

INSPIRATIONAL

The First 50 Report

A DIGITAL WELL-BEING PARENTING PLAYBOOK



We met 50 parents...

this is what we learned so far about how American families are managing their devices, screen time, and boundaries.

What's in the report?



Introduction	3	Our thoughts on families, wisdom and technology
Background	7	Families we have spoken with so far
	8	Devices in the home
Self-perceptions of a family's screen time	10	Thoughts on family screen time compared to others
	11	Spouses struggling with each other's screen time
Social pressures for parents	13	Is screen time an important parenting topic?
	16	Do parents discuss rules with each other?
Devices and rules	18	First memories of children using digital devices
	19	Family rules for devices
Use of newer technologies	21	Family rules for screen time
	23	Role of the Apple Watch
Family rituals and passing on wisdom	24	Smart home devices
	26	When families spend time together
	27	Most important family rituals
How many families practice mindful living	28	When and how families pass on wisdom
	30	Meditation, yoga, organic food and vegetarianism
Resources	32	Outstanding screen time parenting resources

Intro: our thoughts on families, wisdom and technology

Happiness is a blend of all parts of life. Family, nature, knowledge and a sense of belonging socially are big pieces of existing happily. Underlying all these needs, we now have technologies that are new and untested as to how they will affect human society. Balance is key and almost every parent we speak with senses that we are now due for a reconciliation of our time, attention and human nature.

Norms are shifting as younger children have more access to more devices and content than any other time in human history. But there are still only 24 hours in a day. As time is spent on digital devices watching YouTube Kids or playing Fortnite that means less time playing with friends who live in the neighborhood, being outdoors or just using imagination. Parents face constant peer pressure via their children's perceived norms of what their friends are allowed to do. Almost all families seem stretched to create the time they'd like together to just be.

Amidst the chaos of school, sports for the kids and work pressure for the adults, there are tectonic shifts in how we live and relate to each other as families. For those listening, we hear in multiple recent articles published in the likes of the New York Time, Washington Post and BBC that now is the time that our society is seeking to actually change behaviors. We're now admitting to each other that we must find a new integration of this digital reality with the historically tangible reality we grew up in.

At Inspirational, our work is to listen to you all to find the events in life that we can reclaim with this new balance. And in the quiet, focused spaces we create, offer your family healthy, collaborative discussions and activities to reconnect in genuine ways.

Our first focus is on dinner. It is the last great shared ritual of families.

No matter how busy and scattered life may appear, the family works very hard to protect that time, honor and respect it. But we've found that now with the newly perceived "always on" burdened mentality of responsibilities, most parents do not obey their own rules of "no devices at the dinner table." Most of you admit that your children will say to you that you're breaking the rules as you check texts and calls regularly at the table or walk into the other room to check your phone. Without being asked, you volunteered that you feel that it's wrong for you or your spouse to not be the role model that you feel you can in this respect. The pattern to these responses and reflections from parents is striking. You want to change.

The other area of interest is when we asked what you do as a family with your dinner time, the responses are lacking the depth that you'd like. At the end of the day, people are tired and not fully engaging or present, yet they still have a belief and desire to do better. Quick questions and one word responses about the day are the norm for many. There is a collective sense that this "sacred time" for the family can be elevated.

Lastly, when we ask how you pass wisdom on to your kids, it's a hard question for most to answer. It's probably the most complex in terms of generating a long pause and then asking questions in return, defining what we mean by wisdom. We mean talking and teaching what kindness, generosity, patience and love are and how you deepen your understanding of them to become a beautiful person in the world. Most of you, after reflecting, will say that it's almost always reactive to some bad behavior of children. In the best case, if you slow things down and focus on it, you may explain why what happened has a lesson.

Where did the proactive time to pass wisdom to kids go? Some of you take part in an active weekly religious tradition, but increasingly fewer do. Virtues and values that have connected us universally are being replaced by stronger identities to race, class, sports and the country in which one lives.

With the gap between time spent focusing virtues and digital

entertainment that is often virtue-less, we are collectively reprogramming a generation. Parents used to be the purveyors of wisdom as we recall, “my parents used to always tell me.” But now they seem to be curators of content. Instead of telling and teaching directly, for some the role of the parent has become solely the selector and enforcer of what can and can’t be watched and for how long.

When and where did these rituals start to slip away? At Inspirational, we are helping to recreate healthy boundaries for celebrating the amazing things digital can offer without losing sight of traditions, rituals and wisdom that make us the unique creation of humanity.

With all the challenges we face as a species now, passing on wisdom and respecting each other’s presence has never been more vital. Our first products will use the feedback given to help reclaim your dinner time together and elevate the time to help rekindle the art of passing on wisdom, values and virtues. We hope you’ll join the effort and support this by passing on this study to your trusted networks and asking them to provide feedback.

I am grateful to have this work creating space and balance for families. We look forward to hearing how it changes the energy and feel of your time together at home.

James Yancey, Founder, Inspirational

James Yancey



Background



Families we have spoken with so far

98%

are married couples
who live in the same
household

95%

are Caucasian

98%

are heterosexual

76%

are upper middle class

81%

have both parents
working a full-time
or part-time
professional job

63%

have one child

22%

have two children

17%

have three or more
children



Devices in the home

Families have an average of three devices per person in the household*



87%

are iPhone users



22%

of parents own an Apple Watch



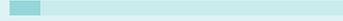
9%

of families have a "kid's tablet" (one designed for children like Amazon Fire Kids)



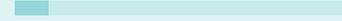
93%

who have a kids tablet were given it as a gift by a relative as their first primary device



90%

of kids age 5 or under have a used iPad



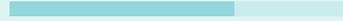
10%

of parents bought new iPads as a first device for their child



93%

of kids age 5 or under have some type of device given to them on a regular basis for screen time



67%

of families have an Alexa, HomePod or Google Home



77%

of families have a video game system of some sort

*This includes phones, tablets, smart watches and computers

Self-perceptions of a family's screen time



Thoughts on family screen time compared to others

We have spoken with families across the spectrum. From parents who firmly believe that our world's new reality is digital devices and you'd better fully embrace it or get left behind, to those who are staunch believers in no devices for kids in the home - period. Where do families think they fall on that scale and how do they know?

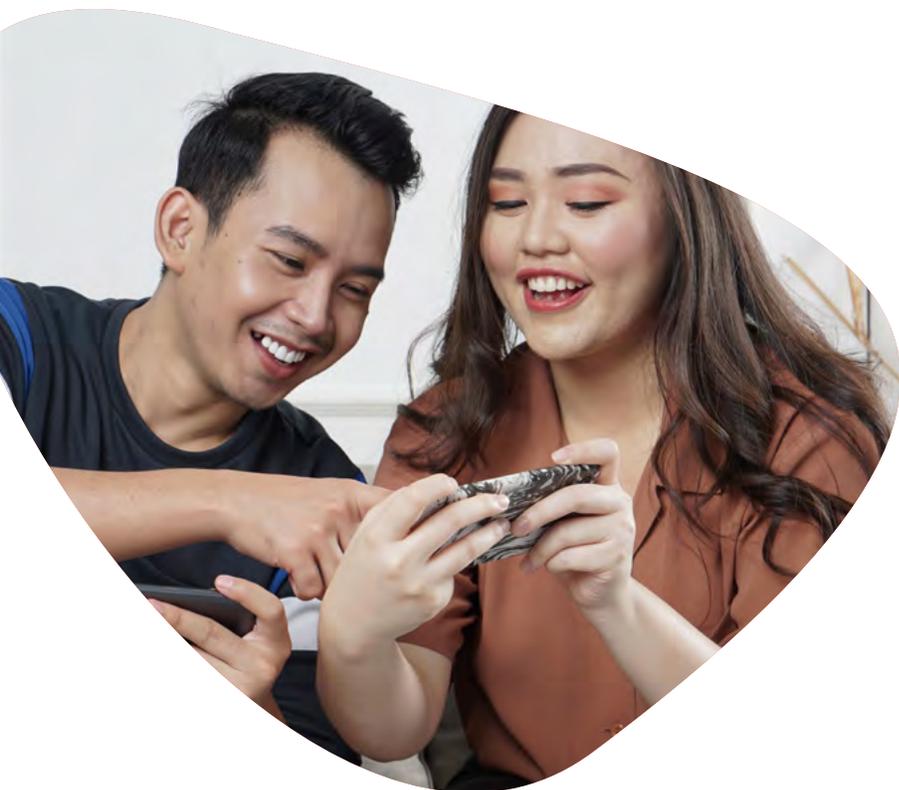
The answer is that the significant outliers know that they are outliers and they're right. For those parents who fall in the middle, most say that they think they probably have a little less screen time consumption than average. Parents who report their family has more screen time than average, yet aren't outliers, often believe that other families misrepresent their own use. They often express a likelihood that these other families do have as much screen time as their own and misreport it.

So how can parents know without asking other parents directly, which is often cited as awkward? Most people report that their kids playing at other homes gives them a sense, with the biggest reveal being the age at which their child is allowed to own their own phone.



Spouses struggling with each other's screen time

61% of married couples claim that they communicate with each other regularly in a variety of ways to tell the other that they should spend less time on their phone. Most of the conversation is in reference to family time with the kids but it is also prevalent regarding couple time. Most spouses have the expectation with each other that work must be tended to at home after hours. But often they'll feel that other things not work-related are competing for attention. They may also simply feel that work hours are intruding on family time. Most couples characterize the communication as harmless nagging but they do wish that more time could be reclaimed for the family and each other. It is also often noted that a family's kids will often say something to them about breaking the rules for device use. When asked about the progress they've made in reducing their own screen time, 92% percent of parents said that they had not been successful.



Social pressures for parents



Is screen time an important parenting topic?

This varies by the age of children.

Newborn

It's an important topic but not something parents think they have to spend a lot of time on yet. The general rule for newborns is little to no screen time, but it happens opportunistically. Only a few parents were very conscious not to have any screens around their newborn at all.

Toddler

Increasing importance compared to newborns as they start playing with digital devices whether intentional or unintentional on the part of the parents. It's also increasingly important if a child is given a digital device from a friend or relative in terms of what to do with it, what to allow and when. Most parents say that they only allow one hour per day and they consistently report that when there is more usage, their children are harder to manage, cranky and disruptive. Most parents admit that at least once per week, children receive more than one hour of screen time as parents are having alone time or spending time together. 17% track their children's screen time precisely with a timer or another mechanism while the rest just gauge it generally. 8% have scheduled times that the Internet shuts off using technology.





Elementary schoolers

It becomes very important as a top area of concern and focus. This is the first age that stated family rules are developed, most often verbally, with 8% having them written down in some way. This also starts the period where there is concern and focus on how much time, where devices are kept at night and necessary content restriction software. Exposure to extreme content like porn and violence is also a big worry. Lastly, children as young as 7 and 8 years old are now getting limited or fully functioning phones. 11% of parents allow their child to own a phone at 7 years old. Many have kids at that age with friends who have started getting phones or have heard of other children getting phones at that age. Most parents seem very dismayed and concerned by this trend. Although most have heard of the “Wait Until 8th” campaign, few have waited until 8th grade to allow their child to have a phone. This is mostly due to peer pressure and the need to communicate as they’re not always together.

Middle schoolers

It’s a top topic of focus as 82% reported their child having a phone by 6th grade, 87% by 7th grade and 93% by 8th grade. Social media starts to come into play in a significant way, but only 23% reported allowing their kid to have their own accounts. YouTube is watched often and Instagram and Facebook are observed with a parent or through a parent’s account. 92% of parents actively monitor Internet use either by looking at search and browse histories or logging into their child’s accounts and reading messages. 16% are using a monitoring software of some sort specifically for that purpose. 81% restrict Internet sites through parental controls in some way by this age and 19% control active and shutdown times of the Internet for devices in the home. Fortnite and Minecraft are huge areas of concern for parents at this age, especially with those who have boys. Parents consistently report feeling concerned and frustrated by the inability or lack of desire for kids to go outside and play with other kids in the neighborhood because they are playing with them on the games concurrently from their separate homes.

Highschooler

Most parents stop monitoring behaviors as actively by the time children reach high school. Almost all kids have phones. 33% have their own social media accounts by the start of high school with 73% having their own accounts by the time they graduate. The big focus is on social media and how their kids interact with and treat each other online. There is as much concern over what their kids experience directly as there is over what other kids will expose them to. Porn and online sexual predators are major concerns as well as bullying and self image being affected. YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are the major platforms that are used in that order. Gaming is still a concern but not as much as middle school, as they have the ability to travel more independently and greater access to a variety of things without direct parental oversight.

“Every time there’s a new tool, all these things can be used for good or evil. Technology is neutral; it depends on how it’s used.”

– Rick Smolan, Co-Creator of The Day In The Life Book Series



Do parents discuss rules with each other?

This was an incredibly interesting result. Even though most parents claim that it's a top topic, 73% of those say that they do not feel comfortable to speak with other parents in detail about rules for screen time and devices in the home.

The consistent response as to why that's the case is that they don't want to come across as "judgy" and don't want to be judged by others who might then ask them the same questions in return. Spouses do discuss these topics related to screen time and devices though and most of them will discuss these with family members (most often siblings) or their closest friends. But devices and screen time generally are not discussed beyond that circle. For those who have structured meetings with other parents at school, tensions are reported to run high when there is discussion as to what age children should have their own smartphones.

Most parents are curious about what rules and boundaries other families have in place but they're also equally if not more interested in how those families determined them. Many families feel that 1-2 hours of screen time sounds like the right amount, but when asked how they know, most can't answer why.

The first outward sign of where a family sits on the spectrum of digital exposure is often when kids start getting phones or experience digital as part of play time in other families' homes. 90% of families report regularly reading articles or hearing about issues surrounding screen time. 83% of them feel like the recommendations they read are not consistent and that it's still generally unknown what the right parameters for a healthy child's digital life are.



Devices and rules



First memories of children using digital devices

97% of parents share a similar recollection regarding this. The story goes that when they're around their newborn or toddler they're often on their phone. Due to the nature of attention being focused on a device, the child is naturally curious and reaches out for it often. Just over half of parents eventually hand their phone to the child under the age of two at home. 76% of parents with children two or younger hand their phone to their child when "in a pinch" such as while at a restaurant or doctor's office. This almost universally was not something parents planned with foresight or discussed in advance. In essence, the parent's phone becomes a toy. Also, 90% will allow their kids at age two and under to play with their phone or a tablet on long car trips or a plane ride only. 9% do not allow their toddler at age two and under to touch or play with digital devices at all under any circumstances.

The vast majority of parents who allow their children to play with digital devices have not purchased specific learning apps. Most of the time parents allow their children to simply play with existing apps on the adult phone as well as the camera or video functions. Often a common activity is to take pictures and video of the child and then allow them to watch or see those of themselves.

If there is conscious decision making around entertainment of some type, it is most commonly YouTube Kids. But 97% of parents claimed that they felt uncomfortable with the content and had to monitor it constantly. An all-time favorite video type on YouTube Kids is videos of other kids playing with toys or unboxing things. Most parents find this content odd and feel uncomfortable for their children to watch it.



Family rules for devices

The most universal and clear rule regards no devices at meals. 98% of families state that they do not allow devices at the dinner table. But at the same time a whopping 90% of parents, upon further questioning, admit that while the kids do not have any devices, parents do check theirs regularly even though it is against the rules. In fact, often their kids will tell them they are breaking the rules.

92%

of families do not allow devices in their kids rooms overnight. Only 5% of parents do not have devices in their own bedrooms for charging, etc.

36%

of families report having issues with children breaking rules by taking and using their devices outside of the allowed times.

98%

of men charge their phones next to their beds and only 71% of women do, citing health concerns and boundaries.



5%

of families do not allow any devices in bedrooms or that entire floor of the house.

12%

of families have a written contract for phone rules with their kids. This seems to be a newer trend but has been reported positively by those who have adopted this model.

91%

of the time when another family's kids visit their home and have a phone, the device is treated under the same rules as the hosting family and it is most often held in a separate area like a basket of some sort.

92%

of families have a specific place in the home where devices always live for charging, etc. That is most often a basket or countertop in the kitchen.

“Your smart phone has already replaced your camera, your calendar and your alarm clock. Don't let it replace your family.”

– Anonymous

Family rules for screen time



We are trying to understand if a family's rules are stated or unstated, enforced consistently or not. In general, most families with kids under the age of 12 felt that one hour was ideal but one to two hours daily was likely happening.

In this instance we define screen time as time spent with interactive digital screens. Rules generally are set more consciously with this type of time. Watching TV and playing video games was sometimes included in the one to two hours but roughly a third of families felt that these other activities were different.

86% of families feel that they had received information from an authoritative source that one hour was the correct amount of time. But only 36% of those could say exactly where they had gathered that information. 33% of families have a friend they trust who'd become the expert in their social circle and passed that information on.

In terms of tracking daily screen time, 17% of families use a timer of some sort and 11% have their technology programmed to automatically shut off at certain times. Those families who have it shut off automatically in some way, reported the most ease in getting children to stop versus having to turn the device off manually.

17% of families with kids under 10 did not give any screen time at all during the week for the purpose of enjoyment.

For those families who do give screen time during the week, 8% is given in the morning before school or daycare, 27% is given in the early evening before dinner and 65% is given after dinner and before bed.

82% give screen time as a reward or make it conditional to something else like finishing chores or having good grades at school.

99% of the time these rules regarding screen time did not apply on long car rides and plane travel.

Use of newer technologies



Role of the Apple watch

We asked about other personal devices parents use and 22% now own an Apple Watch. Most of these purchases have been made recently, within the last 2 years. These devices seem particularly enjoyable for parents because they aren't able to be taken and played with by kids like a phone often is. Parents also seem to feel that it makes it much easier to glance at messages quickly rather than a phone. 38% of couples got Apple Watches at the same time.



What are families doing with smart home devices?

74% of families own one of these smart home devices. 51% have an Alexa, 29% have Google Home, 13% have HomePod while 7% simultaneously use multiple types. It sounds like Amazon got the early jump into homes but is being replaced with Google Home and HomePod more recently in many cases.

99% of the use cases for any of these systems is exactly the same - asking the weather and playing music. Only 10% reported turning lights off and on and in only one instance did we speak with a family who actively makes shopping lists. 3% of families will sporadically ask trivia questions during a meal as part of a family interaction and reported that to be a positive experience.



Family rituals and passing on wisdom



When families spend time together

The morning routine for families doesn't seem to hold nearly the same importance or patterns as after work and evening routines.

8%

have a structured and formal family breakfast at the table.

We have not spoken with any families where both parents stay home and do not work or work part-time.

63%

said that time in the car can be valuable for conversations with children and particularly noted moments of truth were easier to have when not directly face to face with their child.

99%

experience dinner as the most important time of the day for family time.

49%

dedicate time after dinner to interactive activities with kids versus working or other activities.

58%

feel that bedtime is an important family time to read and share stories or talk about deeper things.

83%

have planned activities that involve the entire family regularly on the weekends and these experiences vary greatly (sports, outdoors, movies, etc).



Most important family rituals

Dinner is the most sacred ritual of nearly every family by far. 98% of families make it a priority to sit down with some level of formality to share a meal and discuss their day. This was the most consistent pattern of behavior and priority across families. 80% of the time, all family members are present at dinner with dads being the person most often not able to attend due to work commitments or travel.

The second most important ritual is bedtime. This is most often, depending on the age of the kids, characterized by reading books and checking in with the children. 99% of parents exclusively use paperback books at bedtime when reading stories. 27% of parents have a prayer or a reflective moment at bedtime on a regular basis.

Car time was an interesting topic of discussion. There seems to be a lot of valuable conversations that happen when en route to places. Notably when parents do not see their kids' faces and look them directly in the eye, they talk more and seem to open up.

Morning time seems less consistent as a routine and focused family time with only 25% reporting structured interactive activity at home compared to evening time.

Sports and weekend activities are consistently important but lack any regular pattern, being dependent upon the time of year and type of activity.

Religious observance of some type was important to 54% of them.



When and how families pass on wisdom

This question resulted in more pause than others. For the purpose of this question, we characterized this as deeper life lessons parents intentionally seek to pass on such as how to be kind, what love is and why being generous is a good virtue, etc.

82% said that all opportunities to teach wisdom are reactive. In essence this means that the impetus for these deeper discussions is a response to negative behavior. Explaining to a child why they needed to be a good person was triggered by an action that was seen as bad by the parent.

There was no set time or place in the home on a routine basis to consider wisdom and share it. Many parents state that the deepest moments of conversation consistently result from not being face to face with their child such as being in the car or walking the dog together. Families attending religious services experience that as the natural spring board to discuss things of this nature. But a decreasing number of families are regularly attending religious services. Most often people other than parents, such as teachers, are providing kids with some version of wisdom, if it is taught at all.



How many families
practice mindful
living?



Meditation, yoga, organic food, or vegetarian?

We wanted to get a sense of correlation between healthy lifestyle and screen time decisions.

Meditation had been tried regularly by 22% of parents but only 2% had done it together as a family activity.

Yoga had been tried regularly by 18% of parents but only 3% had done it together as family.

Organic foods were very important, regardless of price for 10% of families.

Organic foods were moderately important depending on price for 82% of families.

Organic foods were not considered important to 8% of families.

Vegetarian diets were followed by 2% of some members of families.



Resources



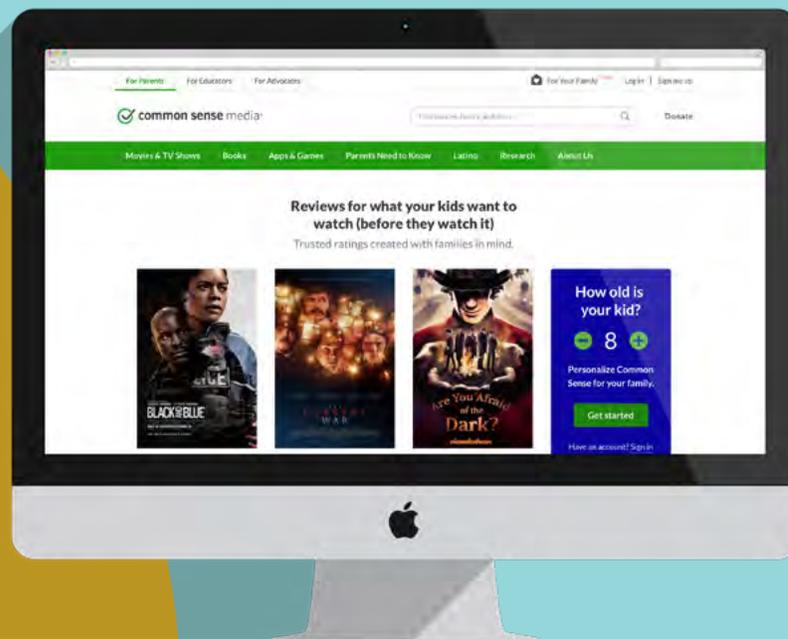
Outstanding screen time parenting resources

We asked for only things that stood out from the pack.

Common Sense Media got the most mentions.

They are a non-profit that creates a rating and review system for children's media. They also feature a lot of good content written by a credentialed team regarding parenting topics in a digital world.

The second most common resource seems to be discussion groups on Facebook that are either local or focused on specific topics of interest.



INSPIRATIONAL



The First 50 Report

Thanks to all of the parents for sharing your experiences navigating screen time and devices for your family.



www.inspirational.com