Technology/Screen Time.

It is amazing to think that our phones and many watches now have 100x – 10000x the computing power that took man to the moon. I hear stories of people gathering to watch the landing on the moon as not everyone had a TV. These days most households have up to 2 devices per person that people could be watching, in colour, whatever they want and whenever they want. Digital media, technology and screen time has increased significantly and has become a normal and in some cases necessary part of life.

So how do we manage this? How do we make sure that our children do not become mindlessly glued to the screen? Here are a few ideas to try out at home:

Create a plan
Sit down as a family and work out a plan. Write this down so you remember what it is you are trying to achieve and gain from this. Your child does not need to see the plan but it helps if you have a strategy. You can use the following as a guide for your plan.

- **What is your goal?**
  Is your goal with your child connection? How are you wanting to interact with your child? What example do you want to show them? Write down what goal you have with the screen time in your house both for adults and for children. What are you wanting to achieve?

- **Know your Child and your Values**
  What are your family values? What character traits do you want your child to have?
  What do you know about your child- what are their dislikes and likes, hobbies etc.? What can they handle and what is it that they struggle with? Some people have great self-control while others need to work harder at this. How does your child manage responsibility? What are their responsibilities? How can you increase their experience of responsibility- ie. chores, attend training or other extra circular activities, plan or attend a family event or just enjoy the outdoors?

- **Set Clear rules and boundaries**
  You are the adult and the parent. You make the final decision. Set clear rules around screen time use. Such as:
  - Parent has access to spot checks on use, emails, text messages and other social media
  - Screen time occurs in public areas of the house (no bedrooms)
  - Screen time occurs after homework and chores are complete
  - Screen time may be reduced to weekends except for school work
  - Screen free time – plan this into your schedule (ie. Sunday afternoons)
  - Screens off an hour before going to bed – minimum at least 15mins (this allows the brain to calm down and get into the right patterns for sleep)
  - Wi-Fi to be turned off by 10pm every night (if you can hit this goal you are probably doing a great job managing screen time responsibly)

- **Be consistent** – Once you have established the family rules/guidelines with screen time STICK to them. No matter how you feel this is a boundary that you have set up and your child needs to know they can trust your word. If they chose to fight this rule one afternoon, use the LOKOP one liners - Fun or room? If they consistently ask you for screen time. Yes you can as soon as (add in the job or condition that you need to have meet).

- **Age /Maturity appropriateness** – There are ratings for a reason. Use these as a bench mark to work from and be aware of what they are wanting to play or watch. What works for one child may not for another. Just because their friends are playing this game or watching that show or movie does not mean that it is good/right or appropriate for them. So what is the level of your child and work with that, yes it may be different for each child. They will say that is not fair, your answer could be – I know… probably so…

- **Stay up to date with their usage**
  What are they up to? What are they watching and what are they playing? Who are they talking with and too? What is that game about and what do you need to do in the game. The latest game craze at the moment is Fortnite. What is the rating for this game? Do you know what it is and what they need to do in this game? Regularly check and ask questions, even have a go yourself and make this a connection point with your child.

- **Know their school work**
  Keep informed about what tasks are required for their subjects. Sometimes they will need to access technology, but there are may tasks that do not require this. Parents can fall into the trap of thinking because their child is 'studying' they are using technology appropriately. This is a myth, study and exam week results in the highest incidents of online bulling across Australia. Why? Students are bored, easily distracted and stressed. This is a terrible combination for reacting negatively toward peers. During weeks 8 and 9 of term please turn up the vigilance!!!

- **Communicate with your kids**
  Talk with your child. Ask them about the screen time they are doing, what game are they playing and what shows are they watching? What is it about or what do you need to do? Why is this fun to watch this or play this? Join in, sit down and watch with them for a moment, play the game with them or watch them play and ask questions. Be interested in their interests and their screen time activities.

- **8.30am – 3.20pm**
  Whilst your child is at school they are required to use their technology for class work only. If a student needs to contact a parent they are required to phone them from student services. We ask parents to please refrain from texting or emailing their child during school hours.

For further information please check these out:

Coffee, Kids and Crazy podcast – Back to school and Screentime – By Loving on Purpose – Brittney Serpell

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner - Information on online safety and screen time activities

Common Sense Media – Check on ratings, content and storylines. Plus many other resources.

Cyber Safety Solutions – Learn about safety for your child whilst online.

Family Contracts for Screen time – Use one of their templates or just use this as a guide when you write your own!

Welcome to the adventure of building great relationships with your child around appropriate use of technology. Enjoy your time with your child teaching, modelling and monitoring the screen time world!

Today's WiFi password can be unlocked by texting a photo of a clean kitchen to mom. Said photograph MUST contain one box of crackers on the counter by the stove (to prevent re-using any previous photos).

Thank you for playing.

May the odds be ever in your favor.

Love, Mom

WANT TODAY'S WIFI PASSWORD ?
1) MAKE YOUR BEDS
2) VACUUM DOWNSTAIRS
3) WALK THE DOG