iKEEPSAFE

LEADER GUIDE

CYBERBALANCE

Kids, even young kids, spend more time engaged with media than they do in any activity other than sleeping. As Scout leaders, preparing your Scouts for life means proactively teaching them how to balance their online and offline activities.

The skills that help them achieve balanced digital lives, such as time-management and self-awareness, can be learned over time and from an early age. Indeed, research regularly indicates that mastering self-control in this way is a positive predictor for future academic and other life successes. Scout leaders teaching balance as part of the Cyber Chip help their Scouts avoid the physical, social, and emotional health challenges that are associated with problematic use.

Technology, media, and device use becomes problematic when it interferes with daily life and responsibilities. Though this manifests differently depending on individual situations, personal goals, and age, there are common consequences we can all struggle with. Losing sleep, procrastinating in school, replacing in-person social interaction with screen time, becoming emotionally dependent on social media approval, and loss of attention span could all be consequences of an un-balanced life.

Lack of balance can harm our bodies as well as our minds. Not only can habitual or problematic media use interfere with the physical exercise we need, but spending so much time bending over our mobile devices, computers, and keyboards is leading to widespread chiropractic issues – particularly in the head, neck, shoulders, and back.

How do we manage these challenges?

The solution is not to take technology away, but to shed light on the benefits and draw-backs of digital tools, set appropriate limits, and encourage creative alternatives to, as well as smart use of, digital media.

Visit iKeepSafe.org/Scouting to download all Wise Tech Choices material.

Encourage Scouts to self-monitor their activities through journaling and logging to develop self-regulating skills. Ask Scouts about a specific behavior while they are self-monitoring to highlight the importance of a topic. This will lead the Scouts to think about what they are doing and modify or specify their actions.

Physical activity is crucial, as Scouts are continuing to develop their coordination skills, develop stamina, and master their bodies. Social interaction and breaks from screen time are equally important, and can be similarly self-monitored.

> ### Did You Know?
> Bending our necks to lean over phones increases the volume of strain on the neck to about 60 pounds, and over time can lead to the development of a 'dowagers hump' even in teenagers. Slumping in this way negatively affects mood and self-esteem.[12]
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> [1] Cuddy, Amy (2015).
> [2] Nair, Shwetha, et al. (2015).

Most social media networks, such as Facebook or Instagram, are not for children under 13. There are some social networking sites designed for the kids under 13, and these have built in, required parental consent and protective measures.

Tips

Leaders can most effectively help Scouts create and maintain cyberbalance by **modeling a healthy online/offline balance**. This can understandably be difficult, when adults' work responsibilities, communications, and entertainment can all rely on digital tools. However, being prepared for life includes having a varied diet of experiences to support overall development and, in particular, social development. **Please watch the Scout leader video available at iKeepSafe.org/Scouting for more specific cyberbalance tips and best practices**.

Additonal Resources

iKeepSafe:
- Leader video available at iKeepSafe.org/Scouting
- Balance Curriculum Matrix K-12 BEaPRO™ – iKeepSafe.org/balance-matrix
- BEaPRO™ Parent App – Google Play Store or Facebook

- Cyberbalance in a Digital Culture – iKeepSafe.org/cyberbalance

Pew Research Center:
- Mobile Technology Fact Sheet – PewInternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet

References

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