# BEST PRACTICES FOR TECHNOLOGY USE

## TECHNOLOGY TIME FOR KIDS

The news is full of stories about the risks of technology and social media, and they are designed to scare. The truth is complicated: scary things can happen when young people connect online, but helpful adults can help them navigate the risks. Some kids compare themselves to others, experience bullying, or make risky social connections. And they can also use technology to nurture relationships, explore identity, make friends, and connect with important people in their lives. Youth often self-soothe with technology (through use of games and music, for instance), and checking in on family members can provide a sense of safety. These benefits are especially important for kids who have experienced relational losses.

Ways you can support healthy technology use include:

- Regular check-in's. Ask kids about their time online. This should just be a conversation. "How are your firends doing? How do you feel about that?" Be curious and helpful.

- Teach kids to listen to their bodies. If they've been at a screen a while, ask them how their head, back, neck, and heart feel. Encourage self-awareness, even from a young age. Use similar check-in's after other activities so they can compare and contrast what gives them the best feelings. Help them notice their moods.

- Keep tech out of bedrooms at night, and shut down tech at least an hour before bed to reduce sleep disruptions.

## SUPPORT PROBLEM-SOLVING

How do you support healthy online behavior? Research says one of the most important things you can do is support good problem-solving by teaching youth how to handle negative interactions. Find out how they would respond to things like cyber-bullying, or what they would do if they saw something they didn't like online. Teach them how to block people and what to do if someone asks for personal information. Have open conversations about how they self-regulate when faced with online stressors: should they step away, talk to a friend, or unfriend someone? Do they need you to step in to help? Conversations like these have been found to reduce online harm.



## VIDEO VISITS — TIPS FOR MAKING VIDEO VISITS WORK

Families need their visits. Not only are visits a significant predictor of reunification, they help support connection during a difficult time. Here are some tips for improving video visitation.

- Make plans with the parent about your shared hopes for the length and content of the visit. Remind about any guidelines that may apply about contact or content at regular visits. They are worried too: let them know how kids are managing. They may have extra stressors or fears right now as well. Be patient.
- Normalize this as temporary and assure that visits will get back to normal.
- Keep visits short and frequent.

- Reduce distractions and noise. Show kids how to hold the camera still if they are using a phone; ideally prop it up somewhere.
- Consider activities for younger kids such as having parent and child read a book to each other or make up a story together. Have things ready for the child to share.
- Give kids space. These visits are pretty safe. More tips here.
- Check in afterwards: Ask questions like "how are you feeling? Want to talk?" Say, "I hope your mom is well." Empathize about how hard it is to not be able to visit in person. Reflect feelings.
- More tips for supporting kids during COVID-19 are here.