

Top tips from caregivers

The California Partners Project 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. In conversation, caregivers shared both the struggles and strategies of parenting over the past year. Here are practical strategies shared during the listening tour by caregivers across California.

Tips to support healthier tech habits

TIP 1: Schedule tech-free time in your calendar.

Planning and setting aside tech-free time will promote more mindful usage of digital devices and set a positive example for youth. A mom in Oakland admitted, "When we are juggling we lose sight of the fact that we are on our screens and our phones."

TIP 2: Remove devices from the bedroom at night.

This will help promote restorative sleep. A mom of two boys in the Conejo Valley said, "We lock down our son's phone at 10 pm so no texts come throughout the night."

TIP 3: Help kids connect with nature.

Many parents shared the power of taking a walk, hiking, camping, and surfing to encourage their kids to move their bodies, make time for conversation, and put down the devices. A mom of three in Oakland shared, "The public parks have been lifesaving for our mental health." Another mom was relieved when her family went camping, "I felt like I had my kids back."

TIP 4: Reward an hour of physical activity with an hour of tech time.

One mom in Santa Rosa allows her teenage son to have one hour of gaming for every hour of physical activity. "We are trying to find a balance, so he feels he has a say and he feels we are in a compromise." The agreement motivates her son to exercise.

TIP 5: Put devices away during mealtimes.

A mom in Los Angeles and mom in San Francisco both commit to device-free dinners. Use this time for conversation and connection.

TIP 6: Teach daily affirmations.

A single mom of three shared that she teaches her kids self-affirmations. "I teach them to love themselves...it has helped them be more confident."

TIP 7: Assign chores.

Several moms in northern CA shared that they assign chores as a productive way to promote breaks from tech. One mom shared, "I've given my kids chores which gets them to get up and move a bit as well just to get them off the screens."

TIP 8: Enroll your child in a programming course.

A mom of a teenage son who likes to game shared that she accepted that "Tech is here so I started looking at it differently. Why doesn't he actually learn about the game?" She enrolled her son in a local community college programming class, and he loved it.

TIP 9: Remind youth they have value beyond their social media presence.

A mom raising two boys in an intergenerational family in Sacramento expressed concern that "a lot of kids measure their importance based on the amount of followers or likes they get" on social media. She reminds her kids that "your social media presence does not define you and there is more to you than just you behind the screen."

TIP 10: Turn off your phone.

One mom in Northern CA shared that she turns off her phone to play boardgames with her children. "It is really nice to not really worry about our phones." Find a way to get back to basics without the distractions of a device.