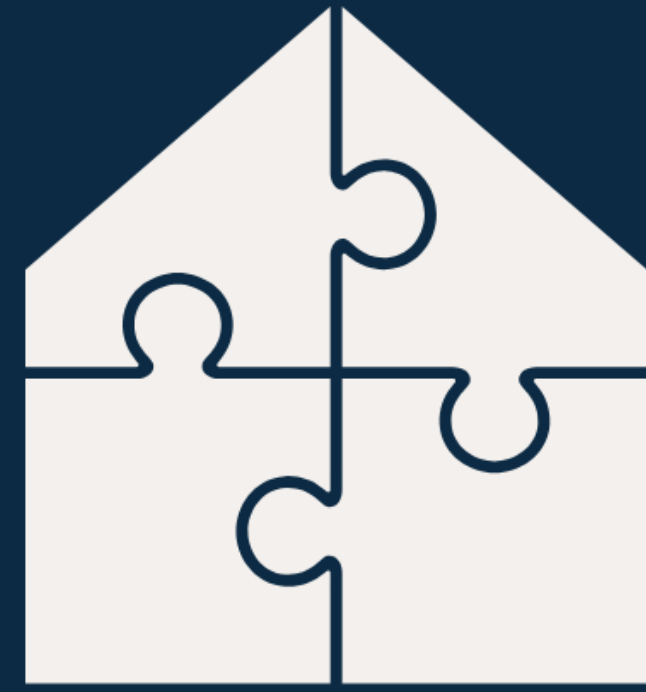




Digital Kids; Parenting in the Tech Age

Dr. Ryan Smith



PARA **VITA**

Therapy and Training

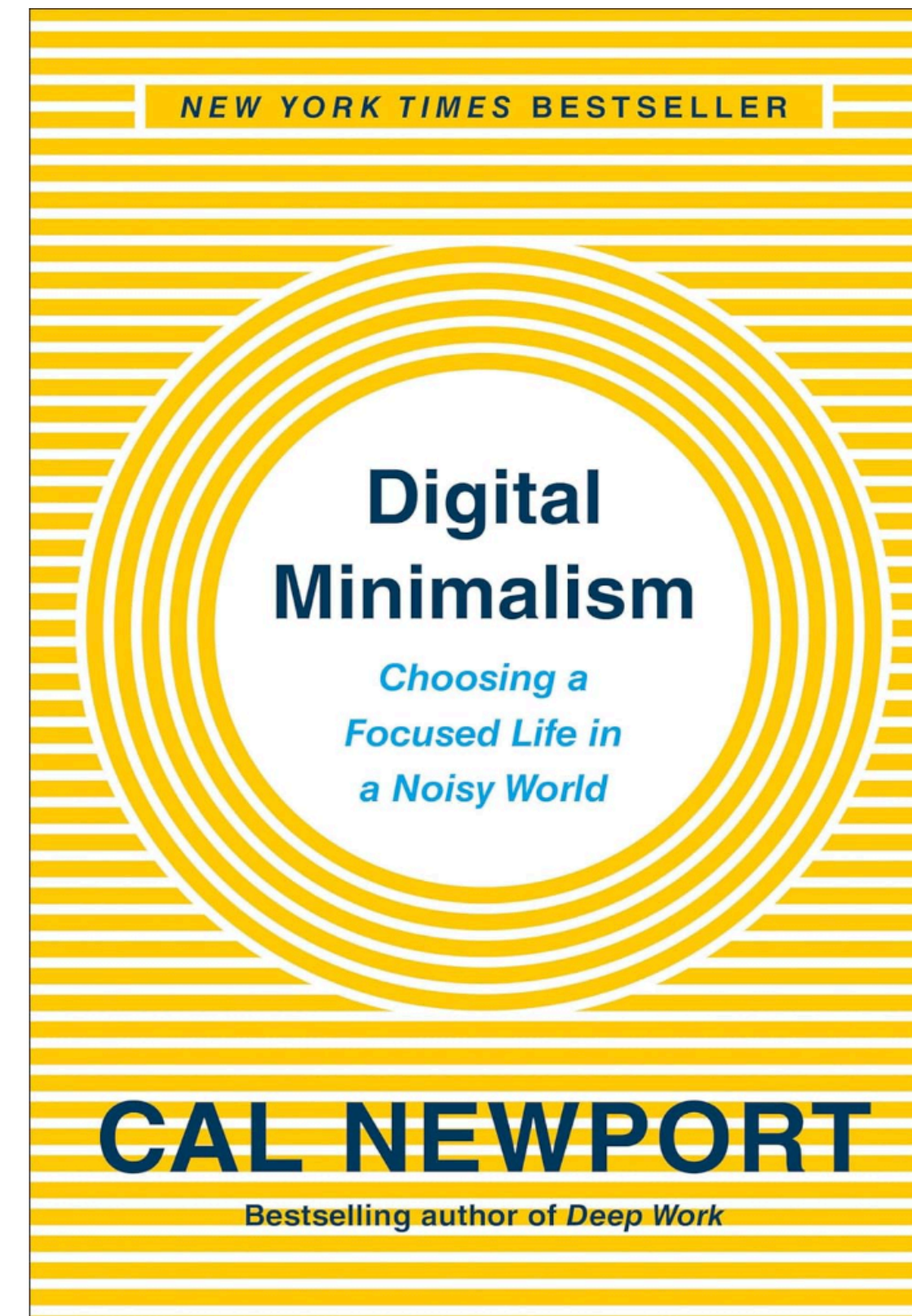
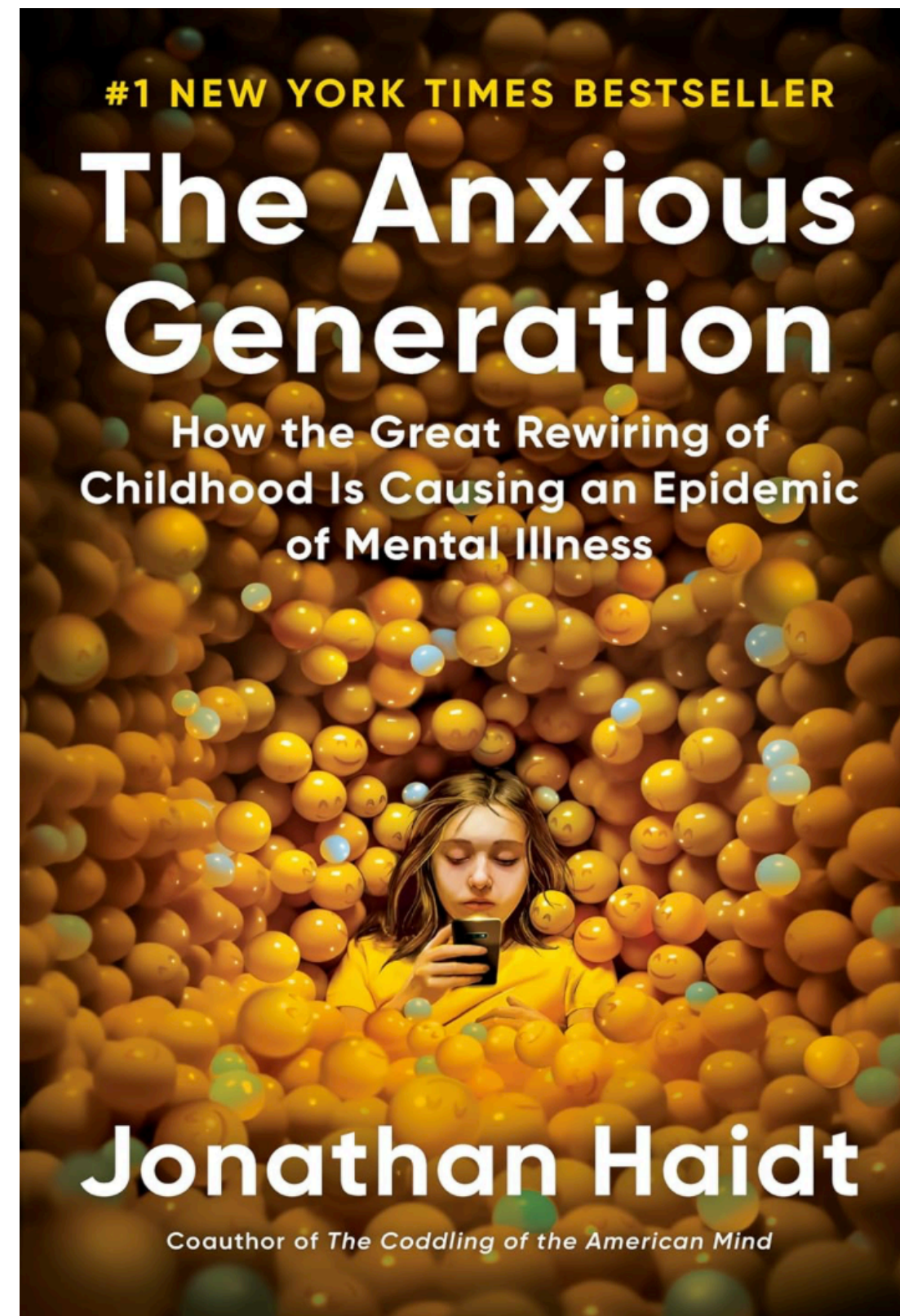
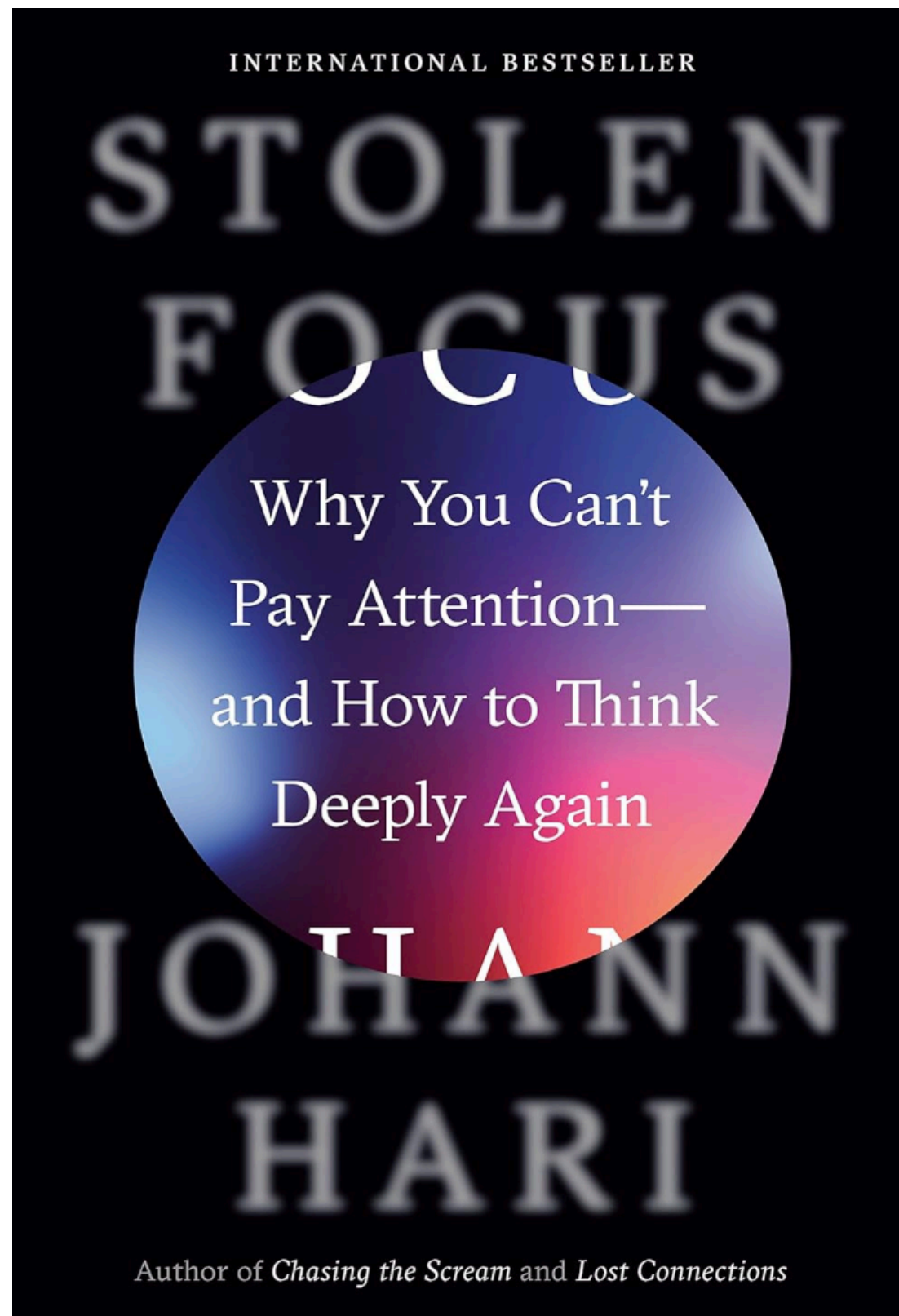


Presentation Slides

Ryan Smith PhD, LMFT-S, LPC-S

- ☐ **Private Practice**
- ☐ **Founder/Former Director of Family Clinic in Mesquite ISD serving families for classroom based issues**
- ☐ **Served as President of the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Counselors**
- ☐ **Public School Teacher, Basketball/Football Coach**
- ☐ **Published work on the impact of social media on real-world relationships**
- ☐ **Husband and father**

Books Worth Reading

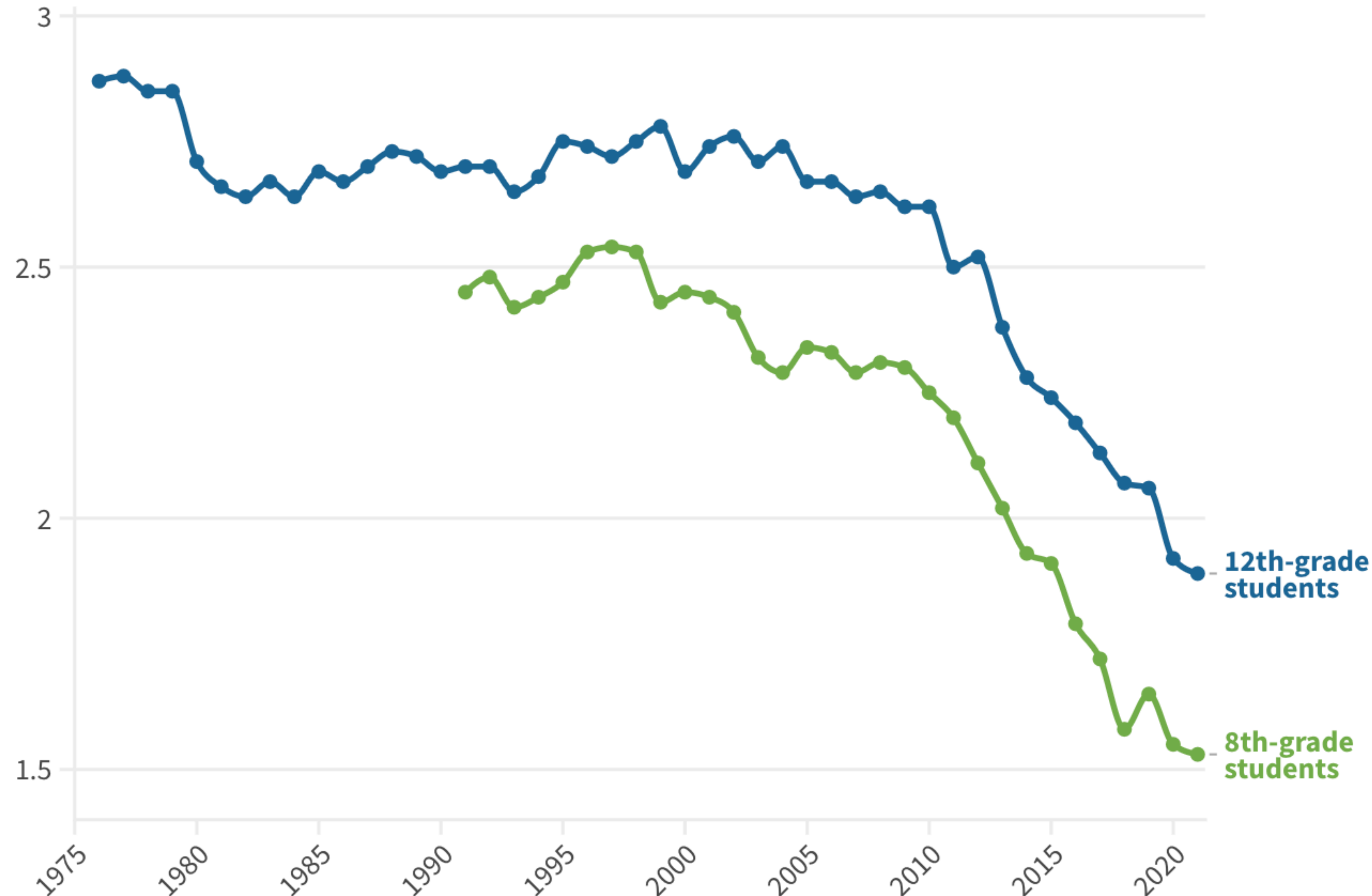


Lost Time

- What did you love doing most as a kid? Your fondest type of memories?

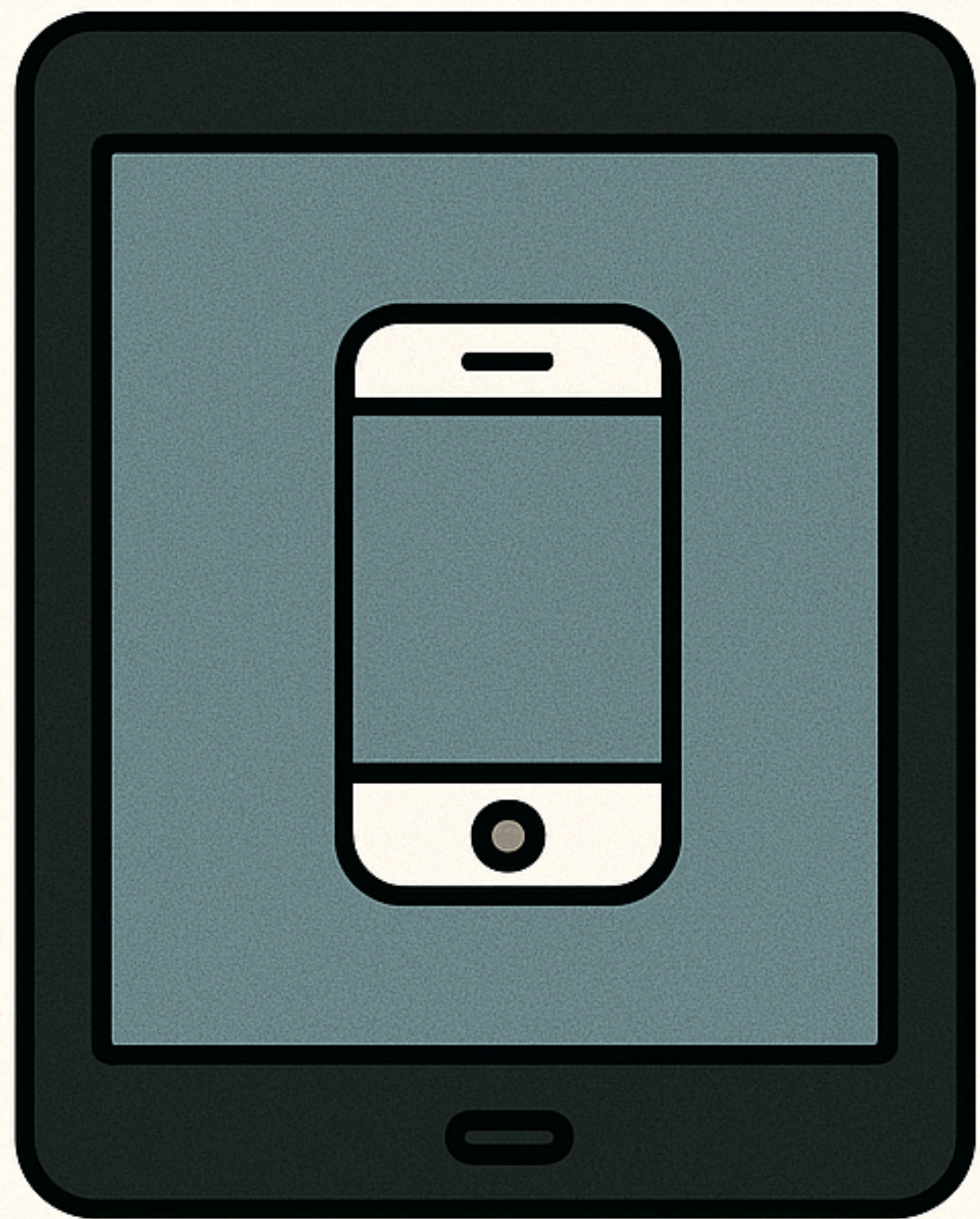
Teens are spending less face time with friends

Weekly social outings for teens have plummeted in the smartphone era



**Smart Phones and
video games are
Experience Blockers**

**Kids learn best
through
experience, which
is in decline.**

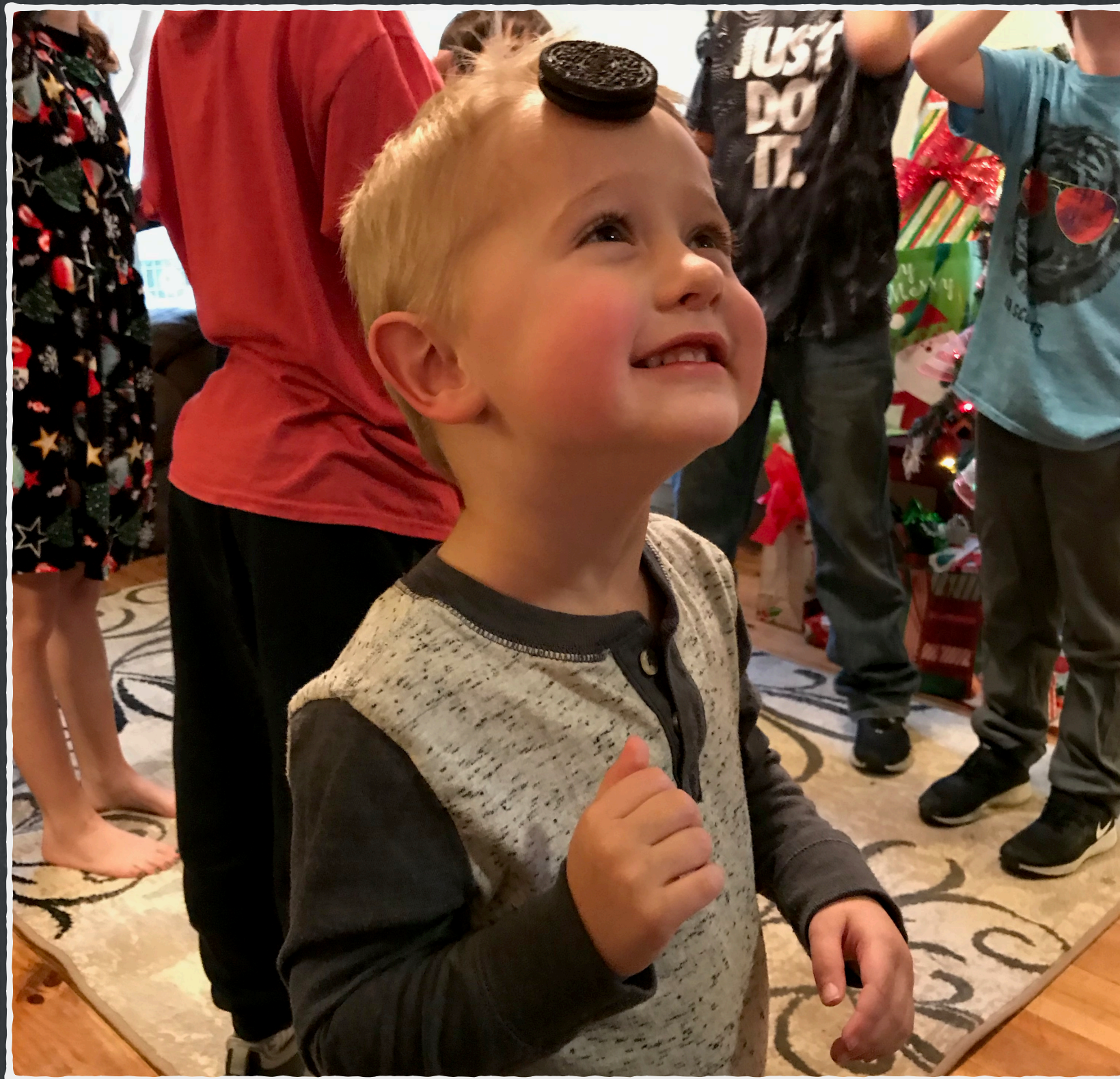


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Effects Begin Very Early



- ☐ Digital stimulation:
 - ☐ Every hour per day = 10% increase in the likelihood for later attention problems
- ☐ Cognitive stimulation:
 - ☐ Every hour = 30% decrease in likelihood for later attention problems

But Why???



Inattention in early education is positively correlated to the expectation of high levels of stimulation and rapid pacing created by digital input.

In other words, digital devices are setting an unrealistic expectation for how fast the world moves and how much control kids will have over it.

What A Pre-Digital World Taught Us

- The world doesn't revolve around you.
- You're going to have to work for what you want and make concessions.
- You have to pay for everything with some combination of money, time, and energy.
- If you miss it, you miss it and it's on you.
- Once you've obtained something, value it, because replacing it will be a challenge.



Analog World

- The world doesn't revolve around you.
- You're going to have to work for what you want and make concessions.
- You have to pay for everything with some combination of money, time, and energy.
- If you miss it, you miss it and it's on you.
- Once you've obtained something, value it, because replacing it will be a challenge.

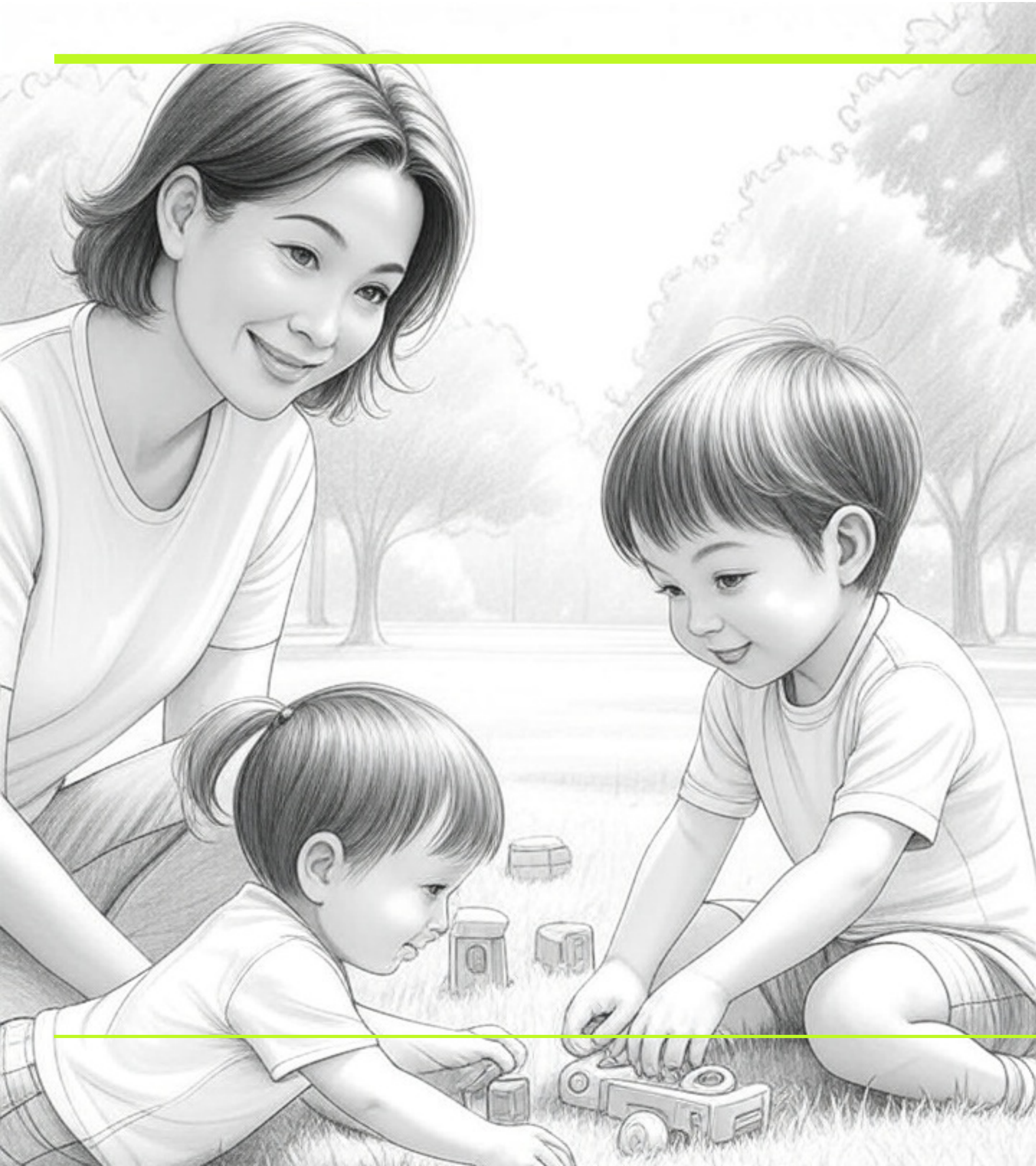
Digital World

- The world is on-demand and up to you.
- Acquiring entertainment, knowledge, and information is effortless.
- If something is unpleasant, immediately switch to something better.
- You won't ever miss anything so don't worry about your schedule.
- You don't need to encounter viewpoints different from yours and if you do, you don't need to consider them as potentially valid.
- Obtaining things is easy and you don't need to value anything because everything is easily replaceable.



Eight Before 8

TECHNOLOGY TIPS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW



1. Delay, Don't Rush

- **Why it matters:** Jonathan Haidt (The Anxious Generation) points to early exposure as a key driver of later anxiety and attention struggles.
- **Takeaway:** Hold off on introducing personal devices and, to the best of your ability, limit time with all devices. Especially before age 6, less is more; prioritize real-world play and imagination.
- Kids need to work through boredom starting as early as possible.



2. Co-View, Don't Just "Supervise"

- **Why it matters:** Sherry Turkle (Alone Together) warns of technology displacing conversation. Kids learn most when adults engage with them.
- **Takeaway:** Watch *with* your child. Narrate, ask questions, and connect screen content to the real world.
- This turns technology into bridge rather than a chasm.



3. Create Device Free Zones

- **Why it matters:** Research shows children with consistent screen-free family times (like meals or bedtime) have stronger emotional regulation.
- **Takeaway:** Protect sacred spaces; kitchen table, bedrooms, cars, and outdoors, as screen-free zones.
- Keep phones out of sight when sharing a meal.



4. Use The “Hour for Hour” Rule

- **Why it matters:** The AAP recommends limiting screen time to 1 hour/day for ages 2–5. Physical activity, outdoor play, and creative exploration balance brain development.
- **Takeaway:** For every hour of screen time, aim for at least an hour of active, imaginative, or outdoor play.
- This doesn't have to be planned by a parent, just give them space and no instructions. They'll figure it out.

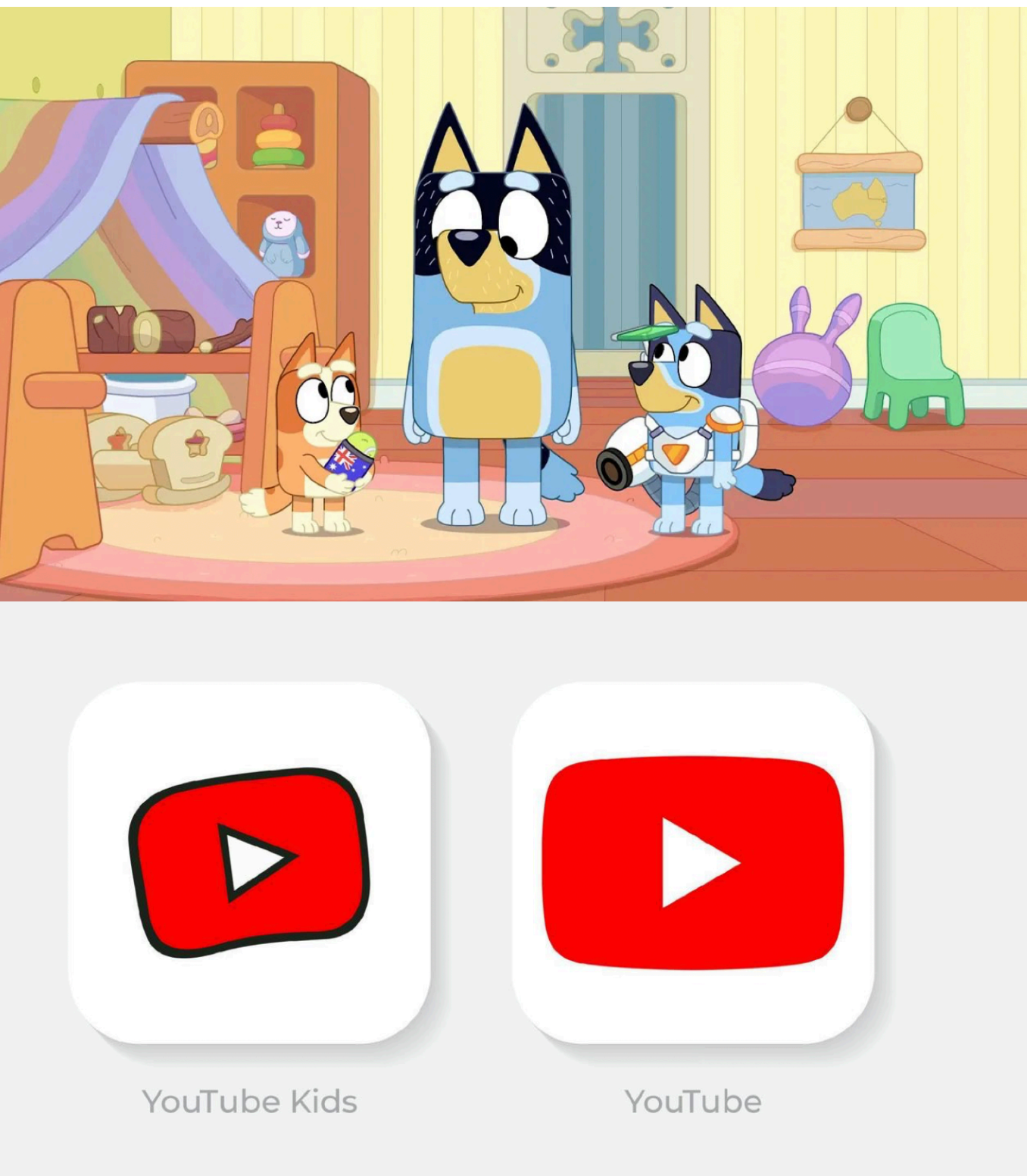


5. Model

The Behavior You Want

- **Why it matters:** You can't ask for healthy kids in an unhealthy home. Your behaviors and habits train your children to define the word "normal".
- **Takeaway:** Make a conscious decision to put your phone away in the presence of your kids. Don't bring your phone to dinner. Stay off it in the car. Be able to point to your own technology use as a model for what you want your child to do.
- If work prevents this, explain that and do the absolute best you can.

6. Be Picky About Content



Watch This



Not That



- **Why it matters:** Fast-paced, overstimulating scrolling/content can increase attention problems. Slow-paced, **story-driven content** fosters language and empathy.
- **Takeaway:** Choose quality over quantity. Think Bluey over YouTube autoplay.



7. Teach:

“Screens as Tools, Not Toys”

- **Why it matters:** Framing matters. Research shows children who see tech as a tool (for learning or connecting) use it more wisely later.
- **Takeaway:** Let kids use devices for creativity (drawing apps, video calls with family, creating of almost any kind), not just passive watching.
- *Creative use doesn't have to count as screen time in your house (GarageBand, iMovie, etc.)



What to Search For For Young Users

- **Music Creation Apps**
- **Video and Animation Creation Apps**
- **Art and Drawing Creation Apps**
- **Story and Book Creation Apps**
- **Coding Apps for Kids**



Music Creation Apps

For the youngest users

- **Toca Band (Ages 4-8, iOS/Android):** Kids mix quirky animated characters as "band members" to create fun, layered music compositions—great for preschool to early elementary.
- **Loopimal (Ages 2-7, iOS):** Simple drag-and-drop interface where kids sequence animal animations to make looping melodies and beats, introducing rhythm concepts playfully.
- **Bandimal (Ages 4-6, iOS):** A touch-based app for composing electronic music with animal instruments, perfect for pre-K to kindergarten to explore sounds and patterns.



Video/Animation Apps For the youngest users

- **Toontastic 3D (Ages 6-10, iOS/Android):** Kids draw characters, build scenes, and narrate animated stories with pre-made templates—emphasizes storytelling through video creation.
- **Stop Motion Studio (Ages 6-11, Multi-platform: iOS, Android, Windows, macOS):** Create frame-by-frame animations using toys or drawings, with easy tools for adding voiceovers and effects.
- **Magisto (Ages 8-11, Web/iOS/Android):** AI-assisted editing turns photos and clips into polished videos with music and themes—ideal for beginners who want quick results.
- **FlipaClip (Ages 7-11, iOS/Android):** Frame-by-frame animation tool for drawing cartoons or GIFs, with layers and sound integration for creative expression.



Story/Book Creation Apps For the youngest users

- **My Story School eBook Maker (Ages 5-11, iOS):** Build digital books with drawings, photos, text, and voice recordings—great for classroom or home storytelling projects.
- **Book Creator (Ages 6-11, Web/iOS/Android):** Illustrate and write multimedia books or comics, with options to add audio and share digitally or print.
- **Pictello (Ages 6-11, iOS):** Create social stories or photo books with narration, helpful for visual learners to produce personalized tales.
- **Toontastic (Mentioned above in video, but also for stories):** Combines drawing with narrative prompts.



Other Creative Apps For the youngest users

- **ScratchJr (Ages 5-7, iOS/Android):** Drag-and-drop coding to create simple animations and stories with characters —teaches logic while producing shareable projects.
- **Toca Life World (Ages 4-9, iOS/Android):** Design worlds, characters, and scenarios for open-ended storytelling and role-play, resulting in custom narratives.
- **LEGO Builder / DUPLO World (Ages 4-10, iOS/Android):** Virtual building with bricks to create models or scenes, blending physical toy inspiration with digital output.



**Well Connected
Family Blueprint**



8. Develop a Healthy Plan in Advance

- **Why it matters:** This allows you to build a technology life around what you want, not just passively allow it to be constructed around “what’s on my phone.”
- **Takeaway:** As long as you control your technology, it’s amazing. But without a plan, it will control you.
- Key theme: Don’t wait until it falls apart. Build a healthy tech life before it does.

WHEN TO AVOID SCREENS:

MORNING AGITATION & BEDTIME SLEEP SABOTAGE



Morning

- Passive screen use linked to agitation
- Language and cognitive setbacks



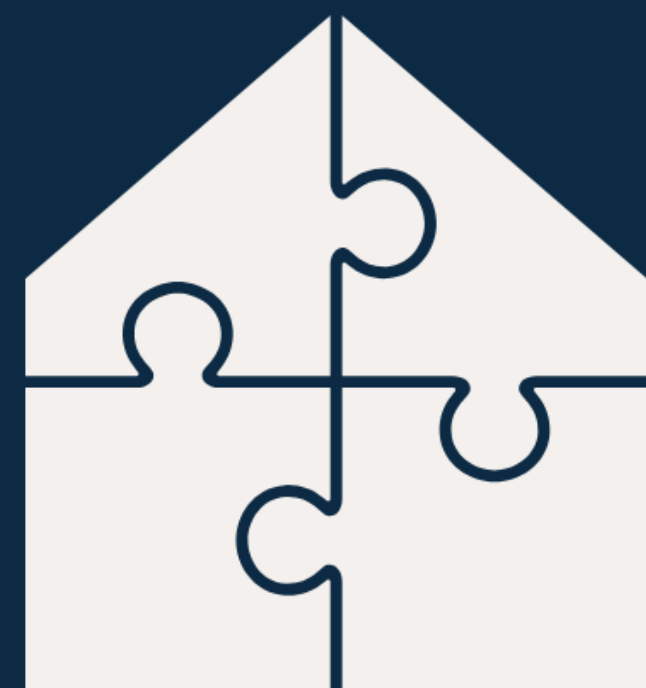
Evening / Pre-Bedtime

- Strong evidence of delayed sleep, reduced sleep
- Behavioral issues tied to bedtime screen use



Daytime in General

- Increased daytime screen time can negatively affect sleep quality overall



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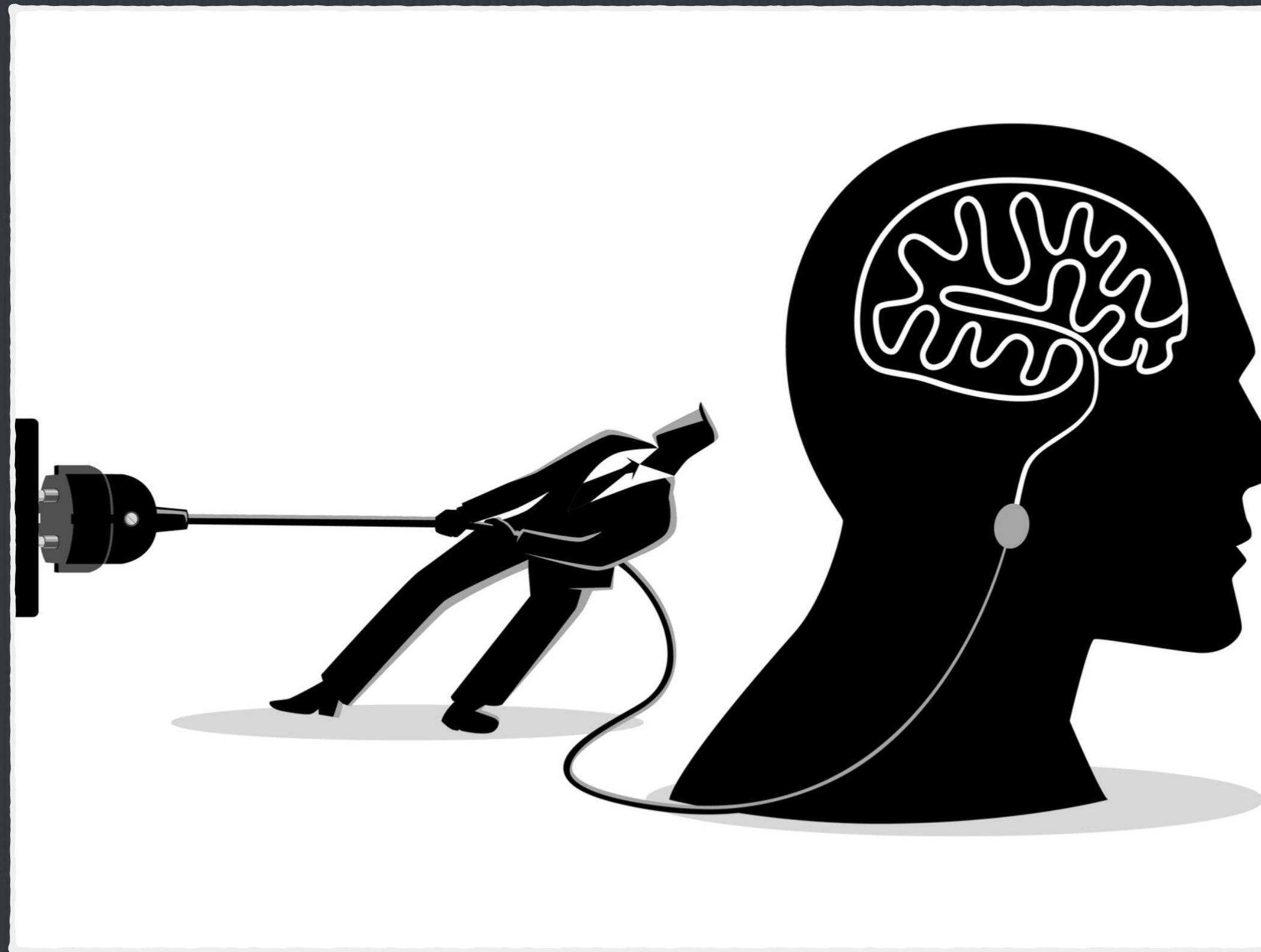
Book an Appointment



Presentation Slides

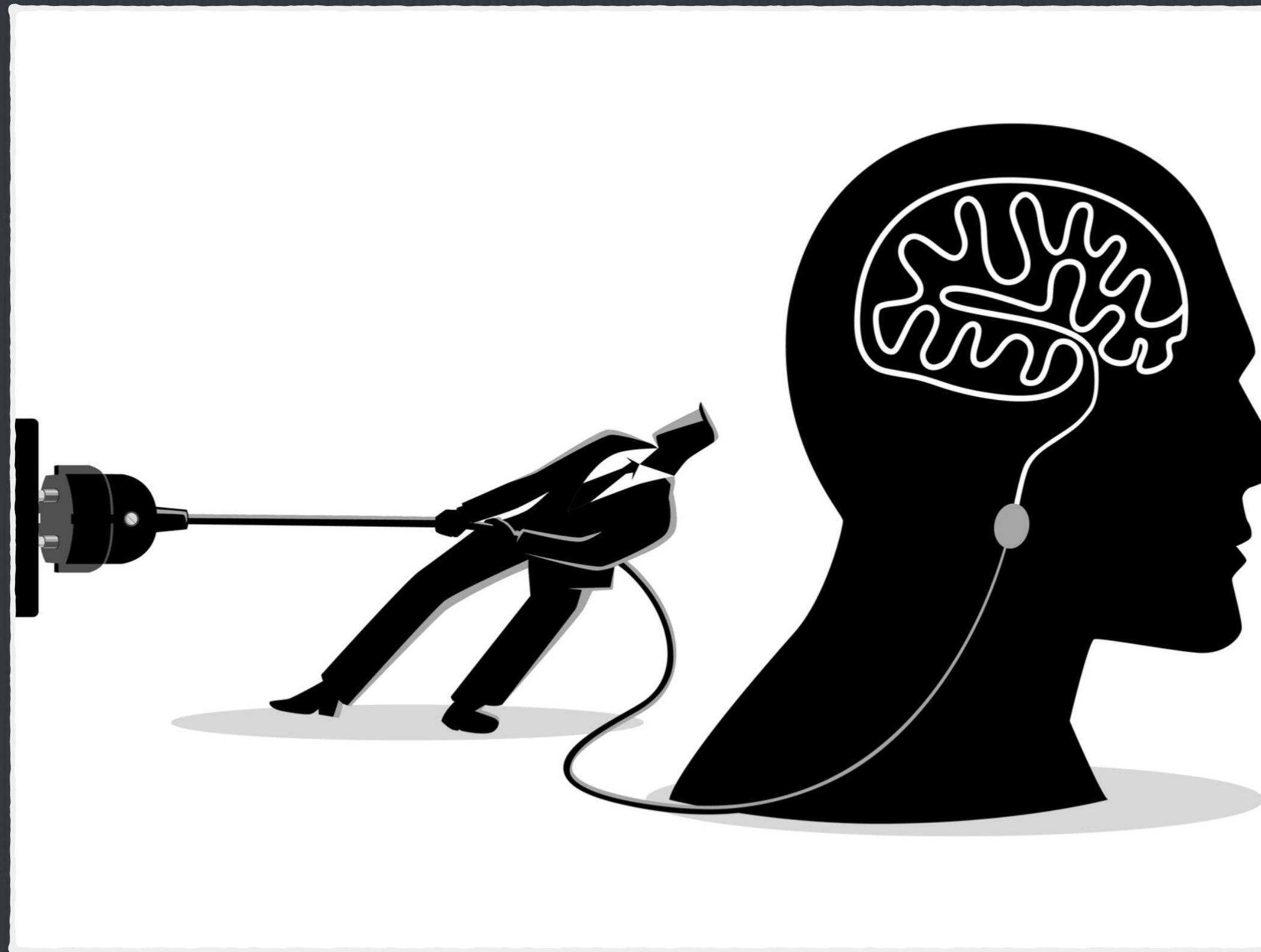
**Sounds good, but what if we've
already let it get out of hand?**

How to Hit the Reset Button

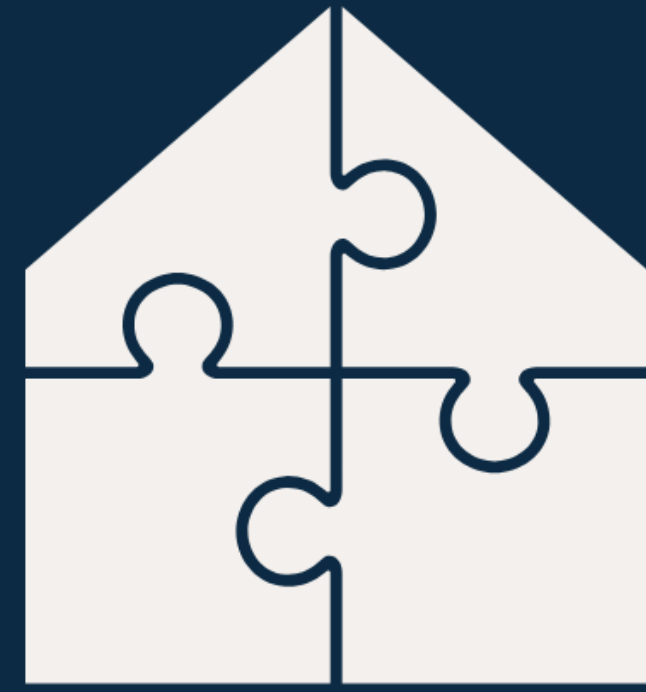


- ☐ Set a target weekend 6 weeks from now where your whole family is going to unplug from devices for 3 days.
- ☐ Set incremental goals each week that reduce screen time (no phones at dinner this week, no phones at dinner or for an hour after everyone gets home the next week, etc.)
- ☐ Gradually scale down as the weeks pass. Parents don't get to cheat because you're the parents.
- ☐ Enjoy your digital vacation weekend. Parents can't cheat.
- ☐ Bring the phones back on Monday with a new plan.

Your New Plan



- ☐ Needs to be less focused on time than on environment. Some examples. No phones when:
 - ☐ We're in the car together.
 - ☐ We're at dinner
 - ☐ You're in the living room
 - ☐ You're in the bedroom.
- ☐ Your new plan needs to be thoughtful. Intentionality is key...



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Book an Appointment



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