



Cyberbalance in a Digital Culture

Tips and Best Practices for Households



Finding and maintaining a healthy cyberbalance is a challenge in a connected culture where virtually we can go anywhere, see anyone, and do anything at the touch of a screen. Technology does not have to distract us. Device settings, reminders and apps can help us enhance our relationships, improve our health and wellbeing, and be more productive.

Three Steps for Yourself

Step 1. Be aware of how you use your time and how long you are using technology

Step 2. Reflect on your own behavior and consider your goals and priorities

Step 3. Devise a personal device plan that focuses your time and energy on your priority tasks and goals

Top Ten Digital Parenting Hacks

1. Overcome hesitation or uncertainty and engage in digital parenting
2. Monitor and be aware of the amount of time spent with digital devices
3. Turn off screens at least one hour before bedtime
4. Charge mobile devices away from the bedroom
5. Enjoy media-free meals where the emphasis is focused on building strong family relationships
6. Encourage your child to develop the habit of completing tasks like homework, before engaging in social media, mobile device conversations or games
7. Address obsessive and addictive behaviors
8. Identify a list of device-free activities your child enjoys
9. Foster healthy relationships and learn how to manage strong emotions when using devices
10. Provide a varied diet of experiences in order to support overall social, emotional and physical well-being

Strategies for Managing Distraction

Devise a family plan for using time optimally based on each family member's goals and reflections on their own behaviors.

- Monitor daily activities including device use to better track patterned behavior.
- Explain the importance of having a varied diet of experiences in order to support family members' overall development and, in particular, their social development.

A Culture of Cyberbalance

Children look their parents to model good digital balance. Have a family meeting and create household digital technology rules that all members can agree to and follow.

- Limit entertainment screen time to 2 hours per day. *Tip: have youth create a list of things they like that don't involve a digital device. They can refer to this list when necessary.*
- Plan some media & technology free days.
- Set parental controls on devices that have that capability.
- Discuss whom it is safe for teens and tweens to communicate with using their digital devices.
- Parents can help their child prioritize homework and activities before games and entertainment
- Give special guidance to family members who seem to have the hardest time balancing digital technology use.

Maintaining device-free spaces

Creating and maintaining media-free spaces in the home normalizes a balanced routine.

- Make the dinner table a phone and media-free space.
- Create a charging station to check in portable devices an hour before bedtime.
- Encourage technology use in common areas rather than in bedrooms.

Balance is one of the six core competencies that is needed to thrive in the digital culture.

- Download the Healthy Balance K-12 Curriculum Matrix at iKeepSafe.org/balance-matrix for a comprehensive guide to teaching this core competency and related skills in classrooms.
- Download iKeepSafe's BEaPRO Parent app at iKeepSafe.org/beapro-parent-app for a parents' guide to knowing what they need to know and where to look for answers.

For more tips and resources on cyberbalance as well as Ethics, Privacy, Relationships, Reputation, and Online Security, visit iKeepSafe.org/be-a-pro.

This study was developed in partnership with experts in online health issues, including youth market and internet health research expert Dr. Suzanne Martin, Dr. Michael Rich from the Center on Media and Child Health at the Boston Children's Hospital, and Dr. Kimberly Young of the Center for Internet Addiction.

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