

Helping Kids with ADHD Manage Screen Time: Tips for a Healthy Relationship With Technology

In today's digital world, managing screen time can feel like an uphill battle—especially for kids with ADHD. Between online games, social media, and streaming platforms, technology can easily dominate their day. But with the right strategies, you can help your child build a balanced and healthy relationship with screens. Here are four practical tips to get started.

1. Understand Why They Stay on Their Screens

Kids love technology, but to help them manage it, it's important to dig deeper and understand why they stay glued to their screens. Is it because they lose track of time? Is it their way to relax after school? Or do they use it as a way to avoid less preferred tasks?

For example, many kids with ADHD struggle with time management. Your child might sit down to play a game “for just an hour” but suddenly realize two hours have passed. To help, encourage them to structure their screen time around specific activities, like watching one episode of a show or completing a single level in a game. Instead of saying, “Five more minutes,” guide them to log off when the activity is complete. This not only helps them stay on track but also builds their awareness of time.

2. Create a Screen Time Contract

A screen time contract can be a game-changer. This simple tool lays out clear expectations for using technology and helps kids practice impulse control—something that many kids with ADHD find challenging.

Together, you and your child can create a contract that outlines rules, rewards, and consequences related to screen time. For example, the contract might include agreements like no screens during meals or turning off devices an hour before bedtime. By involving your child in the process, you give them a sense of ownership and accountability. Plus, they'll know exactly what's expected of them and what happens if those expectations aren't met.



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3. Unplug With Them

It's not enough to tell your child to get off their screens—you have to show them how it's done. Kids learn by watching, so if you're glued to your phone or have the TV on all the time, it sends mixed signals.

While you don't have to follow the same screen time rules as your child, leading by example can go a long way. Try setting aside times where everyone unplugs together, like during meals or before bedtime. Replace screen time with activities like board games, puzzles, or family walks. Not only does this create meaningful opportunities to connect, but it also reinforces the idea that life can be just as engaging (if not more so!) offline.



4. Celebrate Their Efforts

Managing screen time isn't easy, especially for kids with ADHD. That's why it's so important to praise their efforts. When your child logs off without a fight or follows the screen time contract, let them know you noticed. A simple "Great job unplugging today!" or "I'm proud of you for sticking to the rules" can make a big difference.

You can also point out the benefits of their progress. For instance, you might say, "I noticed you were really focused on your homework after you turned off the TV" or "Wasn't it fun to play that board game together instead of being on our phones?" Positive reinforcement helps them feel good about their choices and motivates them to keep going.

Building a Healthy Relationship with Technology

Helping kids with ADHD manage screen time is all about balance. By understanding their needs, setting clear boundaries, and leading by example, you can help them build lifelong habits that promote both productivity and relaxation. And remember: It's not about banning screens altogether—it's about teaching your child how to enjoy technology in a way that works for them.

With patience, consistency, and encouragement, you can help your child unplug and thrive—on and off the screen.