

SCREEN SANITY

Happy Routines, Healthy Screens

SMALL HABITS TODAY, BUILD CALM TOMORROW

Just like we create routines for meals and bedtime, it helps to set simple, predictable patterns for screentime too. Too much screen use can crowd out time for play, movement, exploration, and real-life social interactions. Yet, in a world surrounded by devices, we also know total avoidance isn't realistic.

Screens can trigger meltdowns—yet sometimes seem like the easiest way to stop them—but relying on screens to calm a child can prevent them from developing important coping and emotional regulation skills.

Establishing healthy screen habits takes effort, especially at first. But with patience and consistency, routines eventually bring fewer struggles in the long run. Perfection isn't the goal—steady patterns that fit your family are.

Quantity of screen time matters, but quality matters just as much. Not all screen time is equal, so here are some quick tips for healthier viewing.

Look for shows that:

- Encourage active participation
- Avoid flashy and attention-grabbing programming
- Provide slower educational content

When possible while using screens:

- Communal screens > individual devices
- Coview together
- Avoid headphones (so you can hear what they are watching)
- Cross check media with free resources like Common Sense Media for reviews and ratings

Tips for Building Healthy Digital Habits Early



Set clear screen time limits

Set time limits and consistent routines for when screens are allowed and when they stay off. For children under 2, limit use to occasional video chats with family and friends.



Narrate what you're doing

Kids see us on screens all the time, so it can look like we're just staring at our phone. Narrate what you're doing ("I'm paying a bill," "I'm texting Grandma") so they learn screens are tools for connection and getting things done.



Prepare for waiting

Pack a small "activity bag" with a simple game or toy to use while waiting at the pediatrician or for food at a restaurant (audio players like Yoto's or Tonieboxes are great screen free options).



Give your child a warning

When screen time is coming to an end, give your child a warning ("This show will be over in 5 minutes and it will be time to play outside.") Physical touch can also help them disengage from the show.