

Ten Steps to Successfully Unplug Children from Technology

1. Become informed regarding the effects of technology on physical and mental health.

Technology overuse is related to child attention problems, poor academics, aggression, family conflict, impaired sleep, developmental delays, attachment disorders, impaired body image, obesity and early sexuality. The signs of technology addiction are tolerance, withdrawal, unintended use, persistent desire, time spent, displacement of other activities, and continued use. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours per day of combined technology use, yet elementary children use on average eight hours per day! **Need Help?** Get informed by checking out the Zone'in website www.zonein.ca to watch the *Reality Check* video clip, read the *Unplug – Don't Drug* policy initiative, review the research, read loads of articles, and sign up for the Zone'in *Development Series Newsletter*.

2. Disconnect - Unplug yourself first!

As child technology use patterns parallel that of their parents, a technology addicted child is likely to live in a high technology usage household. Parents need to determine how much technology is too much, and set limits. Parents should then model balancing technology use with other activities. Schools could sponsor a *Technology Reduction Week* where classrooms compete to reduce technology use. **Need help?** Zone'in *Mixed Signals Workshop* offers participants information regarding family technology reduction strategies. All Zone'in Products and Workshops include the Zone'in *Technology Reduction Module* (can order at www.zoneinproducts.com).

3. Designate "sacred time" to reconnect with your children.

The root of addiction is fear of human connection or "social anxiety", and results from poor parent – child attachment formation. Adults may benefit from exploring past experiences of attachment with their own parents, and think about how this experience may have affected how they relate to their own child or students. Designation of "sacred time" in the day with no technology (meals, in the car, before bedtime, and holidays) is a first start toward reconnecting with your children. **Need help?** Zone'in *A Cracked Foundation Workshop* offers participants information regarding parent-child attachment and profiles the *Attachment Questionnaire*.

4. Explore alternatives to technology as a class or family.

Not all children are interested in or value the same activities as adults. Fostering a tolerance for differences and respecting individual preferences can go a long way toward promoting children's motivation to unplug.

Need Help? Have each family member make a list of ten realistic, inexpensive things to do by themselves, with a friend, with another family member, with a pet, indoors, and outdoors. Help children create a game, song, joke, poem, story or dance. Buy a book of games, create a story night, play wrestle, make up a play, build a fort of couch cushions, or family cooking night are but a few of a myriad of alternatives to technology use.

5. Enhance performance skills PRIOR to unplugging your children.

Children with technology addictions have poorly developed identities, social skills, relationship to nature and sense of spirit. Drastically or suddenly reducing technology with a child who has an addiction, will result in chaos at school and home, as the child is now alienated from what has become their whole meaning for living. Teachers and parents can help build performance skills by exposing children to activities that are "just right challenge", not too hard, not too easy.

Need help? Zone'in offers the new *Unplug'in Game* for school and home settings, a development tool to build performance skills prior to unplugging from technology.

6. Meet developmental milestones through engagement in the three critical factors for child development - movement, touch and connection.

Children need to rough and tumble play 3-4 hours per day, and spend time connecting with their parent(s), teacher and other children, in order to achieve optimal physical and mental health. This type of play promotes adequate sensory development of the vestibular, proprioceptive, tactile and attachment systems needed for paying attention, printing and reading.

Need help? Zone'in *Harnessing Energy and Back to Basics Workshops* offer participants information regarding sensory and motor development– or – buy the new *Zone'in* and *Move'in* educational programs for schools and families.

7. Address perceptions of safety.

Parents' perceptions of safety correlate with child time indoors in front of TV and videogames e.g. if a parent perceives the world as unsafe, that child will spend more time indoors using technology. Litigation has drastically changed playgrounds. Outdoor rough and tumble play is a biological need for children, and all children have a right to be physically active and healthy.

Need help? Zone'in *Diminishing Returns workshop* offers participants a variety of alternative options for ensuring 'safe' home and school activities to promote optimal physical and mental development, and provides the *Productivity Designs for Classroom and Gym* to improve student productivity.

8. Create individual roles.

Children benefit from knowing their role in the big picture, and self esteem comes from being productive. Realistic challenges and expectations by parents and teachers promote defined roles for children, and provide a structure where they can begin to try out new skills. When faced with a task that is perceived to be beyond a child's skill level, frustration and poor self-esteem will be the result.

Need Help? Zone'in *Mixed Signals Workshop* offers participants the *Child Inner Drive Directive for Schools and Homes* – or – purchase the new *Unplug'in Game*.

9. Schedule a balance between technology use and activities.

Follow the *Zone'in Concept* of an hour of 'energy in' (technology use) equals an hour of 'energy out' (movement, touch and connection). Make up a weekly schedule with designated time for technology balanced with time for movement, touch and connection. When beginning the technology unplug, it's important to alternate between familiar, predictable, structured activities and novel activities. The parent and teacher's job is to skillfully *dance* the child between predictability and novelty during the initial unplug period.

Need Help? Zone'in Programs Inc. offers parents, teachers and therapists' products, workshops and training to help address child technology addictions. See www.zonein.ca for more unplug information and suggestions.

10. Link Corporate and Community to create sustainable futures for children!

Zone'in Programs Inc. offers an invitation to all corporations who benefit monetarily from technology production, to re-direct a percentage of their gross profits back into building healthy communities. Free recreation passes for children, building safe parks, and school camping trips are but a few sustainability initiatives to ensure children stay unplugged.

Need help? Zone'in *Why Children Can't Sit Still workshop* offers participants the *Child Development Directive* and the *Nature Directive* to optimize learning. Check out www.zonein.ca for more information on how you can link corporate donations to your community.