

Digital device role model

The California Partners Project is engaged in a statewide listening tour with mothers, parents, and caregivers to understand how they are navigating the integration of technology and devices into most aspects of their children's lives.

A mother of four children in Sacramento shared what she learned during the pandemic. "I have to model for my kids what I expect from them. I cannot set these boundaries and limitations on their tech time if I'm going to be going down the Google rabbit hole all day and mindlessly looking at social media." Her strategy is to literally turn off her phone to spend time with her kids without distractions; this way they don't see her scrolling.

Today's parents did not grow up with screens and don't have a blueprint to guide them. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), two thirds of parents of children aged 18 and younger believe it is harder to parent today than it was 20 years ago. Many of those surveyed believe that aspects of digital technology, including social media, are why. A survey by the [Digital Wellness Lab](#) showed that parents report more frequent arguments with their children over media use since the pandemic began.

Tips to be a digital device role model:

TIP 1: Institute windows of time when the entire family is offline.

This could be in the hour before bedtime, in the first 30 minutes upon waking in the morning, or for an entire day every weekend (see Tiffany Shlain, [24/6](#)). Make sure your children see that you are abiding by the family rules too and have open conversations with them about what is difficult or liberating about these offline segments of time.

TIP 2: Remove social media apps from your phone and turn off notifications.

If you find yourself constantly checking social media, consider removing the apps from your phone. Also turn off unnecessary notifications which cause you to check your phone more often.

TIP 3: Keep devices out of the bedroom and keep dinners device-free.

Digital devices in the bedroom can lead to insomnia, disrupt restorative sleep, and shorten sleep duration. If you use the phone as an alarm, consider an inexpensive alarm clock instead; keep a family charging station outside of bedrooms. Prohibiting devices at the dinner table will enhance the opportunities for conversation and connection. (See [Be a Role Model](#) and [Device-Free Dinner](#) at Common Sense Media)

TIP 4: Be mindful about what you post to social media.

If you are concerned about the content your children and their friends post online, consider how your own posts influence what they believe is appropriate. ([Parents & screen time: role-modelling](#))