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Outline:

Conscious Parenting as applied to screen management

What our children need to learn from us:

1. That they are precious and valuable
2. That they have the right to be vulnerable and we will protect them as they grow with boundaries
3. That they are human, do/ will make mistakes and need to learn to apologize, amend their behavior and be forgiven.
4. That they have wants and needs and so do others and that we will teach them negotiation skills.
5. That health lies in moderation in their mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual/sensual selves.

Today I will just address self esteem and boundaries.

Imagine when you first fell in love with your child.

Feel the preciousness of that connection. That love.

Remember how you looked in their eyes, heard their little sounds/voices, held them close to your heart.

There was no technology in that moment.

You were building a relationship with them of deep connection.

It is that deep relational connection you need to nurture throughout your lives with them.

In non tech moments of presence we, as parents, learn to emotionally attune to our children: over and over and over until it is a neural pathway in our brain.

Through this presence and attunement we create in them a feeling of being safe and secure.

This attunement stimulates the part of the brain where EMPATHY is developed. (Research shows that empathy is one of the losses in too much screen time.)

Our children learn that their first and most powerful experience is in RELATIONSHIP to us.

They learn us, read our availability, approachability through all the years we are with them.

Now imagine that a big wave is coming and you have to help your child manage that wave.

Technology is a wave.

You have to steady yourself. You have to create your own groundedness, centeredness, intelligence of technology wave management so you can teach them.

How will you do that?

How do each of us deal with this wave, that is alluring, stimulating, addictive?

It requires setting boundaries: our own boundaries with ourselves so we are balanced between technology and presence and attunement that only come in non tech moments. This is not to say we cannot have relational tech times, but we will have negotiated those together.

How Do We Teach?

Through Modeling

Through What We Do To or With Our Children

Through What We Let Them Get Away With

Self- Esteem: You are precious and valuable because you exist.

How our children learn this is through us as parents.

Giving them the time, the attention, the positive feedback, the joy of our love, and the strong stances that love can call up for us to take is how we teach them they are precious to us and thereby to the world. We are their world initially.

When we turn away from or turn off our computers, i-phones, that distract and absorb us we signal them through our behavior that they matter, that they are precious. If we don't we are signaling the information, person, or entertainment on the other end is more important than our child. Of course there are times we negotiate for a break in the connection: I have a call to make, or excuse me but I have to take this call, or I have some work to do, let's get you set up with a game, a toy, a project, some homework while I take care of some business. It is negotiated, announced, planned. No disappearing act.

Who Are Our Children?

How Do We Positively Reflect Their Unique Preciousness to Them: They are the only unique being that is them that has ever been or will ever be on the planet!

Our Culture tends to hold Achievement Esteem, Attribute Esteem and Other Esteem as the origin of our worth. NOT SO.

Achievement Esteem: How much we accomplish, do, attain. Achievements are good. We like them. They just don't determine our worth.

Attribute Esteem: How pretty, handsome, strong, sexy, wealthy, smart etc. All the images flashing at us from magazines, advertisements, TV shows.

Other Esteem: Is Our Worth Defined by What Others Think of Us?

These three create a roller coaster ride: someone is always more or less than us in any of these categories!

Boundaries: Setting boundaries around technology is a big job.

For some of us we are technology immigrants teaching technology natives.

But we are always the parents whose job it is to keep our children safe and secure in a wave of information, alluring possibilities and enticing games that stimulate their minds and nervous systems. The onslaught of social and emotional waves in their peer world where belonging feels like survival can be overwhelming!

Containment: Self Boundaries

Parents have to know how to manage their own anxiety, agitation, feelings of rejection in this digital age and not give up when they are overwhelmed. Learning to speak up with love and compassion for yourself as you breathe through some tough interaction with a child who is bidding for the more when you know there has been enough is one of the biggest challenges.

Here is where the relational empathy for yourself and your child will need to be remembered and reached for. Breathe. Get your feet planted. The tech wave has your child. Their nervous system is wound up. Do not take him/her personally when their nervous system is haywire. Take a step back. Breathe. Remember the love. Remember the contract you had because you did talk about what type of media, for how long and the time is almost over. Rule of thumb, give a twenty minute warning. Some kids will need the 5 min repeat.

Common Sense Media has great chats on this from parents and kids on their website.

Help from the tech world to set boundaries: Common Sense Media, The Big Disconnect Steiner-Adair.

Common sense media: stay attuned to what your kids are into, ways to stay attuned

Catherine Steiner-Adair EdD of The Big Disconnect has these recommendations for families and managing the wave of technology

1. Recognize the pervasive presence of tech in today's world. Develop a family philosophy about using it that reflects and supports the family values and well being. Whether you are a low-tech, mid-tech or high tech family, have your own ways of non-tech and tech hanging out, messing around, geeking out.

For Example:

1. A responsible use contract for all media, computer and tech use. All sign. Parents and kids abide by the contract. Modeling behavior is how children learn by our walk not our talk. The contract makes it easier when friends come over.
2. Parents install protective software, blocks, or apps to limit access to levels of content that are developmentally beyond their children
3. Children earn privileges by showing responsibility and establishing trust by following clear rules about access and downloading that is agreed upon.
4. Mistakes are treated as teachable moments. Children are encouraged to fess up and are allowed to learn from their mistakes. No shaming allowed.
5. Family members have shared expectations with tech: if I text you about a plan, a date, you text me back. Parents do not text children at school unless an emergency. It makes the children anxious.

6. A child's phone is a privilege that can be revoked. It is given in the trust that family or school rules with it will be followed. It is not to be used for mean or sexy stuff. No illicit anything. If a child loses or damages it they are responsible to replace it.
7. Parents get to have the password to the phone and get to reserve the right to scroll through the phone if worried about their child's safety.
8. The phone does not replace real conversations with family or friends. Important conversations happen face to face.
9. No using the phone while crossing streets. No sleeping with phones. Phone is off during homework, family meals. No phone for alarm clock. All need a break from texts or emails being the first thing that bombards them in the morning.

2. As a family encourage play and play together. Kids know you enjoy them when you actively choose to spend time with them, when you take turns and let them choose what would be fun to do, when you co-create fun times, and when you don't back out of play dates

3. Nourish meaningful connection and thoughtful conversation that shares feelings, values, expectations, and optimism. Have the kind of conversations that are about what makes your children tick: What did you do today? How did you come up with that? What did you do next? Brainstorm problems at school and work. Share your work dilemmas and ask for their input.

Dinner conversations are about sharing stories, solving problems, no pressure, no meanness, no putdowns, no sarcasm, no tech distractions.

If conflict, give it your total attention. Ask each what is their version of what happened. Establish your neutrality and helpful intention. Apologies, accountability and walking in each other's shoes is key.

4. Understand the uniqueness of each person, encourage independence and individual interests and foster their independence in the context of the family.

5. Have built-in mechanisms for healthy disagreement. Parents set limits, act thoughtfully with parental authority and do the hard parenting work of demonstrating accountability, authority, openness, transparency and not just "trust me" but "here's why."

6. Develop and exercise values, wisdom, a link to past and future and have common language that you share with family and friends.

7. Provide experience off-line in which your children can experience and cultivate an inner life,