

Supporting your
family's wellbeing

MENTAL HEALTH

eating a balanced diet;

getting enough sleep;

exercising;

being creative;

spending time doing things we enjoy;

talking to people we trust about our feelings;

limiting time on devices (e.g. watching TV or using social media).

There are many ways we can support our own mental health. These include:

drinking plenty of water;

practising good self-care

being kind to ourselves;

spending time with people who make us smile;

asking for help when we feel it is needed;

having some calm, quiet time each day;

spending time outside;

reminding ourselves of our strengths and attributes;

SCREEN TIME

Negative Effects of Screen Time



Lack of Social Interactions



Poor Sleep Quality



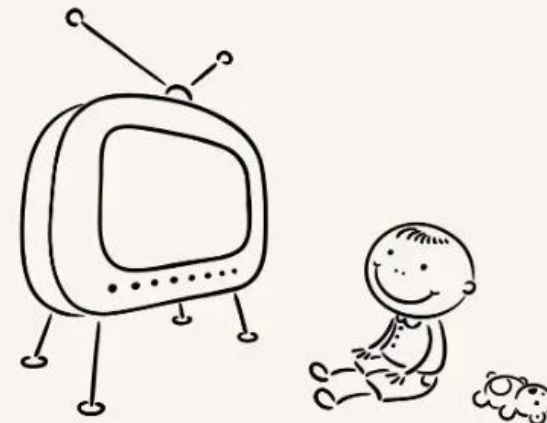
Speech and Language Delays



Poor Physical Health



Life Skills Impediment



THE RISKS OF EXCESSIVE SCREEN TIME

DOPAMINE OVERLOAD

Technology can cause an over-release of dopamine, creating a cycle of craving more screen time. This builds tolerance and a constant desire for more stimulation, similar to craving more sweets after tasting something delicious.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

High levels of screen use can obstruct the development of crucial executive functions like planning, organizing, and impulse control, impairing a child's ability to make sound judgments and manage technology use effectively.



HEIGHTENED STRESS LEVELS

Prolonged screen time can keep the brain in a constant state of stress, akin to the "fight or flight" response, which negatively impacts a child's overall health and well-being.



MYELIN DEVELOPMENT

Myelin, which speeds up brain processing, can be damaged by the overstimulation from screen time. This disrupts the natural process of making brain tasks easier over time, similar to creating smooth sled tracks on a snowy hill.

CONTROL AND PERSEVERANCE

Screens offer a controlled environment where children can easily switch activities, preventing them from learning perseverance and coping skills needed for real-life situations beyond their control.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Excessive screen time can hinder the brain's ability to manage social interactions and emotional regulation, making it difficult for children to interact and control their emotions appropriately.



SOCIAL SKILLS AND EMPATHY

Face-to-face interactions are essential for developing social skills and empathy. Excessive screen time can impair children's ability to understand and respond to others' emotions, hindering relationship development.



Managing Behaviour

Boundaries –
Consistency is KEY!

Communication

Practical advice on how to effectively communicate with your child:

- Speak face to face and make eye contact, so you can be sure that your child is listening.
- **Wait for them to respond** so you can determine whether you need to repeat what you've said or explain further. This can be tricky as we are all busy but for a child , it can make all the difference.
- Be mindful of the fact that children do not process information as quickly as adults so waiting for a response will create a safe place for them to articulate their thoughts as best they can.
- Make it a habit to ask your child how their day was – and then listen to what they have to say.
- Consider your reaction when responding to your child.

Bedtime!

WHY SLEEP MATTERS FOR KIDS

SLEEP RECHARGES KIDS' BODIES AND BRAINS SO THEY CAN:

- Feel calm and refreshed.
- Make good choices.
- Have a healthy weight.
- Pay attention in school.



- Remember what they learned.
- Do better in sports.
- Avoid getting hurt.
- Feel good about themselves.

AFTER 1 OR 2 NIGHTS OF LESS SLEEP, YOUR CHILD MAY:

- Have more meltdowns.
- Make poor choices.
- Zone out in class.



- Forget what they learned.
- Have trouble with sports and games.
- Get into arguments.

KIDS WHO ARE SLEEP-DEPRIVED MAY:

- Feel sad, hopeless, or anxious.
- Become overweight.



- Make risky choices.
- Use cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

9-12 hours for ages 6-12

8-10 hours for ages 13-18

Feeling relaxed is important in the run up to bedtime for both parent and child. If your child is experiencing difficulties sleeping it can make you both feel anxious. Youngsters often pick up on stress levels so try to create a relaxing and calm environment as bedtime approaches.

Here is some advice that may help:

1. Turn off all screens an hour before bedtime, this includes television, laptops, tablets and mobile phones. Screen activities can be mentally stimulating and also may inhibit the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone that helps us to feel drowsy.
2. Set aside time earlier during the day to allow your child to share any worries with you. It can be helpful to share how their day has been and what is planned for the next day. Make sure to give them your full attention.
3. Dim the lights in the hour before bed to create a relaxing environment and aid the production of melatonin.
4. Fine motor skill activities such as craft activities, model making, jigsaws or colouring pictures can aid relaxation.
5. Massage can help some children to unwind.
6. Classical music can be very soothing and makes good relaxing music to play in the background during the bedtime routine.
7. Mindfulness is being increasingly used and there is evidence to suggest that it can be helpful to promote relaxation and sleep. There are a number of apps and products on the market that may be useful.
8. Encourage your child to concentrate on their breathing. Imagine breathing in a beautiful white light and blowing out any worries or troubles each time they exhale. Breathing exercises are also useful for parents to carry out and are a great exercise to enjoy together.
9. Teach your child to progressively relax the muscles in their body. They can begin by tensing their feet to the count of 5 and then letting them relax. Next tense the calf muscles and relax, moving up to the thighs and so on until they have relaxed each part of their body. This is another good activity to try together.
10. End the day on a positive note by sharing 5 great things that have happened during the day.

Supporting your own
mental health!

NEW PROGRAMME:

Good Morning Club – all parents/carers sent log-in information.

RESOURCES YOU CAN ACCESS IN SCHOOL

- Park Hill Infant School's Headship Team are available to speak to in the event of a family emergency or crisis or if you have concerns that cannot be dealt with by the class teacher
- Concerns surrounding your child's daily school experience or educational progress can be referred in the first instance to your child's class teacher
- Daisy (School Counsellor) and Paula (Nurture Support Mentor) – work alongside parents to provide in house support for children in the form of counselling, nurture groups, and play therapy.
- Parent/Carer Counselling with Daisy has now started – please enquire at the school office

Top tips to support children and young people



Be there to listen

Regularly ask how they're doing so they get used to talking about their feelings and know there's always someone to listen if they want it. Find out how to create a space where they will open up.

[How to start a conversation with your child](#)



Support them through difficulties

Pay attention to their emotions and behaviour, and try to help them work through difficulties. It's not always easy when faced with challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why.

[Help with difficult behaviour and emotions](#)



Stay involved in their life

Show interest in their life and the things important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.



Encourage their interests

Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team help connect us with others and are important ways we can all help our mental health. Support and encourage them to explore their interests, whatever they are.



Take what they say seriously

Listening to and valuing what they say, without judging their feelings, in turn makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them process and work through their emotions in a more constructive way.

[The Anna Freud Centre support guide](#)



Build positive routines

We know it still may not be easy, but try to reintroduce structure around regular routines, healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also really important – try to get them back into routines that fit with school or college.

[Sleep tips for children](#)