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Tech Generation:
## Raising Balanced Kids in a Hyper-Connected World
By
Mike Brooks, Ph.D., LSSP

Thanks so much for attending! Please note that Tech Generation: Raising Balanced Kids in a Hyper-Connected World, written with my good friend and colleague, Dr. Jon Lasser, is available on Amazon and at most major bookstores. If you know of other groups, faith communities, businesses, schools, community groups, or teens who might be interested in a version of this presentation, please contact me at drmikebrooks@techhappylife.com. I'd be happy to set that up!

1. With technology, the idea of balance is about using our screens mindfully, purposefully, and strategically so that we can get more of the positives while reducing the negatives. The Mindful Engagement with Technology (MET) is a general approach that can help us get our needs met.

2. The incessant pull of screens that entices us to compulsively check our devices and spend too much time on them is the main area of concern. This can interfere with both happiness and productivity.

3. Finding a healthy balance can reduce the likelihood of other areas of concern (e.g., sexting, the drama that plays out on social media).

4. Screen time taps into the same primitive reward system as gambling and drugs, which is why we have trouble resisting their pull on us. Whether they are truly "addictive" is still up for debate. However, there is no argument that their incessant pull on us can be problematic.

5. Focus on whether it is a problem rather than whether it is an addiction. Kids won't respond well to being told they are "addicts."

6. Our effectiveness as parents to help guide our children in a balanced use of technology rests on the strength of our relationship with them. So, we must invest in our relationship!

7. Because it is just about impossible to resist the incessant pull of technology, most efforts should focus on prevention. We need to remove the temptation because *we can't win a battle against the primitive parts of our brains*.

8. If you have a partner, work to be on the same page with them regarding the family's tech use.

9. As a parent, model balanced tech use. We cannot expect from kids what we are not delivering ourselves. *This cannot be emphasized enough.*

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10. Our in-person relationships with one another are fundamental to our happiness and well-being. To the extent that we use our screens to facilitate and enhance our *in-person* connections, we will come out ahead in terms of well-being. But when our screens displace, replace, or disrupt/interrupt our in-person connections too much, our well-being will suffer.

11. **Tech Happy Life** model – provides a framework for how to manage kids' technology use.
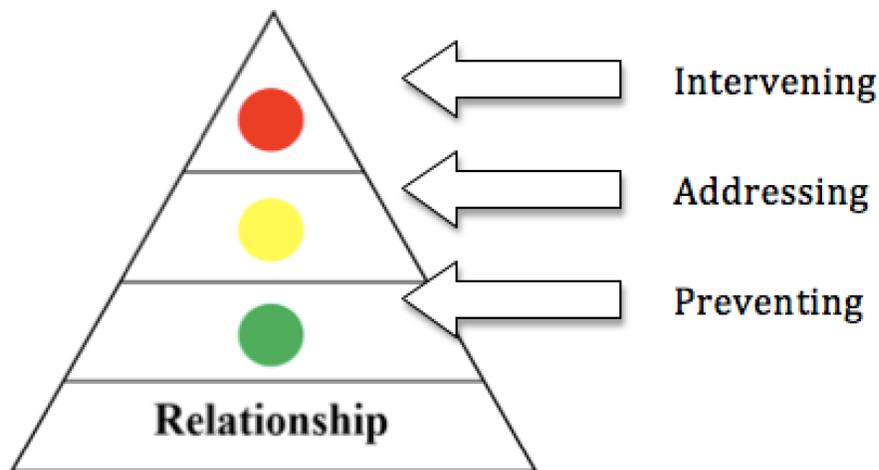
12. What To Do About It
    A. The Foundation: The Relationship
        i. Helping to manage kids' screen time is nested within a positive relationship with parents
            1. We can influence our kids through the relationship. The more positive the relationship, the greater the influence that we have.
            2. Use the "Magic Ratio" – 3 to 5 positive interactions to 1 negative.
            3. Engage in activities with your child/teen that build the relationship.
    B. Preventing (Green Light)
        i. Be the change – Model the way you would like your kids to manage tech use
        ii. Get your kids involved in other activities (e.g., sports, music, family games) that will naturally engage them & limit their tech time
        iii. Avoid allowing your child to be an early adopter. Delay access until they are ready.
            1. Ensure that the tech is developmentally appropriate
            2. Steer them away from games/tech that is known to be "addictive"
        iv. Discuss *before* giving access
        v. Use "Screen Time" feature within iOS12, especially for younger kids

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C. Addressing (Yellow Light)
   i. Collaboratively problem-solve the issue of tech usage
      1. Talk to your child about *their* goals.
      2. Help them connect the dots – ask whether their screen use helping them achieve those goals or getting in the way of them.
   ii. As screen use problems emerge, you might have to turn up the "control" dial on your parenting.
   iii. Establish & enforce clear limits & boundaries around tech use.
   iv. Establish tech free areas & times. Parents should abide by these too!
   v. Separate work computers/devices from leisure devices because the temptation is too strong to fight.
   vi. Arrange that certain screen time (e.g., gaming) is a privilege.
   vii. Might have to use screen time managing/controlling apps.

D. Intervening (Red Light)
   i. Be in a calm state.
   ii. Pick a good time to talk about it.
   iii. Discuss with your partner first.
   iv. Apply consequences agreed upon beforehand.
   v. Limit Wi-Fi access.
   vi. Use natural or logical consequences when possible.
   vii. Use minimum amount of consequences needed.
   viii. Collaboratively problem solve.
   ix. Have alternative need-satisfying activities ready.
   x. Establish terms under which the screen time can be earned back.
   xi. If all else fails, seek professional help for your child/teen/family

Resources:
- *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age* by Catherine Steiner-Adair and Teresa H. Barker
- *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* by Danah Boyd
- *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* by Nicholas Carr
- *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World* by Jane McGonigal
- *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* by Sherry Turkle
- *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* by Sherry Turkle
- *Moral Combat: Why the War on Violent Video Games Is Wrong* by Patrick M. Markey and Christopher J. Ferguson
- *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* by Cal Newport

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- *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* by Jean M. Twenge
- *The Distracted Mind: Ancient Brains in a High-Tech World* by Adam Gazzaley & Larry Rosen
- *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us* Hooked by Adam Alter
- *Hooked: How to Build Habit Forming-Products* by Nir Eyal
- www.TechHappyLife.com (Dr. Brooks' site with a focus on raising balanced kids & living a balanced life in a technological world)
- www.commonsensemedia.org
- www.esrb.org The Entertainment Software Rating Board

Thanks again! If you have additional questions, comments, or are interested in setting up a presentation, please contact me at drmikebrooks@techhappylife.com.

Sincerely,

Mike Brooks, Ph.D.

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