

Distracted Parenting: Phone Use as Both a Support and Hindrance to Parenting

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Some Points to Remember:

Phone/technology use can both support and hinder life and relationships.

- 1. Examples of Potential Positive Uses:**
 - a. Connect with others / receive support
 - b. Cope with / regulate emotions and stress
 - c. Engage in work / entertainment
 - d. Find parenting or health information/resources
- 2. Examples of Potential Negative Uses / Impacts:**
 - a. Engage in infinite scrolling / overuse
 - b. Experience a loss of time / control
 - c. Experience guilt surrounding use
 - d. Feel fear of missing out / social comparison
 - e. Allow technoferece in relationships
 - f. Lose sleep
- 3. And it can be both at the same time!**

“It is the best tool I have for social support, but that can make it tricky because it is also everything else...double edged sword...”

–Anonymous Parent

“What I need is to learn how to use my phone as a tool instead of letting my phone use me.”

–Anonymous Parent

Feel Good

1. When use is supportive to them.
2. When feel autonomy and in control of their use.
3. When use fits with their goals/values.

Feel Bad

1. When use disrupts or impedes their life, family, or activities.
2. When lose sense of control or engage in unintended use.
3. When use does not fit with their goals/values.

Take-Home Messages

- 1. Do NOT come at it from a “phone/tech use is bad” perspective.** It depends on how, when, and why it is used, and how the use is experienced and perceived by the user and children. But it is indeed possible for even a heavy user to be using the device in healthy ways!
- 2. First, seek to understand how the use fits into their life.** Remember device use often serves a purpose or fulfills a need.
- 3. Help people recognize** their supportive uses, use they are unhappy with, impacts on their mental health/feelings, and [persuasive design](#) features within the device/content they use.
- 4. Help people set clear boundaries.** They may find it helpful to set up tech-free times or zones in their home (e.g., no parent phone use in a child’s bedroom), create time limits on specific apps (e.g., <https://appblock.app>), or use apps to slow them down / break habits / help them make more intentional choices (e.g., <https://one-sec.app>).
- 5. Not always as simple as “stopping use,”** as this may have unintended consequences if the use filled a need (such as coping with stress), potentially leaving them without the resources they need. Instead, seek to maximize the beneficial ways they use the device and minimize the detrimental ways.



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