Parents, Check Your Own Screen Habits

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From distracted parenting to "sharenting," taking an honest look at our own use of electronic media can make us into more skillful parents and better role models.

1. Put your phone away whenever possible when you're with your kids.

A recent paper reports parents check their phones an average of [70 times a day](#) and consistently underestimate just how often we do it. Try leaving your phone in the charger during the morning and evening routine, turn off notifications, and tell your kids what you're doing when you do pick up your

phone.

2. If you want calmer children, be a more focused parent.

Research by Dr. Jenny Radesky suggests that we are especially likely to turn to digital distractions in stressful moments with our children. Resist the temptation. Paying attention to our kids' state of mind will help us respond more appropriately, and that leads to children with better emotional self-regulation in the long run.

3. Before you post a picture or share a cute story about your kids on social media, think twice and get their permission if possible.

Too much "sharenting" can expose our kids to hackers, spammers and creeps. Guard their personal information and be aware of what could be embarrassing. When you ask for kids' permission on what to share, starting in kindergarten, you model respectful and appropriate behavior online — and with luck, they will grow up to follow your example.

4. Don't use technology to stalk your children.

It's tempting to physically track your kids, read their messages and text them all day long. Instead, let your kids know you will trust them and check in only if there's a real red flag. Your confidence will help them make better decisions and feel safer opening up if they do run into trouble.

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5. Work for healthier technology for your kids and for all of us.

Building a healthier digital environment is bigger than what any individual family can do. It takes all of us together. Official efforts in the U.S. and UK are underway to introduce design guidelines so kids are safer online without running into ads, surveillance, or other bad actors.

Resources:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics offers guidelines on children and media.
- Children with behavioral issues consume more media, according to a study in *Pediatrics*.
- Parents reported their own experiences in a paper titled "Parent Perspectives on Their Mobile Technology Use: The Excitement and Exhaustion of Parenting While Connected" in the journal *Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*.
- Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey recently introduced the Kids Internet Design and Safety Act, or KIDS Act, to limit marketing and try to address algorithms that put harmful content in front of kids.