

I'm constantly told to worry about my child's screen time – but I'm more concerned about my own

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. How many hours a day do you spend on screens?
2. Is your screen time more or less than in the past? Why?
3. What do you use your phone for?

2 Key words

1. Complete the sentences using these key words from the text.

addiction

afford

embrace

entirely

motorway

1. If you _____ a change, you accept it with enthusiasm.
2. If you have a(n) _____, you can't stop doing something.
3. A(n) _____ is an important road that connects cities or towns.
4. _____ means *completely*.
5. If you can _____ something, you have enough money to pay for it.

justify

scroll

stare

suddenly

unfortunately

6. If you _____ something, you give a good reason or explanation for it.
7. If you _____ at someone or something, you look at it for a long time without moving your eyes.
8. To _____ is to move text or images up or down on a screen.
9. _____ means the same as *sadly*.
10. If something happens _____, it happens quickly and unexpectedly.

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b. Use the words from task a to complete the following sentences.

1. Do you often _____ your phone while watching TV?
2. I want to buy a new smartphone but I can't _____ it.
3. I've always _____ new challenges.
4. He was reading the news when, _____, the phone rang.
5. I'd love to go to the party but, _____, I have to work late.

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- 1 All parents worry about a thousand things during the day; from worries like “What’s that in their mouth?” and “How am I going to get this cleaning done?” to things that are entirely out of our control, like “Will they be a good person?”
- 2 Of all of these, one of the topics that is most talked about and stressed about is screen time. Every time my child looks at a screen, I start to worry. I try to calm myself by remembering how I grew up watching television.
- 3 Suddenly, I find myself worrying about my own screen time. I justify my time on screens believing that it is important for my work. Sometimes I take a break to scroll on my phone. Then, after a hard day, I like to sit on the sofa and stare at the biggest TV set I can afford. This is called living life to its maximum.
- 4 The way we measure time spent on our phone is similar to watching other cars on the motorway: anyone going slower than you is a fool; anyone going faster than you is crazy. In the same way, anyone who watches more television than me, or scrolls for longer, has a terrible and sad addiction. Anyone who does it less than me is afraid to embrace the new world.
- 5 Really, there are times when every minute of my screen time should count as two because I’m actually looking at a second screen on my phone. Then there’s the third screen, from the laptop I am typing on. Honestly, it’s four – I just checked my smartwatch to see some notifications.
- 6 We must consider the effects of these distractions. One of the real losses from all this distracted living is the ability to think about difficult problems or situations. So, how do I get my attention back?
- 7 It is a difficult question. Unfortunately, I am already distracted. I’ve started scrolling through my phone, and when that is done, I might watch a couple of minutes of the football game on the television while reading what people are saying about the game.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Choose the correct option to complete the sentences.

1. Parents are often worried **only about everyday things / about cleaning / about things they can't control**.
2. Parents **don't pay much attention to / are stressed about / are too worried about** how much screen time their children get.
3. The author believes **he spends too much time on screens / he doesn't watch much TV / he is living his life to the maximum**.
4. The author says **distracted living / looking at a second screen / checking your smartwatch** affects how we solve problems.
5. He would like to **receive fewer notifications / stop using too many screens at work / be able to concentrate better**.

4 Key language

a. Look at these sentences from the article and answer the question below.

Anyone **who** watches more television than me, or scrolls for longer, has a terrible and sad addiction.

There are times **when** every minute of my screen time should count as two.

Which of the words in bold ...

1. refers to time? _____
2. refers to people? _____

b. Look at the sentences below and answer the question.

That's **where** I saw her last week.

This is the laptop **that** I used to write the email.

Is that the book **which** you told me about?

Which word(s) do you use to ...

1. refer to places? _____
2. refer to objects? _____

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c. Complete the sentences using *that, which, who, when* or *where*.

1. This is the driver _____ won the race last Saturday.
2. Is this the school _____ you studied as a child?
3. The film _____ we watched on Friday was excellent.
4. Is that the book _____ you borrowed from the library?
5. I remember the day _____ we first met.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

1. 'All parents worry about a thousand things during the day.'
2. 'One of the topics that is most talked about and stressed about is screen time.'
3. 'The way we measure time spent on our phone is similar to watching other cars on the motorway: anyone going slower than you is a fool; anyone going faster than you is crazy. In the same way, anyone who watches more television than me, or scrolls for longer, has a terrible and sad addiction. Anyone who does it less than me is afraid to embrace the new world.'
4. 'One of the real losses from all this distracted living is the ability to think about difficult problems or situations.'

6 In your own words

- a. In pairs or small groups, do some online research about the negative effects of spending too much time in front of screens and what we can do about it.**
- b. Present your ideas to the class.**