
- Block specific apps.
- Set a daily screen time limit for your kids.

- Access to a list of apps on your child's phone.
- Block access to texting apps.
- Family locator with real-time geolocation.
- Track your lost or stolen Apple device.
- Block all adult content on our child's phone.
- Allow, schedule, and block specific apps.

As of June, 2018, OurPact has three different packages. OurPact's free standard package has limited features. OurPact Plus allows up to 10 devices with limited features for $1.99/mo., and OurPact Premium allows access to all features for $6.99/mo.

Qustodio– for Windows, Mac OS X, Android, iOS, Kindle and Nook.

Designed to supervise, manage and protect your child's device use on the go! Its features include:

- Web filtering and monitoring
- Screen time controls
- App controls

As of June, 2018, Qustodio costs $54.95/yr. for smaller families (up to 5 devices), $96.95/yr. for medium sized families (up to 10 devices), and $137.95/yr. for coverage of 15 devices.

unGlue– for Android and iOS

An app that empowers kids to make their own healthy time management decisions, instead of a heavy-handed approach of device confiscation. Its features include:

- Set limits on social media, watching videos, and playing games.
- Chores so that your family can earn more entertainment time.
- Steps4time: kids walk or run to earn more entertainment time.
- Block adult content and porn websites.
- Assign multiple devices per kid & designate shared family devices.
- Create internet schedules, wake up and bedtimes.
- Monitor app, game and website activity with usage reports for each device.
- Remotely turn the internet off on any one device or on all devices in your family with a single click.'

As of June, 2018, you can subscribe to unGlue for $9.99/mo. or 83.99/yr.

TeenSafe– for Android and iOS

Helps give you the knowledge you need to protect them and support them. Its features include:

- View texts – View sent, received and deleted SMS and iMessages.
- View calls – View call logs of incoming and outgoing calls including contact name.
- View web history – View your child's web browser history.
- View phone location – See your teen's current smartphone location on a map as well a history of the phone's location.
- View installed apps – View a list of all third-party applications installed on your child's phone.

Onboarding can be a challenge with Apple devices but call center staff are fantastic. As of June, 2018, TeenSafe costs $14.95/mo. and monitors up to 5 devices.

As TeenSafe's Global Ambassador in 2017, I worked closely with the company and helped write and implement call center policy for interacting with customers. They support full disclosure to children about monitoring and refuse to allow their tools to be used illegally, as detailed in this articleI came across in the NY Times.

Mobicip– for iOS, Android , Windows , Chromebook , Mac , Kindle and Nook

Enables parents to provide an online world safer for their kids and families. Its features include:

- Age based filtering
- Setup daily internet time limits
- Strict safe search
- Youtube filter
- Cross-platform remote management
- Categorization
- Intelligent real-time analysis
- Monitor app for parents/admins
- Safari-like browser

As of June, 2018, Mobicip has a free option which has limited coverage, or you can purchase the premium package which covers 5 devices for $39.99/year.

Forcefield– for Android and iOS

Give your children access to the wonders of the Internet and apps while protecting them from online dangers. Its features include:

- App sleeper- remotely sleep apps on your kids' mobile devices.

- App report- see all apps on their devices and get notified upon downloading a new app.
- Family finder- geo-locate your child on a continually updated map.
- Browsing controls- use blocking to protect your kids from objectionable content.
- Activity report- see all websites your kids visit.
- Curated library- give your kids access to over 400curated premium websites.

As of June, 2018, Forcefield costs $11.99/mo. for one child and two parents. Each additional child is $3 more per month.

FUNAMO–for Android, Google, and Nook.

Build accountability and gain a peace of mind with Funamo. Its features include:

- Internet filtering
- Device monitoring
- Application control
- Cloud-based solution

As of June, 2018, FUNAMO is a one-time purchase of $19.99 and will protect the device that you purchase it for as long as you own the device.

Covenant Eyes– for Android, iOS, Kindle, Mac, and Windows

Protect your children from online pornography. This app is specifically designed to rid your child of viewing pornography. Help them make wise choices by blocking the bad stuff. Its features include:

- Monitor and record all Internet browsing.
- Set age restrictions to filter out mature content.
- A report will be sent of the content that was viewed.

As of June, 2018, Covenant Eyes' plan is $11.99/mo. for personal, and 15.99/mo. for a family plan.

Life360–for Android and iOS

This is one of the top used family networking apps in the world due to it being extremely user-friendly. Its features include:

- You can view the real-time location of your children.

- Receive real-time alerts when your family arrives or leaves home, work, and school.
- See the past locations of your family.
- Track a lost or stolen phone.
- A favorite, are you worried about your kid speeding or texting while driving? Driving safety can be tracked with this app.
- A Crash Detection service which will send you an alert notifying you in the case of a car accident.

Life360 has free and premium features. As of June, 2018, Life360 has more than one subscription option. Life360 Plus which allows you 30 days of history, unlimited place alerts, and local crime alerts for $2.99/mo., 24.99/yr. Life360 Driver Protect which includes all of the features of Plus, as well as driving analysis, 24/7 driver care support, and crash detection for $7.99/mo., 69.99/yr.

We try to keep our GKIS digital toolbox updated, but please keep checking for effectiveness on your own as well. We offer this list for your education and entertainment only. These are not our products, so we have no control over and no liability for any third party websites or material per our Terms of Use. Also, there are often work-arounds for many of the digital tools, so keep specific information about your digital toolbox and your username and password credentials private from your kids.

Have some favorites of your own? Please email me at DrTracy@DrTracyBennett.com so I can share with other committed GKIS parents.

Don't Forget to Take Your GKIS Parent Report Card Again & Compare Scores!

Chapter 10 – GKIS Sensible Guide for Digital Safety Products

- ☐ **Create your GKIS Digital Toolbox.**
- ☐ **Complete your GKIS Parent Report Card.**
- ☐ **GRADUATE!**

Congratulations! You Have Graduated!

You have made it! By working through your Home Starter Workbook you have filled in potentially dangerous online portal risk gaps and created an honest, cooperative working alliance with your kids. Taking these steps take courage and effort. Thank you so much for allowing us to be part of your parenting journey. We believe there is no other job more fulfilling, difficult, or important!

If you feel you've made real progress, please email the GKIS Home Starter Workbook Amazon link to those you love. One family at a time can launch a GetKidsInternetSafe revolution!

I'm the mom psychologist who will help you GetKidsInternetSafe.

Onward to More Awesome Parenting,

Tracy S. Bennett, Ph.D.
Mom, Clinical Psychologist, CSUCI Adjunct Faculty
GetKidsInternetSafe.com

GKIS
GetKidsInternetSafe

Parent Report Card

		NO 0	1	2	3	4	YES 5
1	Are you confident you've made good parenting decisions about screen media devices?	O	O	O	O	O	O
2	Are you confident you've made good parenting decisions about games & websites?	O	O	O	O	O	O
3	Are you good about not using screen media as a babysitter?	O	O	O	O	O	O
4	Have you set a clear screen media use day & time agreement & stuck with it?	O	O	O	O	O	O
5	Do you know exactly what screen media activities your kids engage in?	O	O	O	O	O	O
6	Do you follow the GKIS Elementary Screen Use Guidelines of no more than 3 hrs/day?	O	O	O	O	O	O
7	Do you have a firm no screens behind closed doors policy?	O	O	O	O	O	O
8	Do you have GKIS Family Meetings to discuss screen media policy?	O	O	O	O	O	O
9	Have you adopted a digital contract to fill screen media safety gaps?	O	O	O	O	O	O
10	Are you confident your kids will come to you if they have a screen media problem?	O	O	O	O	O	O
11	Have you taught your kids about Screen Media Netiquette so they're kind on- & offline?	O	O	O	O	O	O
12	Are you knowledgeable about screen media risks that can cause digital injuries?	O	O	O	O	O	O
13	Do you have parental controls programmed on all screen devices, through ISP & software?	O	O	O	O	O	O
14	Have you covered Screen Smarts like protecting personal information & not oversharing?	O	O	O	O	O	O
15	Have you set up a GKIS Community Docking Station & a GKIS Community Work Station?	O	O	O	O	O	O
16	Are you familiar with cybersecurity terms like firewalls, geo-tagging, phishing, & malware?	O	O	O	O	O	O
17	Do you practice GKIS #NoTechTuesday? Or NoTechAnyday?	O	O	O	O	O	O
18	Has your family ever taken a screen media free vacation for at least 48 hours?	O	O	O	O	O	O
19	Do you have a GKIS Master List of all usernames & passwords?	O	O	O	O	O	O
20	Are you confident your kids do not text or chat with people they don't know personally?	O	O	O	O	O	O
21	Can you be sure that your kids are being age appropriate with their screen media content?	O	O	O	O	O	O
22	Are you certain your kids would never accept cyberbullying in silence or cyberbully others?	O	O	O	O	O	O
23	Are you confident that your kids have not seen explicitly violent or sexual content online?	O	O	O	O	O	O
24	Do you know everybody on your kids' buddy lists?	O	O	O	O	O	O
25	Are you confident that online predators have zero access to your kids?	O	O	O	O	O	O

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