



# CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

3-9TH FEB 2025

The Power of Going Offline

DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT



Unlocking Potential

# Children's Mental Health Week 2025

This year our theme is: **DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT**



This year we want to encourage you to **DISCONNECT** from your digital devices and **RECONNECT** with the world around you.

This Children's Mental Health Week we will explore

**The Power of Going Offline**

So why has UP chosen this theme?

Our digital devices such as our mobile phone, Ipad, laptop, and gaming devices can help us stay connected to our families, friends, interests and our online world.

However, **TOO MUCH** time on our digital devices can become unhealthy, leaving us disconnected from the real world and the people closest to us.

This year we want to encourage you to **DISCONNECT** from your digital devices and **RECONNECT** with the world around you, to help build better connections and a healthier relationship with your digital devices.

# Children's Mental Health Week 2025

## DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT

### Why?

Screen-free activities at home can encourage family bonding, boost creativity, improve focus, and help children develop social and emotional skills. By engaging in hands-on activities and real-world experiences, children can strengthen their connections with loved ones and enjoy learning and playing in a more balanced way. These activities can be done as short breaks or longer family time together.



### Aim of CMHW:

To promote the importance of taking regular tech-breaks and inspire families to engage in screen-free, meaningful activities that foster off-line creativity, connection, and well-being at home.

### The Learning Objective of today's Coffee Morning:

Parents & Carers will understand the benefits of reducing screen time for your children, explore alternative activities that boost creativity and mental health, and develop strategies for incorporating regular screen-free periods into family life.

## Does your child...

Spend more than **2 hours** a day on any devices?

Find everything else is **boring** except being on devices?

Become **upset** or **angry** when asked to come off a device?

Find it hard to **concentrate**, **sleep**, or **relax**?

Or even **prefer being on devices** instead of spending time with family/friends?



**These can all be signs that your child may be having too much screen time**

## Some children find managing this harder than others...



For example, children who have neurological differences, such as ADHD and Autism, or anxiety, may use screens to manage certain aspects of their day-to-day lives.

This can be a helpful tool **but** too much can also lead to a loss of physical and emotional connection with others or create unhelpful changes to mood and functioning.

UP can look to create a guidance or signposting resource if parents are communicating a need for this, please let us know if your parent community might benefit from this

## What are unhealthy and healthy digital habits?

### Unhealthy

#### Spending more than 2 hours a day on your device:

Two hours of screen time is the national recommended daily limit. Exceeding this can negatively impact your attention, social skills, physical and mental health.



### Healthy

#### Setting boundaries and daily limits:

This helps maintain a healthy relationship with your devices and supports your mental wellbeing. It allows you to be more physically active and free.



The question to explore with parents:

WHICH kinds of screen activities to allow,

WHEN to permit your child to begin using them, and

HOW FREQUENTLY to allow them.

And of course, once you've made those decisions:

HOW to help your child accept those limits and be responsible about their screen usage, given their still-developing brain, the social pressures to use various screen activities, and the addictive nature of screens

## Some tips for setting boundaries and daily limits:



- **Start by setting a reasonable goal:**

Maybe you want your child to use screens only on weekends. Or you're fine with some after-school screen time but you don't want your child glued to a screen every morning.

- **Discuss the goal with your child:**

Sit down with your child and have a chat about all the screen-time. Talk about screens the way you would sweets; lots of fun, but a special treat, not something to indulge in every day.



- **Brainstorm a list of alternate activities:**

Ask your child what else he or she might like to do instead for some of the time that has been used on screens. Brainstorm some fun ideas that your child or children can do on their own and make a list with your child.

- **Choose high quality screen experiences as much as possible:**

Not all screen time is created equal. For instance, while social media usage has been shown to increase anxiety in people of all ages, following along with an exercise class online is good for the body.

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## What are unhealthy and healthy digital habits?

### Unhealthy

#### Missing out on life because you are on your device:

Sometimes we miss exciting, meaningful moments because we are distracted by our devices, this can sometimes make us feel empty and sad



### Healthy

#### Screen-free play:

Improves your social skills, your communication and boosts your creativity and imagination and happy hormones. It also provides opportunity to learn how to navigate conflict and relationship repair.



#### Using screens together:

Watch, play, and talk together about what is on the screen, this enables you engage with the digital and real world in a healthier way. It also means you can share your joy and interest with friends/family.





## What are unhealthy and healthy digital habits?

### Unhealthy

#### Using your device in bed:

This disrupts your sleep, which negatively effects your physical and mental health



### Healthy

#### Device-free bedtimes:

Staying off devices for the hour before bedtime will help children relax, improve sleep quality, wellbeing and concentration.



## The Science Behind It

Everyone has hormones or chemical messengers in their brain; these hormones make a big difference to how we feel and how we behave, they help us to know when something is fun, exciting or makes us feel good so we must take care of them.

Let's get to know some of the really important hormones:



**Dopamine**



**Serotonin**



**Cortisol**

**Balancing screen time with other fun activities keeps our brains happy and healthy!**



**Dopamine:** Dopamine is sometimes called the happy hormone that makes us feel good when you enjoy something, like eating your favourite snack, laughing with friends or playing a game. Often games on devices are designed to give us lots of dopamine. But if we get too much, it might be harder to stop using them, and it could also make other things feel boring that are actually also fun!

**Serotonin:** Serotonin helps keep our mood balanced. If we don't have enough, we might feel sad when we're not meant to. We get lots of serotonin when we exercise or spend time outside in sunlight. Sometimes if we are using screens too much it might mean we are not doing other/outdoor activities that give us serotonin.

**Cortisol:** Cortisol is what we call the 'stress' hormone. It helps us to react to scary or stressful things which is very important. Competitive games, even if we are simply trying to beat our own previous score, can activate our stress levels, initially being fun but over time becoming a preoccupation or worry, over-stimulating our levels of cortisol, make us feel stressed or hyper instead of relaxed, even

making us feel angry for no reason.

Please see below a link to a 2 min 20sec video that goes into more detail about brain hormones which can be shown to parents.

<https://youtu.be/ldPuBk7a9V4?si=rsVunn7VUGpO2yEp>

**COMPETITION TIME!**

This competition is designed to help you set boundaries and daily limits for your screen time, let's get creative!

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**DIGITAL DEVICE BOOTH**

Calling all children! Show off your creativity by designing your very own digital device booth and share a picture with us on social media.

Simply tag us on Instagram @upunlocking to enter the competition for a chance to win an exciting prize! Whether it's for a phone, tablet, or laptop, we can't wait to see your amazing ideas.

Get building, get snapping, and get tagging—good luck!

Or use our Children's Mental Health Week email address  
CMHW@up.org.uk

[WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/UPUNLOCKING](http://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/UPUNLOCKING)



This year, we're launching an exciting competition for children to design and create a digital device booth to store phones, laptops, tablets, or consoles.

The booth aims to support setting healthy screen time boundaries and habits. Parents/carers can upload an image of the booth on Instagram tagging @upunlocking or email it to CMHW@up.org.uk for a chance to win a prize.

This activity is also in the Teacher Resources if you wish to do it in class. Teachers can email images for entry to the competition (personal details do not need to be shared so long as the teacher can identify the winner if selected).

While promoting Instagram may seem counter to reducing screen time, we acknowledge the balance between online interactions and screen limits. We are providing both an email address for parents/carers who do not wish to engage with or wish to reduce engagement with social media, while offering Instagram as a positive tool for sharing ideas and advice during this week.

## Screen-Free Activity Ideas

### Nature Treasure Hunt

**What to Do:** Create a simple list of things to find outside, like a feather, a yellow leaf, a smooth stone, or a flower. Head to the garden, park, or local woods and let the kids explore!

**Why It's Fun:** Encourages curiosity, gets everyone moving, and sparks conversations about nature.

**Bonus:** Let them collect items to create a nature collage later!



### Build a Fort

**What to Do:** Gather blankets, cushions, and chairs to build a cosy fort indoors or outside if you have space. Decorate it (fairy lights, pillows, other home decorations items).

**Why It's Fun:** It's creative, collaborative, and offers imaginative play opportunities, eg a reading nook, or pretend castle.

More ideas for screen free family games:

1. Parent/child/family set aside 30-60mins a week. Device in drawer for all family members (or in the device booth if made). Give them a calendar sheet after school and weekends for the week and an activity sheet with pictures of the phone things they like to do i.e. riding a bike, drawing, playing a family game, baking, reading, playing in the park, etc. Each family member each week cuts and pastes what they want to do that week and they do that as a family instead of device time. There can also be tokens for screen time for each family member and they all have the same amount of tokens, and they have tokens for family fun activities, and they plot those on the calendar for the week.

2. Each family member has a piece of paper. The person leading, chooses a category like 'colour', each member of the family has to write down a colour (including the lead). If two people come up with the same colour they each win 1 point, if more than two people come up with the same answer, they lose 1 point (you can have negative points i.e. -1), and the first to 3 wins. You get 0 points if no-one shares the same answer.

3. Charades - films, books, tv programmes.
4. Shopping list game 'I went to the shop and bought a...' memory game have to list what was bought i.e. I went to the shop and bought an apple, the next person says I bought an apple and a 'bicycle' for B, and the next person carries it on choosing the item for C and remembering all the items that came before until they get to Z.
5. Home made Pictionary - someone decides on a category like 'nature' and the drawer has to draw something related to nature within a set amount of time (2 mins), then the others have to guess the image. The person who guesses correctly then draws an image for the others to guess.
6. Say a sentence from a song, the others have to guess which song it is. Or alternatively hum a couple of lines from the song for the others to guess what it is. Or sing a line from the song, but leave a blank at the end for someone in the team to guess the missing lyrics.
7. The second most fish: In 100 seconds, everyone must draw between 1 and 20 fish on a piece of A4 paper. The person who draws the second most fish is out of the game. Also, if you draw the same number of fish as someone else you are out of the game. This continues until there are just two people left. Out of these two people, the person who has drawn the most fish along the way wins.
8. Cutlery Balance: Balance the most different things on one normal table fork and one normal dessert spoon. Each thing must be bigger than a pea. You have three minutes to gather your own balancing items. Then going around the table, each person must add one of their items to their fork or spoon. Everyone must be holding their fork and spoon at all times and balanced items must only touch the spoon or fork. If an item falls at any time, you are out. Last player standing wins.
9. Team Rhyme Time (Taskmaster game) Gather the most different things that rhyme with each other. You have four minutes. The person with the most items that truly rhyme wins.
10. Word association game, each say a word in turn that is associated to the last word someone shared - no-one wins, but is fun.

## Screen-Free Activity Ideas



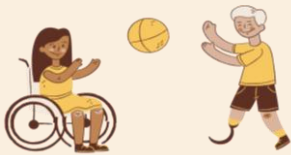
### Bake together

Choose a simple recipe like cookies, cupcakes, or pancakes, and bake together as a family. Let the kids help measure, mix, and decorate. It's hands-on, creative, and a great way to teach children basic cooking skills and teamwork. **Bonus:** You get a delicious treat to enjoy together at the end!

### Some More Ideas

- Make a paper chain.
- Put on music and dance.
- String a necklace out of pasta.
- Listen to an audiobook.
- Have an indoor "snowball" fight using socks.
- Make paper bag puppets or sock puppets.
- Sit in a big box with markers and colour the inside.
- Write down ten things you love about each person in your family to surprise them.

## A recap of what can we do to reduce screen time



Play screen-free sports

Set boundaries and daily limits



Play off-line, in-real-life games with friends

Would anyone like to share their screen-free activity ideas?

Or ask any questions?



Device-free bedtimes



Screen-free creative activities