A 7-DAY SCREEN-FREE

CONNECTION RESET

CHALLENGE FOR BUSY FAMILIES

Better ScreenTime

CONNECTION RESET

7 Days, 7 Ways to Disconnect and Reconnect

Welcome to Better Screen Time's Connection Reset!

1 Why reset?

Are you tired of seeing your kids being sucked into a screen? Do you find yourself endlessly scrolling and then wondering where your time went? Have glowing screens taken over family Scrabble night, the evening stroll around the neighborhood, or friendly banter at the dinner table?

It's time to hit the reset button!

This Connection Reset will give your family time to create, increased resiliency, better sleep, more physical activity, parents who are emotionally available for their kids (huge win!), siblings who are kinder and get along better, and in the end, more connection as a family.

Our screen-free challenge is more than a digital detox. It's an opportunity to connect with yourself, your values, and with those you love the most.
This download will guide you through 7 days with 7 ways for your family to disconnect and reconnect.

2 What do you want from your reset?

We encourage you to ask yourself and your family two questions to get the most out of your reset: 1. "What do you wish you had more time for?" (Tiffany Shlain, author of 24/6: Giving up Screens One Day a Week to Get More Time, Creativity, and Connection). 2. What do you want more of in your home and family life?

Ready to start your challenge? Subscribe to our exclusive podcast for daily inspiration using the link in your confirmation email!

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CONNECTION RESET

3 How do I get my family on board?

- Share why you want to do a reset. Remind your family that your screen-free week will be a time to have fun, rest, and make memories. How we frame the idea makes all the difference! As we brainstorm and dream with our family, we can help them see this as a week of possibilities, not punishment.

- Make a plan together and pick a start date. Use the included Connection Reset Planner to help you brainstorm ideas. We have assigned a theme to each day, but feel free to mix and match the days or come up with your own themes. Make the challenge work for your family! Pick your start date and put it on the calendar for everyone to see.

- Decide on a reward together. How will you celebrate when the challenge is done? Reward yourselves for giving your best effort to the challenge (perfection not required!).

4 How the challenge works:

- Use this guide. This PDF contains everything you need for a successful screen-free week, but if you'd like a little encouragement and accountability during the challenge, you can subscribe to our private podcast feed for a 7-day daily drip of inspiration along the way. The link is in the email we sent when you signed up!

- Print the tracker. Hang it somewhere your kids will see it. Kids can take turns coloring it in at the end of each day during the challenge.

- Make expectations clear. For many families, completely stepping away from technology is not possible due to work and other commitments. Don't let this deter you! Set certain hours and perimeters on your work hours, and decide what tech/uses (like social media) you can abandon for seven days. Be honest with yourself and commit to two things:
    - Going as screen-free as possible.
    - Spending quality time with your family.

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4 How the challenge works (continued):

- Decide what to do with boredom ahead of time. Decide what you will say when your kids say, “I’m bored” or “There’s nothing to do.” Win over the whining by telling your kids:
  - “Keep thinking! I know you’ll come up with something. You always do.”
  - “I’d love some help with _____ (folding laundry, washing dishes, etc.).” They’ll find something to do very soon!
  - “Do you want to invite a friend over?”
  - Let’s look at our list of activities.
  - “Let’s go do _____ together.”

- Put away all optional technology: Xbox, Nintendo Switch, tablets, extra phones, laptops, etc. If you want to get really crazy, you can even put your TV in the closet like we did 14 years ago! Whittle your tech down to the essentials. Unplug the big stuff, hide the small devices, and turn off the WiFi when the work day (or school day) is done!

- Prep your environment. What activities, tools, and resources are available to your family? How can you make the outdoors more accessible? Investing in some open-ended toys (legos, blocks, magna-tiles, play kitchen, etc), activities, games, and books go a long way! You can check out our Amazon list HERE for more ideas! (*As Amazon affiliates we earn from qualifying purchases.) Also, don’t underestimate the library. Many libraries lend out free kits, games, and passes to local museums. If you have teens in the house, let them plan something fun, add friends to your family activity (who are willing to be screen-free for a few hours), dish up some tasty food, and they’ll be set!

Are you ready?

Family connection is waiting for you on the other side! Every time our family steps away from tech, we walk away with a deeper connection to one another and a resolve to use tech differently moving forward.

Let’s disconnect to connect with our kids. Happy unplugging!

- Andrea & Tyler

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CONNECTION RESET PLANNER

1. What do we want from our connection reset? What do we wish we had more time for as a family or personally?

2. What tech (devices and/or uses) will we discard for 7 days? What tech will remain and what are our boundaries with using it? (Consider where you use it, what you'll be doing on it, why it's being used, and how long it will be used.)

3. What are some activities we'd like to do during the 7-day challenge? Use each day's theme for ideas: Day 1—Disconnect to Connect (family rituals), Day 2—Get Outside, Day 3—Laugh Together, Day 4—Serve Others, Day 5—Create Something, Day 6—Go Explore, Day 7—Rest and Recharge

4. What day will we start the challenge? Write the date on your family calendar!

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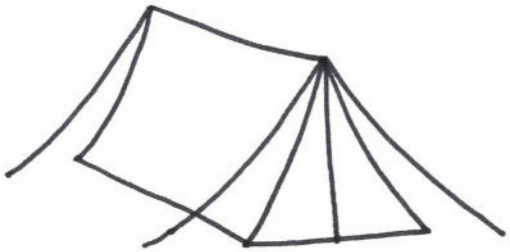
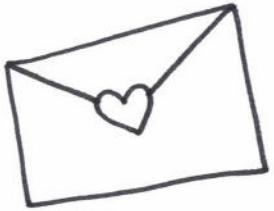
Connection Reset

OUR SCREEN-FREE CHALLENGE TRACKER

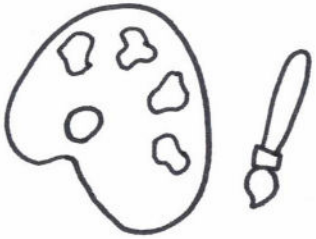
☐ disconnect to connect



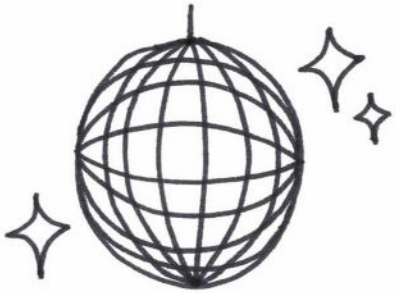
☐ get outside



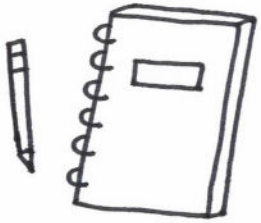
☐ serve others



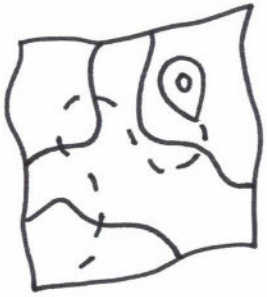
☐ create something



☐ laugh together



☐ rest and recharge



☐ go explore

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DAY 1: DISCONNECT TO CONNECT

The American Psychological Association shared a study almost two decades ago stating that "family routines... are associated with marital satisfaction, adolescents' sense of personal identity, children's health, academic achievement and stronger family relationships."

> *As screens begin to seep into the white space in our lives, families are reluctant to set their devices aside to embrace the rituals that used to be so commonplace in society.*
>
> *You can change this. You can set your device down in favor of family dinner, an evening walk, bedtime stories, and Saturday chores. These simple moments have the power to ground your family and elevate your life in ways a device never will.*
>
> *- Andrea Davis*

Ideas:

- Work in the yard together.
- Take an evening walk.
- Have a family game night.
- Play Charades or Reverse Charades.
- Play outdoor night games (perfect for teens!)
- Do sidewalk chalk together.
- Family Black Out Night - turn off all lights, get out candles, flashlights (great during winter!).
- Prepare a meal together.
- Play a game of flag football.
- Do house repairs.
- Play instruments or sing together.
- Have a kitchen dance party.
- Share High, Low, and Buffalo or best/worst parts of the day.
- Read a favorite chapter book aloud.
- Find more ideas in our Guide to Screen-Free Family Rituals!

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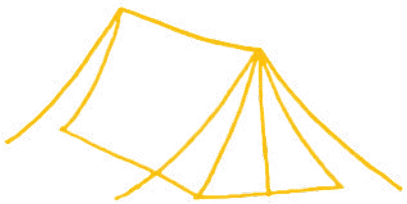
DAY 2: GET OUTSIDE

"Family studies researchers at the University of Illinois have looked at the benefits of spending time in nature as a family, and theorize that families who regularly get outside together tend to function better. In addition to nature's ability to restore attention, which in turn helps family members get along better, a simple nature-based routine such as an evening walk can bring a sense of belonging and identity to family members." Source

> *If we want our children to move mountains, we first have to let them get out of their chairs.*
>
> *-Nicolette Sowder*

Ideas:

- Forest Bathing - A Walk in the Trees on Your Own.
- Trail Walk.
- Bike Ride.
- Walk the dog together.
- Yard games (we love Kubb!), capture the flag, red light/green light, no bears are out tonight.
- "Let's go fly a kite" - even Mr. Banks learned to love it.
- Hike to the top of a hill or mountain.
- Identify insects, plants, flowers.
- Catch frogs.
- Build and fly paper airplanes from outdoor bleachers.
- Paint outside, or "en plein air" as the French say.
- Wash and vacuum the car together.
- Lay a blanket out and watch the clouds and find shapes.
- If it's winter, build a snowman or bundle up with hats and gloves and get everyone their own headlamp for a winter walk.
- Build a fort outside.
- Jump on the trampoline.
- Play kickball, wiffle ball, baseball, or catch.
- Plant something new in a garden.
- Have a hula hoop contest or a game of PIG with the basketball.
- Star gaze.
- Camp in the backyard.
- Make mud pies.
- 55 Nature Activities from our friends at Screen-Free Week.
- Use the Thousand Hours Outside Tracker to track your outdoor time (they also have many outdoor activity ideas).
- Climb a tree.



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DAY 3: LAUGH TOGETHER

"Laughter reduces the level of stress hormones like cortisol, adrenaline, and dopamine. It also increases the level of health-enhancing hormones, like endorphins...One of the most recent studies on laughter shows that laughing with others releases endorphins in the brain—our homegrown feel-good chemicals." Laughter not only helps us to feel better, but it helps form social bonds! Childhood attachment is crucial. Wouldn't we rather our kids form that attachment with us than with the latest and greatest YouTuber?

> *Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.*
>
> *-Victor Borge*

Ideas:

- Make a Wall Joy with post-it notes. Write all the things you that bring you joy!
- Go on a walk or a drive and share some silly stories from your childhood.
- Comic books—Calvin & Hobbes, Garfield, and The Far Side have been favorites in our home over the years.
- Play a silly game such as Telestrations or Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza.
- Hang up a funny photo or quote for the family to see during the week.
- Teach your children Knock Knock jokes.
- Have a dance party. Let everyone pick their favorite song. Include props and add in some air guitar for extra fun!
- Let your kids bury you in pillows in blankets on the couch. (Speaking from recent experience, this is fun for everyone. Parents get to lie down.)
- Make up a silly song together.
- Lip sync.
- Water balloon fight.
- Look at family photos albums together (especially the ones when mom and dad were teenagers).
- Have a pie throwing contest.
- Mix up the dinner hour and have your kids order from a secret menu. Who knows what will land on their plate!
- Dress up in each other's clothes. This can get really interesting really fast!
- Let the kids do the parents' hair and/or makeup!
- Choose a code word and come up with a move. Code words can be ordinary words like "thank you," "snack," "no," or "what," and EVERY time someone says the code word, everyone has to do the move. Maybe it's a little dance, a spin, a wiggle, a clap, or a jump! (from Screen-Free Week)
- Get on your costume and host a contest and award show. Each family member can pick someone to present an award to – like "makes the best voices," "has the funniest silly face," and "has the most ridiculous sounding laugh." (from Screen-Free Week)

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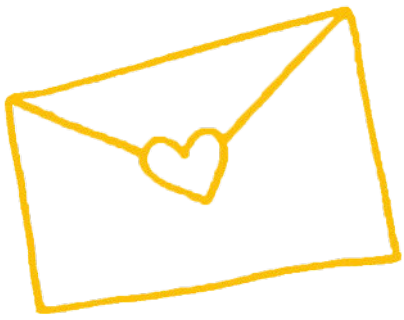
DAY 4: SERVE OTHERS

Study after study confirms that "volunteer experiences have the potential to strengthen family ties, enrich and educate family members, and to create a family tradition of working together toward a greater good." Volunteering has also been proven to boost mental health, which is something all family members can use!

> *The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.*
> *- Mahatma Gandhi*

Ideas:

- Pick a "kitchen table project" from Doing Good Together.
- Search for volunteer opportunities in your area on JustServe.org or Volunteermatch.org.
- Call your local animal shelter and see if they have any needs.
- Contact the local homeless shelter and see if you can prepare hygiene kits or help prepare a meal.
- Help an elderly neighbor with yard work.
- Write thank you notes to community leaders and first responders.
- Grab some trash bags and gloves, and go collect neighborhood trash.
- Go grocery shopping as a family for a family in need and leave the food on their doorstep.
- Write letters to grandparents and brighten their day!
- Assemble and share seed bombs.
- Bake cookies and deliver them to a friend who needs a lift.
- Sew a simple blanket for someone who needs comfort.
- Decorate a veteran's door with happy thoughts of gratitude.
- Write kindness notes in sidewalk chalk on the sidewalk.
- Unplug to Help from Screen-Free Week.



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DAY 5: CREATE SOMETHING

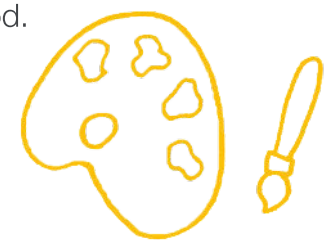
"What revs up the crucial effort-driven rewards circuit—the fuel, if you will—is generated by doing certain types of physical activities, especially ones that involve your hands. It's important that these actions produce a result you can see, feel, and touch, such as knitting a sweater or tending a garden. Such actions and their associated thoughts, plans and ultimate results change the physiology and chemical makeup of the effort-driven rewards circuit, activating it in an energized way. I call the emotional sense of well-being that results, effort-driven rewards."

"Effort-driven rewards and other real-world interactive experiences generate much more intense and pervasive reactions in your brain than the neurochemical alterations produced by a single pill. The result? You begin to feel more control over your environment and more connected to the world around you. This reduces stress and anxiety and, most important, builds resilience against the onset of depression." - Kelly Lambert

> *The desire to create is one of the deepest yearnings of the human soul.*
> *- Dieter F. Uchtdorf*

Ideas:

- Write a story, in a journal, or a comic.
- Garden.
- Play a musical instrument or write a song.
- Friendship bracelets.
- Paint or draw.
- Cook or bake something new.
- Sew.
- Electronic circuits.
- Knit.
- Do woodwork.
- Pound nails into wood.
- Clean!
- Organize a drawer, cupboard, or closet.
- Get out the play-dough or sculpt with clay.
- Try calligraphy or hand-lettering.
- Embroidery.
- Origami.
- Collect rocks.
- Learn magic tricks.
- Photography (with a real camera!).
- Make a model or rocket.
- Make a new lego creation.
- Write and create a puppet show.
- Do science experiments.



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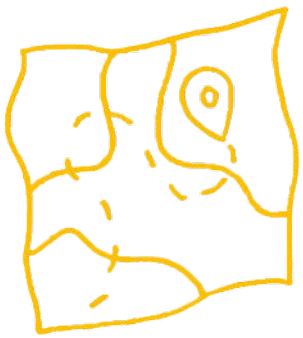
DAY 6: GO EXPLORE

In a new study published in Nature Neuroscience, researchers found that experiencing new things on a daily basis led to more positive emotions every day. "New and varied experiences are broadly beneficial for the brain and for humans in general." Source

> *Home is behind, the world ahead...*
> *- J.R.R. Tolkien*

Ideas:

- Short on time or money? Give your kids the gift of learning to work with limited resources. Where could you go that would be free like a local playground or park?
- Go to a nearby state or national park (free if you are in the US with a 4th grader!).
- If you have older kids or teens, take friends along or meet up with other families.
- Pack a picnic and take it somewhere you've never been.
- Check for local historical sites or visit a local landmark.
- Pack all the fixings for s'mores and have a campfire.
- Try out a new restaurant in your town.
- Attend a sporting event or concert.
- Take the city bus or subway somewhere new.
- Go to the highest vantage point in your town or city.
- Get up for an early morning sunrise and go out for breakfast or donuts.
- After you visit a new spot, have your kids write their own guidebook to your town.
- Visit the most picturesque spot near you and take a family photo.
- Try out a new hike or walking path.
- Find a new local lake, pond, or river you've never been to.



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DAY 7: REST AND RECHARGE

"Many major religions call for a day of rest and science proves there is power in stepping away for a day. Rest helps reduce stress, boost the immune system, improve sleep, restore mental energy, fuel creativity, increase productivity, improve short term memory, and help us to reconnect with our values and our loved ones." Source

> *Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us.*
>
> *- Maya Angelou*

Ideas:

- Walk
- Take a bath or hot shower
- Read—Take a trip to the library earlier in the week and save the books for your rest day. For adults, we love book lists from Modern Mrs. Darcy and Everyday Reading. For kids, we love Read Aloud Revival.
- Make a "thinking path" = a walking path you take when you need some creativity or let your mind wander. Kids can do this, too!
- Meditation (feel free to use your phone for a guided meditation if that works best, just don't spend more than a few minutes on your phone getting it ready)
- Nap
- Listen to relaxing music
- Do a puzzle
- Yoga
- Enjoy a quiet hobby like knitting or whittling
- Color
- Create a bliss station so you have a place to retreat to and do creative work.
- Call your parents or siblings (on the phone!) —no texting.

Ideas for kids who are done with naps and who are not yet teens who like to sleep in:

- Quiet play with Tinker Toys, legos, magna tiles, blocks
- Institute quiet time for an hour or two (something I've done for years!)
- Crafts
- Games
- Wander outside. Observe plants, insects, and nature.
- Sing or play an instrument
- When You Want to Do Nothing - Better Screen Time's list of 100+ Screen-Free Activities for downtime at home
- 101 Screen-Free Activities from our friends at Screen-Free Week

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CONGRATULATIONS! YOU DID IT!

Take some time to pause and reflect with your partner and kids about your experience over the last seven days. What were the results? What will you do differently after this challenge?

Now, celebrate! As James Clear says, “What gets rewarded, gets repeated.” Over time, kids (and adults!) start to develop muscle memory to reach out for the things they love over reaching out for devices.

Don’t forget—this process is repeatable. If you feel motivated, you can do it all over again X3 for a 30-day sans screens challenge or simply return to these ideas any time you feel your family needs a connection reset.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Our discussion guide, Creating a Tech-Healthy Family, will help you turn this challenge into a sustainable long-term approach to balanced tech use. Create a family tech plan and engage in 10 must-have conversations to help you worry less about tech and connect more with your kids.
- Our foundational course, Creating a Tech-Healthy Family, will give you the support and answers you need to prepare your kids for life in the digital world. Tame your personal tech habits and lead your family to better screen time.
- Our flagship course, Untangling Teens & Tech, is a step-by-step program to help you connect with your teen while navigating turbulent tech waters. Learn to build a relationship with your teen and tame the tech.

It's time to worry less and connect more with your kids!

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