



### **Ten Steps to Unplug Families from Screens**

#### **1. BECOME INFORMED regarding the effects of technology on child development and learning.**

Technology overuse is related to child attention problems, poor academics, aggression, family conflict, impaired sleep, developmental delays, attachment disorders, depression, anxiety, impaired body image, obesity and early sexuality. The signs of technology addiction are tolerance, withdrawal, unintended use, persistent desire, time spent, displacement of other activities, and continued use. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours per day of combined technology use, yet elementary children use on average eight hours per day!

**Need Help?** Get informed by checking out the Reconnect Webinars website [www.reconnectwebinars.com](http://www.reconnectwebinars.com) to watch the *Suffer the Child* and *Reality Check* videos, review the research on the *Fact Sheet*, read articles and comment on the *Moving to Learn* blog [www.movingtolearn.ca](http://www.movingtolearn.ca), sign up for the free *Child Development Series Newsletter*, or order Cris Rowan's book *Virtual Child – The terrifying truth about what technology is doing to children* [www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca).

#### **2. DISCONNECT YOURSELF FIRST – Be available for your children!**

As child technology use patterns that of their parents, technology addicted children are likely to live in a high technology usage household. Parents need to determine how much technology is too much and set clear limits. Parents should then model balancing technology use with other activities by planning and scheduling a variety of healthy activities. Schools could sponsor a *Tech Unplug* week where classrooms compete to reduce technology use in home and school or have one day per week screen-free.

**Need help?** Reconnect Webinars *Technology Management webinar* for teens, parents, educators and clinicians offers participants research-based information regarding school, family, and community technology management strategies. Parents, health and education professionals also receive the *Tech Tool Kit*, complete with screens, questionnaires, schedules, and a variety of strategies to help better manage balance between use of technology and healthy activities.

#### **3. RECONNECT - Designate “sacred time” with your children.**

The underlying causal factor for addiction is fear of human connection or “social anxiety”, and results from poor parent/child attachment formation. Parents and teachers might benefit from exploring past experiences of attachment with their own parents and ponder how this experience may have affected how they relate to their own child or students. As adults disconnect from children, as a default these children form unhealthy connections to devices. Designation of “sacred time” in the day with no technology (meals, in the car, before bedtime, and holidays) is a first start toward reconnecting with your children.

**Need help?** Reconnect Webinars *Attachment and Addictions – Child Development series webinar* offers participants information regarding parent/child attachment and addictions, and profiles *Attachment* and *Addiction Questionnaires*.

#### **4. EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES to technology as a class or family.**

Not all children are interested in or value the same activities as adults. Fostering a tolerance for differences and respecting individual preferences can go a long way toward promoting children's motivation to unplug.



**Need Help?** Have each family or classroom member make a list of ten realistic, inexpensive things to do by themselves, with a friend, with another family member, with a pet, indoors, and outdoors. Help children create a game, song, joke, poem, story or dance. Buy a book of games, create a story night, play wrestle, make up a play, build a fort of couch cushions, or family cooking night are but a few of a myriad of alternatives to technology use.

### **5. ENHANCE SKILLS PRIOR to unplugging your children.**

Children with technology addictions have poorly developed skills in other areas with low skill competence and confidence. Self-identity, social skill, relationship to nature, and sense of spirit, are often disconnected in children who overuse tech. Drastic or sudden reduction in technology with a child who has an addiction, will result in chaos at school and home, as the child is now alienated from what has become their whole meaning for living. Help build performance skills by exposing children to alternate activities that are “just right challenge”, not too hard, not too easy, to build skill.

**Need help?** Reconnect Webinars *Attention and Learning – Child Development series webinar* offers parents and teachers strategies to build skill competence and confidence prior to a tech unplug.

### **6. ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING through engagement in the four critical factors for child development - movement, touch, human connection, and nature.**

Children need rough and tumble play 2-3 hours per day and also need to spend time connecting with their parents, teachers and other children, in order to achieve optimal physical and mental health. Rough and tumble play promotes adequate sensory and motor development of the vestibular, proprioceptive, tactile and attachment systems needed for achieving literacy in printing, reading and math, as well as paying attention and learning.

**Need help?** Reconnect Webinars *Sensory Processing and Motor Development – Child Development series webinars* offer participants information regarding sensory and motor development to give children the edge they need to succeed.

### **7. ADDRESS PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY – Go Outside! Go Green!**

Parents’ perceptions of safety correlate with child time indoors in front of TV, internet, and video games e.g. if a parent perceives the world as unsafe, that child will spend more time indoors using technology. Fear of litigation in schools and communities, has drastically changed playgrounds, making them boring and unchallenging for most children. Outdoor rough and tumble play is a biological need for children, and has been proven to significantly reduce problematic behaviors, aggression, and attention deficit, as well as improve depression and anxiety.

**Need help?** Reconnect Webinars *Attention and Learning – Child Development series webinar* offers participants research evidenced strategies to enhance attention through increasing access to nature and enhance development through creating “sensational” playgrounds.

### **8. CREATE INDIVIDUAL ROLES and foster independence.**

50 years ago, children had family jobs and chores that if were not performed, threatened the very sustainability of the family. While life was tough, children had a strong sense of who they were, and their purpose in the family. Children benefit from knowing their role in the big picture, and self-esteem came



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from being independently productive. Realistic challenges and expectations by parents and teachers promote defined roles for children and provide a structure where they can begin to try out new skills. When faced with a task that is perceived to be beyond a child's skill level, frustration and poor self-esteem will be the result.

**Need Help?** Reconnect Webinars *Foundation Series – Child Development series webinars* offers participants foundations for child development, learning and behavior and evidence-based tools and techniques to optimize child health and performance.

### 9. **SCHEDULE BALANCE** between technology use and activities.

Follow the *Reconnect Webinars – Balanced Technology Management* concept of an hour of 'energy in' (technology use) equals an hour of 'energy out' (movement, touch, connection, and nature). Make up a weekly schedule with designated time for technology balanced with time for healthy activity. When beginning the *Tech Unplug*, it's important to alternate between familiar, predictable, structured activities and novel activities. The parent and teacher's job is to skillfully *dance* the child between predictability and novelty during the initial unplug period. Children can't do what they haven't been taught, so need to teach children how to explore new activities, while providing predictable structure and consistency.

**Need Help?** Reconnect Webinars offers parents, teachers and therapists' information and guidance to help address child technology addictions. See [www.reconnectwebinars.com](http://www.reconnectwebinars.com) for more unplug information and suggestions. Sign up for a Reconnect Webinar and receive the *Tech Tool Kit* for loads of helpful information and handouts.

### 10. **LINK CORPORATIONS TO COMMUNITY** to create sustainable futures for children!

Reconnect Webinars offers an invitation to all corporations involved in technology production, to re-direct a percentage of their gross profits back into building healthy communities. Awesome playgrounds, free recreation passes for children, building safe parks and nature trails, and school camping trips are but a few sustainability initiatives to ensure children stay unplugged.

**Need help?** Reconnect Webinars *Successful Schools – Child Development series webinar* offers participants the *Productivity Designs for Classroom and Gym* handouts to improve student productivity and learning and provides ideas for attaining technology corporate funding for playgrounds and exercise equipment.

### Technology Use Guidelines for Children and Youth

Developmental Age	How Much?	Non-violent, pro-social TV	Non-violent, pro-social video games	Violent video games	Handheld devices	Online violent video games and/or pornography
0-2 years	none	never	never	never	never	never
3-5 years	1 hour/day total tech	okay	never	never	never	never
6-12 years	2 hours/day total tech	okay	limit to 30 minutes/day	never	never	never
13-18 years	2 hours/day total tech	okay	limit to 30 minutes/day	limit to 30 minutes/day	okay	never