SCREEN TIME
How does screen time affect kids' mental health and what can we do about it?

The National Institute of Health estimates that kids spend an average of 5-7 hours a day using screens, which is equal to or even greater than the total time spent in the classroom. Additionally, national statistics show a sharp rise in depression, anxiety, and suicide risk among teens. Jean Twenge, a professor of psychology at San Diego State University, has been researching teen trends since the 1970's. Her recent research has found that the arrival of the smartphone has radically changed every aspect of teenagers lives, from their social interactions to their mental health. The distractions of screens means less time for homework, physical activity, family interactions, and face-to-face time with peers. "There is compelling evidence that the devices we've placed in young people's hands are having profound effects on their lives-and making them seriously unhappy."   - Jean Twenge

What is the antidote to such sad statistics Twenge found in her research? "More of anything non-screen: face-to-face friend time, more sports, more reading, more activities/clubs, more music, more creativity, and even more homework! All correlate with greater happiness."
-Kathy Masarie

WHAT RESEARCH IS SHOWING

- More screen time is directly correlated with less happiness. There is not a single exception with what screen use is involved: texting, gaming, and social media.
- The negative effects are greater for girls than boy.
- The greater the use of social media, the greater the sense of isolation.
- Depression, anxiety, and suicide risk increases at two or more hours of screen use per day. - Kathy Masarie

WHAT ABOUT SOCIALIZING THROUGH SCREENS?

Social interactions on electronics is not the same as face-to-face friend time. For positive correlations with mental health and social skills, studies are very clear: In-person interactions are vital. In order for this to happen, kids need to put away their phones. -Jean Twenge

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

1. **Delay getting a smartphone for your child** as long as possible.
2. If you must get your child a phone to feel he/she is 'safe,' **start with a flip phone**.
3. Once your child has a smartphone, **get apps to regulate the time spent on it**.
4. Limit time on screens, especially phones, to **no more than 90 minutes per day**.
5. **Screens should not be a substitute for social interactions.** So much of how kids discover who they are and what they care about is by exploring what works and doesn't work in social interactions and by doing things out in the world with friends.
6. **Pay attention to the habits you are modeling.** Create family time that is free of any kind of devices.
7. **Take out social media** for a period of time and see how it feels. Studies have shown that people **feel better** when they disconnect from their phone.
Family-empower.com - Kathy Masarie
iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy-and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood. - newest book by Jean Twenge