

Navigating the Digital Jungle

Where tech meets family life

EP 02: Understanding the Digital Landscape - FOMO and Phones

Sue: Welcome to Navigating the Digital Jungle with me, Sue Atkins, parenting author and broadcaster. And I'm delighted to be here today with my friends, Tara Jones, an experienced deputy head and edtech consultant working with families and schools around tools and interventions for healthier, more purposeful phone use.

And Angeline Corvaglia, creator of the Data Girls and Friends, empowering young minds with online safety and AI literacy videos. So, we're here to guide you through the digital jungle. And this week's topic of the week is FOMO, which is Fear of Missing Out, and Screen Time. So we're diving into the jargon and the language of tech as I say FOMO, the role big tech and algorithms play in your child's online experience, and talking about screen addiction and what exactly we mean by screen time.

So, Tara, how would you describe FOMO? I know you've got teenage boys. Is that a problem in your house? How do you think parents can handle it?

Tara: Oh yeah, FOMO is a problem. And I think it's one of the trickiest first steps to navigate, because at that point, the requests for a phone, are usually going to be met with, but everyone else has one, everyone's got them, I'm missing out.

And we kind of do mean everyone, because that Ofcom report we talked about last week, we've got 97 percent of 12-year-olds who have got phones. So this is going to make it difficult to navigate as parents, because of course we want our kids to feel comfortable, accepted, included, the same as their friends.

So it's no wonder that this then becomes a key driver, this FOMO, for the first phone. And what we've seen in the smartphone-free childhood movement, echoed by some of the great work by Jonathan Haidt you've been talking about Sue, is this societal change. And I think it is a movement, and potentially a movement that's coming, but we're not there yet.

You know, that 97 percent reflects that, doesn't it? 97 percent of 12-year-olds with phones. So in my house, you ask about my boys, we do allow a phone for the older boys, but with very clear boundaries from the start. And so that would be my tip for parents to navigate FOMO, conversations, and potentially to think about ownership.

That's a really good tip. So, I will always say with that first phone that the phone still belongs to me, that you've got permission to use it, to communicate with friends, friends and family. I'd potentially even suggest a family contract at this point. There are some great family contracts out there.

Sue: Yes, you sent me one, didn't you, actually?

Tara: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Examples. We can share them. But certainly, if you have a look for them, you can think about what that looks like. I'd personalize it every time for your own family and think about what it looks like in your household. But I always kept that sort of, you know, it's a privilege and you've got permission to use it to communicate with your friends.

But I maintain that ownership and champion supervision and support. And it might not be the perfect answer, but that's a good place to start. My son's certainly convinced that I'm the only strict parent. So he's like, Oh, you know, again, this sort of FOMO, you're encouraging screen time, these controls and limited use.

I know that's not the case. I absolutely know it's not the case. And I usually try and round off any conversations by saying, I'm your parent, this is how I show love. That's how I'm taking care of you. And yeah, I'm going to get the eye rolls because there is that thing of missing out. That's absolutely it.

It's my belief that one day he'll be grateful. And we've talked about this before, haven't we Sue? You can't always be your kid's best friend. Some conversations are tough and navigating FOMO is a tough conversation. But you get that, don't you Sue?

Sue: Yeah, I really do. And what I can hear from you, and I've asked you this before, is that you're very confident about your reasons why not.

Lots of parents that I work with are kind of like on the fence and they want to be their kids sort of, they want to get on with them and be their friend and they don't feel confident in saying it. That's what I'm hoping. That the podcast gives people that kind of lift they need to realize that FOMO is just one of those things.

And because I love you, I want to keep you safe. This is how we do it in our family. You know, so it's those conversations you always mentioned that I think you just have to be big and brave enough sometimes to just take that stuff, that hit from them, because otherwise they just want to be sweet all day and, you know, watch the telly.

So that's an important thing. Angeline, you've got an eight-year-old, haven't you? Tell us about how you manage that.

Angeline: Well, I was kind of lucky. I mean, because I live in a place where young kids don't really have phones.

Sue: Oh my God, where is that? We all want to go and it's

Angeline: in southern Italy. So they still spend a lot of time playing outside and playing with each other.



You know, all this stuff that we talked about not existing anymore. She did ask for it, obviously, at some point, I said no. And of course, there was some back and forth and back and forth. And then I said, I, I still say because I'm the mom, but I just showed her the data girl video, like the first videos and she was like, okay, I understand now there's more to this than just fun.

And that was that. And, and she, and she hasn't come back to it yet. I expect next year. I heard from another parent that next year is a tradition that a lot of kids will get phones her age. So it might come back again, but at the moment it's okay. And I know that her best friend's mom is also like getting the phone late.

So I think I'll be lucky in this point of view. I hope so. Knock on wood. But yeah, it's, it's difficult.

Sue: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So that helps, doesn't it? If a friend or a group, and that's why the smartphone-free childhood stuff is all about grassroots collectively in a group, in a school. And I did see in St. Albans, where my husband comes from, actually, he comes from Redbourn, but there's a whole cluster of schools there that are now trying to make sure that they've sent these letters begging parents not to give their kids the smartphones, delay it a bit. And I think collectively that all helps, isn't it?

It gets out in the media and people feel a bit more confident saying no. So it's really important. I want to ask you, Angeline, I've heard young people today are known as the algorithm generation. And I wrote an article actually about it. Uh, when people can see it in the show notes, I write on Substack and go and read it.

It's called Navigating the Algorithm Generation, a guide for parents. But I also want you to tell us and people listening to this today, what does that mean, the algorithm generation?

Angeline: Yeah, I think it's a really fitting description. And by chance, I was writing about that on the same day. So we were great minds think alike.

Yeah, synergy. It's fitting because so much of the content that this young generation gets all of us that we get is because of comes from algorithms. And most of us don't even realize how much of it it is. And obviously, we all I'm talking about people my age, and even 10, 20 years younger grew up in a completely different way.

But the young generation don't know it any other way. And obviously not to get too technical, but an algorithm is basically just a set of rules According to which AI makes decisions, and it's actually programmed by the developer of the AI system based on what the system wants to do and to achieve. And when we think of algorithms, usually we think of it because of the wrong reasons for social media.



Because what social media wants is to keep them online as much as possible. There's Netflix, and what you see on your, what's recommended to you, what purchases are recommended, what search results you get, even fast food chains in the U. S. have started using AI in the ordering system, and that seems innocent, but, if algorithms can figure out because they share data amongst them, then it'll be easier to get people to order more food too.

Yeah. So it's kind of everywhere.

Sue: It is. And so really we want to get parents thinking about that. Cause I, I kind of wondered when I'm sort of scrolling around and I look at that jumper and think, Oh, that's a nice jumper or a nice cardigan. And then you go, Oh look, it's popped up again and I didn't buy it, but there's a different colour this time.

Of course, that's how I started to notice there was something going on. And it's the same thing on Twitter or X or whatever you call it. If you like a load of stuff and then it goes off and you know, if it's divisive, you'll get more of it. And even fake news. I remember Obama talking about that a long time ago, the idea of how it can affect general elections.

And of course, here in the UK, that's a big topic at the moment, which leads me sort of onto addiction and what we mean by addiction. And so Tara, how do parents recognize the signs and the differences between sort of normal? Whatever that is in screen time, you've talked about screen time before, and when does it tip more into something more serious?

Tara: Poor, it's really nuanced, there's a big debate around the language of addiction and phone use, and you're, you're right to point out that last week we discussed that complication of screen time as a metric because it depends what kids are up to. So you've got to start with that. What are they doing? For how long?

How much is passive screen time or unhealthy phone use? You can explore there. Because screen quality matters more than screen time. And for parents and educators, it's going to be really easy to get quite anxious about our young people's screen time. And we're worrying too much about physical health, well-being, academic performance.

And I would challenge that it's not necessarily the amount of screen time that we need to be as worried about, rather what young people are doing. And it's an important distinction. Screens can be a blessing and a, and a curse. I, I do want to make sure we do tip into the healthier use of screens as well and how we can build some healthy habits.

If you're asking for advice on what parents can do, I think there's one area we could tackle or start looking at. And that's perhaps instead of using addiction, thinking about the word compulsion. And I'd ask people to maybe have a little look at a feature. It's quite hidden in screen time. I know that I can't show you, but you can look at pick-ups.



Anyone on the call ever checked their pick-ups on their phone? No, so pick-ups is interesting. I'm having this conversation with adults a lot at the moment, sort of at dinner parties. I promise I'm fun at dinner parties, but no,

Sue: I'm not gonna invite you round. .

Tara: Yeah, I'm asking people to have a little look.

Yeah, it's kind of a hidden feature in, on an iPhone. It's below all app and website activity. So you go into your screen time and then you can take a look and you can think about how often I can see you're doing it, Lucy. You can see how often you pick up your phone. And not only that, you can see what's the first thing they look at when they pick up their phone.

So I did this just for the call. I pick up my phone too much, but I often have to use it for work to authenticate as well. But usually, the first thing I go on to is WhatsApp. So arguably that's not that bad. I'm communicating, checking in with friends and family. But if you were to have a look at your kid's screen time.

And then go down into the pickups. Why are they picking up their phone? How often is it? And I would think about a scale. If you were getting into excess of 200 times a day, which is common, very common if you look into the research, then we're starting to think about compulsion. So you hear about like phantom, you know, you talk to people and they think that their phone's gone off and they're regularly checking their phone.

That's the compulsive behaviour, I dare say, might be more interesting to look at. So that could be a conversation starter, couldn't it? Let's all look at our pickups. How often are we picking up our phones? Are we picking them up unnecessarily? What's the first thing we open? Let's explore the screen time.

Like I say, it's nuanced. Addiction. You've got to explore that language, but what are we doing? What are we doing with our phones?

Sue: But Tara, then what do you do? So you'd go and do that, and I'm going to do it and be horrified by what I'm looking at, I dare say, or even my, my husband looking at dog videos, but anyway.

Really, what do we then do? What if you go on that and you go, Oh my God.

Tara: Again, I talk about debate. I actually love how much this is the topic of conversation at the moment. Phone use, screen time, phone banning. Thank goodness we're talking about it. People are exploring having healthier relationships with their phones.

Great, because the algorithms are there, the phones are there, they're always going to be there, you know, let's think about as adults, they're not going anywhere. It's actually on our human behaviour. That's why education is so key to an extent. We've got to have an awareness of what we're doing with technology.



So that's where I would say, go on, be shocked by your pickups. You can try to reduce it. You can think, so for example, there might be a downtime now where I don't talk for a few minutes and if that was in work in a Zoom, there's every chance I'd pick up and flick on my phone. Have I missed anything? Do I need to?

Is that a compulsion? How much are we interrupted by our phones? With notifications, which I think is a bit of a misconception and how often is our human behaviour reaching out to pick up that phone as a compulsion?

Sue: I mean, that's just a pause to ponder, isn't it? For everyone on the call, listening, talking about it with kids, because that's how we get conversations going.

It's about that with the kids, not, Oh, I want to blame you and I want to be angry at you about that. Let's have a look for your phone. Actually, should we look at this together? And what should we do about it? And were you aware of it? And I'm looking at it and I'm like, Oh my goodness. So talk about it with your kids of different ages, I think.

Tara: And don't go straight to them. Talk about your own.

Sue: No, that's right. I mean, absolutely. Start with ourselves. I'm a great believer in we've, we must model it and we've got to look at it ourselves and then go, well, actually, yeah, I'm constantly doing that or checking that or feeling I'm, you know, notified out.

I need to check it.

Tara: I can joke about WhatsApp because I said that's what I use the most. I'm from a big family and my sister in law text me about something yesterday and she opened it with a, I'm sorry if I'm giving you an unnecessary phone pickup.

Sue: They're all very technical, your family, obviously.

Tara: Well, it's just because we'd had conversations. Yeah. It's in there and we're all talking about it. And she said, I'm really aware of it now and trying to just cut back and how often.

Sue: So interesting. So I've never heard of that before. So thank you.

Tara: I think we've got a few articles we can share.

Sue: Well, that'd be brilliant.

And that's a real takeaway from today, if nothing else. There's an article I saw in the New York Times, actually, it says, Is your child a digital addict?, here's what you can do. And it said it can be hard for children to move on from screen time, but it doesn't always have to be a battle. So we'll put that into the show notes too.

Just like to give resources for people if they're interested to explore a bit further really. Angeline, I know that you've got a great video about this. Why I can't put my phone down. Tell us more about it.



Angeline: Well, I created that video, it was around December, Christmas was, was coming and everyone was going to be off, so I was working to, to give some messages out, to help parents and have conversations, because obviously from a very young age, it's not just a phone, it's also tablets and anything they can get in their hands, they can't put it down, obviously for the reasons that I mentioned before, because the algorithms are, are trying to get them to stay there.

Actually, the people behind the algorithms, just to be clear, and I wanted to make it in language that young children, that particular video is for young children, and when I say young children, I mean I would say between 6 and 10, who aren't, okay, children who are not online very much, you know, a lot of 10 year olds are online a lot, but okay, so children that are young like that are not online very much, to get an idea of what to expect.

Um, and also to give parents language to help their children understand when they start fighting. And that was a fantastic feedback that I got was that some parents hadn't known how to speak to their children about it, what was happening, and they would watch the video and then they had some language that they could use.

I have another one called Algorithm Insights Adventure, where we explain algorithms a little bit as well. It's still for the for the young children. I And because awareness really does make a big difference. Children prefer playing. I would say majority of children prefer playing. And even a lot of teenagers will say, I don't want to be online very much, but I'm bored and I don't know what else to do.

And they don't quite realize how to get away. They feel like they're out of, they don't have the control. So awareness and having language really makes a difference.

Sue: So your videos, are they to watch together with mom and dad and kids?

Angeline: Ideally. That's the way they're, they're thought out. So the idea is that this just between one and three minutes.

To watch it together and just talk and discuss because parents are afraid that they might not know as you say that they're afraid that that they don't have the answers because we often don't have the answers and it's okay not to have the answers because we have the answers offline. And often they're the same answers for, for online.

So yeah, that's, that's just the point really to get conversations going and trust and building a bridge between online and offline worlds, because that's something that's really missing.

Sue: You've also got Melissa and the Magical Book of Balance. Is that trying to talk and teach balance intake or what?



Sue: You've also got Melissa and the Magical Book of Balance. Is that trying to talk and teach balance intake or what?

Angeline: Yeah. So I have this story. So the videos are, are like educational in a sense, informative. And they have these stories. Yeah.

Sue: But they're fun, aren't they? And they're great. I love them. And they're not too long. So, you know, you can go in, watch, have the conversation.

Angeline: Yeah, exactly. That's why I'm thinking of like, you have a five to 10 minute car ride that you, you couldn't take that time and spend it with your children talking about it because we all don't very much time for this kind of thing.

Yeah, and Melissa is a part of the story collection where it just tells a story instead of being informative in a different way. And it's just where this Melissa rejects her friend is, Oh, let's not play outside. Let's, Let's play the phone and then this magical book opens and explains to Melissa the the concept of balance and you know all of this and it was based on the real experiences with so many children from ages I didn't expect before I became a mother they stopped being able to play like half an hour or 45 minutes all of a sudden they're silenced like what are they doing they're like I can't play with you anymore we need to have a phone now Gosh, yeah, it was really shocking.

I'm laughing, but it was really wow. Yeah, that's from a young age.

Sue: So that's why I like them because families can go and sit and watch them together and that just starts the conversations and kids themselves think about this stuff, don't they then? It's all about connection and conversation as we've said last week and in this episode as well.

Now this leads me on very nicely to introducing our guest today, which is the very lovely Lucy Smith, a mum from Bristol and Lucy's daughter got a mobile phone from her parents around about eight years old and she got into filming and uploading videos onto her YouTube channel. She racked up thousands of followers and views by showing the internet her toy collection and showing subscribers tours of her little nursery.

All age appropriate stuff because it was dolls and nurseries and she would do things like a nursery tour. And it would all be about the dolls that she had. It was all about the things other kids were clicking on. But Lucy's daughter is now 17 years old, coming up to 18, not long to go. She stopped making YouTube videos at 11 years old. Which was round about the time she was diagnosed as autistic. Lucy, tell us your story.

Lucy: Well, um, so, okay. So, my daughter, at 11, she was diagnosed as autistic, as you said. At 9, and I will talk about some things now that can be quite, distressing, quite upsetting. So at nine was the first time that she came to me and said that I don't want to live anymore and I've just tried to take my own life.



And so there was something going on with her around her emotions and her feelings. And she became very sad, very depressed, very anxious, stopped doing all the things that she, she had previously, and we thought that she enjoyed, she was very dramatic. She actually auditioned for the part of Matilda at the West End.

She was that kind of, of little girl, you know, and she loved all the drama stuff. She loved doing the little performances and we thought that. Being online and having a YouTube channel that was monitored and managed by my husband and myself, we thought that that was bringing in skills, you know, things like editing and communication and developing, you know, her ability to, to talk to, to a world around different things.

And it was things that she, she seemed to be really interested in. So back in that day, those days. Okay. So we're talking like almost nine years ago now. Littlest Pet Shop. Oh my goodness, did we have a lot of Littlest Pet Shop toys and she had all these little videos of all these little different toys, et cetera, et cetera.

And her world became smaller and smaller and our world became more and more difficult and it wasn't about being online, it was because she was autistic and we didn't know. And then when she was diagnosed as autistic, I started to do a lot more research into what her world was all about and actually being an autistic girl and flying under the radar.

That's something that often gets said about, about young girls in particular, and this was 2017, she was diagnosed and there wasn't as much information out there as there is now. And so I went off and learned a whole lot about what it's like to be an autistic girl and who knows, there may be something running in the family, just saying.

And she still had a phone. And she was still using that phone. She was pretty much connected to that phone. Um, she went into secondary school, mainstream secondary school, and pretty much I'll use the phrase crashed and burned by the time she was, well, by the end of year seven, she wasn't going to school and year eight, she stopped going to school, um, she then became educated at home through an educational health and care plan.

And we started on the journey of trying to understand how to support her because at that point she was suicidal. Most of the time she was either trying, looking up, I'm finding notes. There were things that, that were happening all of that time. So this is a very, it's a very difficult time. She got to the age of 14 and little did I know, but she was investigating how she could give up her mobile phone and what to do about this.

Because. She started to say, I think it's fueling my depression. I think it's fueling me. I think it's part of, it's just, I'm just there. I'm, I'm scrolling and I'm looking at meaningless videos, short form content. I don't want to be on it anymore. By this time, she'd already stopped her YouTube channel.



She'd already stopped all of those kinds of things. And so. She gave up her phone at 15, so she gave up her smartphone and she was connected. She, she was, she was out there at 15. She said, take it away. I don't want it. I didn't ask her to, dad didn't ask her to, she wanted to give it up. And what she'd done is that she'd started to investigate something called digital minimalism.

I don't know if you've heard that phrase, digital minimalism. Yeah, and there's a book by an academic called, I think I'm going to get it the right way around, Cal Newport, okay, so he's over in the States, yes, and she'd read it, and she said, Mum, I want you to read this book, I mean, this is like, she was 14 at the time when she's reading these academic books, and we started to talk about it, and she said, I want to give up my phone, so she did.

Okay, she talks about it and we've done a podcast episode with her talking about her experiences and, and how she did it and she didn't go cold turkey. She kind of just weaned herself down a little bit. She worked out what a screen time she was using, but she effectively, she'd got to this point where she'd said, why am I living other people's lives through this screen when I should be living my own life?

And I think that's really impactful. And so she's nearly 18 now and she gave up her phone. She did get a phone last year. So she got another smartphone. She got herself a brick, right? Her burner phone. Okay. So she has a burner phone, but she said, I'm going to get a smartphone again, mum, because I think I need it for things like getting on a bus, using a QR code, accessing payments in a shop without a bank card.

And so she did. And then within about four months, she talked, she said to her brother, do you want to buy my phone? Cause I don't want it anymore. I'm going to stick with my Nokia brick. And so she just has a dumb phone appearing on her phone now. But here's the interesting thing. Her brother had her phone.

Guess what her brother did two weeks ago. Take my phone away, mum. I don't want it anymore. I'm quitting my phone. Can we go and get me a burner phone? So we have. He now has that. He has no clue how to use it. So he very rarely takes it anywhere. He's 16, right? He's 16. All his mates think he's a bit weird.

And he's not. He's actually really sensible. to all his friends. And his friends are really good friends. So they, they say it in jest, but he now doesn't have a smartphone either. And his reasoning was I'm spending time online scrolling through rubbish. And I want that time back in my life. I don't want to wake up in the morning.

And as you were saying, Tara, I don't want to go to that pickup and scroll straight away to the YouTube short form. Like he was, he was watching YouTube short videos and he said, I just spent two hours mindlessly scrolling, it means nothing. I want to go and do something else with my life. That's what they've done.

I have no, no idea how I've created these kids who have done this.



Lucy: No, he could, we, we bought it. We went to the, to the bookshop and we bought, because my daughter read it from the library. So she got it from the library. I've got it on an audio book and I've been doing research around Cal Newport as well, which is a really, it's really good, right?

Tara: Really interesting. I've just pulled up, I had it in some of my notes, a quote of his, and he focuses on the loss of control, which is exactly what your son's just mentioned there, which is why I wondered. Yeah. So if it's okay Sue, one of the things that Cal said was, That no one, of course, signed up for this loss of control.

No. They downloaded the apps and they set up the accounts for good reason. Only to discover with grim irony that these services were beginning to undermine the values that made them appealing in the first place. It's exactly what you're saying with your son. Yep. They joined Facebook to stay in touch with friends and then ended up unable to maintain an uninterrupted conversation.

Lucy: Yep. Yep. So my son, all his friends are on Snapchat, his girlfriend's on Snapchat. And I'm like, well, how are you going to keep in touch with them? And he's like, I'll go on my computer. You can do it on your computer. So we're not, no tech in our house. We've got, we've got tablets, we've got laptops. They're engaged and they're connected, but they're doing it on different terms.

Sue: Well, they're doing it on their own terms, actually, by the sound of it.

Yeah.

I mean, you must have done something in terms of, were you talking around this stuff with them?

Lucy: We do talk about it a lot, to be fair, I mean. Yeah. I talk about it a lot, and in, in April.

Tara: And Lucy, we can never be at a dinner party together.

Lucy: No, no, you're, you're talking, Tara, and I'm like, oh, in April at our conference, so we had a conference in April. I run an organization called, I'm gonna put a plug out here, sorry.

Sue: No, I was just about to ask you about it. So go ahead, tell us.

Lucy: My business is inclusive change and I talk about building the future of work with neurodiversity in mind.

So everything I do comes back down to neurodiversity and I'll touch on that in a moment around why this has been quite significant around my own family and my kids and their media usage because they're both autistic. So they're both neurodivergent. So they have different ways of thinking. However, my business, I talk about building the future of work with neurodiversity in mind, and for me, building the future of work, we need to invest in young people and give them the skills to turn them into people who can come into the, to the workforce and are ready to go and employers are going to have to get their heads around that kids have had a bit of a different upbringing now, and they come into the



workforce with less of an attention span, with being connected, all the things that we're talking about happening.

But for me, one of the important aspects of it is supporting young people with their mental health and getting balance in that area of digital wellbeing, because it's okay to be online, but we need to know that we have balance and that we can manage our mental health. And that when we wake up in the morning, we don't go.

But mindless scrolling is one thing, but when we're not feeling great, and if I go back to my daughter, she at the grip and the height of her depression and sadness, you know, she'd be looking at body images online. She'd be looking at, she was restricting her eating. She was exercising excessively whilst being agoraphobic, which meant that she was online going on the PlayStation, doing VR, Just Dance, Beat Saber, which are great games, by the way, they're really good.

But she was doing those things and it was fueling and it just made her feel worse and worse and worse. Yeah. And so she had to get off of that and escape it completely before we started to see that she became happier. It's like resetting. She had to reset her buttons.

Yeah. Yeah, she needed that reset.

Sue: And tell me now then, how is she now?

Lucy: Oh my God, she couldn't be happier. Like she is the most self assured, incredible young woman. She's, she's always going to be autistic. So she's an introvert. She's very, she has challenges around social communication with, with groups of people. She was selective mute. So at her height, I mean, we, we've had speech and language therapy.

We have an occupational therapy, equine therapy, you name it. We'd had the therapy. And, and all of those things kind of put together, being online is a part of that world. It's a part of that, that, that, that, that risks. But now she's really self assured. She's just doing her GCSEs. She's just done one today.

She's got a space at university for 2025 because she's already said, I'm going to defer. I'm not, I'm not going straight away. I want to grow up. I want to get my independent skills. All of those kinds of things. And she does not regret one second giving up her phone. Not at all.

Sue: So there's the story that I wanted you to share with everyone listening. I mean, it's so it's so wonderful And where can people find out the work you do now and also the castle conference and then tell us about the curly hair project.

Lucy: Inclusivechange. co. uk is our website. You can find that information there about what we do around neurodiversity in the workplace. My team support individuals in the workplace.



I go and do training with employers, schools, colleges, et cetera, et cetera. I got involved with an organization called Digital Safety, a community interest company, and we ran a conference in April all around digital wellbeing for young people. Um, Sue, you've been part of that and you've, you've had the, the fortune to, to meet some of us online.

We brought in academics from Cambridge University, Loughborough University. I told my story. We also work with an organization called If You Care, Share, which is a suicide prevention charity. And we talk about those really difficult things about cyberbullying and where it can lead you. And there are some really heartbreaking stories we talk about, but they're too difficult if I say that right now, that you can find the information about that on inclusivechange.co.uk, or you can find information at icaw-cic.Com. It's an acronym.

Sue: That's going in the show notes, my friend.

Lucy: Yeah, that'll go in there. Inclusivechange.co.Uk is the best place to go. But the one thing I want to say on our, our inclusive change website, um, my daughter has created a PDF, which at the moment it's free.

Okay. So it's a free guide to simplifying your digital life. And so all of the things that we've been talking about and Tara and Angeline and Sue, I've heard you talking about, we've got that in a bit of a guide. And so her guide is called Simplify Your Digital Life. It takes you through a number of stages, takes you through considering what you can gain from giving up your tech or simplifying your tech.

You don't have to give everything up and this is based on Cal Newport's works. So she's taken it and she's, she's created her own guide. Consider what you had to gain from it. Take stock, what tools do you use and how do you use them? And then think about the reflection, think about how do the way I use those tools align with my values?

How do my habits affect me? And what do I need to create a shift in my digital life? So those are the things she would say to start off. There's plenty more in the guide, but I'm gonna stop talking otherwise, I'll take over forever.

Sue: You will and it is so awesome that there she is having gone through all of that story that we've all gone on that journey listening to you and you've actually lived it. But to come out the other side and then to write a guide from firsthand experience, I mean, it is quite awesome, isn't it? So we'll put some links into that, into the show notes. You can send us that. I just said, mentioned briefly the curly hair project. I'll, I'll come on to just saying that is about helping people on the autistic spectrum and all the people around them.

Animated films, stories, comic strips, you name it, interesting and easy to understand. We'll put thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.Uk into the show notes too. Yes. And now we've found out that she's doing very well and I hope your story inspires people to go and explore some of these resources to weather the storm, to think differently, to communicate and have conversations around the dinner table and wherever else you want to talk to each other.



Yeah. And when you're all driving straight, you're not looking directly at. Yes. That's the one. I did that one with my son. But listen, Lucy, it has been a pleasure and thank you for sharing your story. Thank you. And now a quick word about World Digital Detox Day. Time for a word from our sponsor. Today's episode of Navigating the Digital Jungle is brought to you in collaboration with World Digital Detox Day.

An international movement dedicated to reclaiming our lives from the overwhelming grip of technology. So if you're feeling overwhelmed by screens and technology generally, take a break and join millions of people all around the world on World Digital Detox Day. It's the perfect opportunity to unplug, unwind and reconnect with the world around you for your mental health and your family's and children's wellbeing.

Join this really important movement with over 7.5 million people worldwide and visit worlddigitaldetoxday.com To learn more about becoming involved on the world's largest digital well being initiative, you can start your digital detox journey today to better mental health and well being for your whole family.

So this leads me on nicely now to family change. This is where we come together and think what small thing can we do that may well make a big difference over time. So Angeline, over to you. You're going to tell us all about that this week.

Angeline: So let's grab your digital machetes and let's tackle this together.

We're going to replace scrolling and screens with ing activities and playing, biking, cooking, exploring a new place, playing, dressing up, talking to each other, playing Jenga, Lego, board game. You get the idea. Send us an email. Let us know what your family got up to this last week and see how it goes. Info at navigatingthedigitaljungle.com. Don't forget to send your questions to Sue, Tara, or myself.

Sue: Wonderful. So there we go. We look forward to hearing how you get on with that. And now Tara, you're going to introduce our listener questions. We have this segment each week where people send in some fantastic questions. So let's dive in and provide some answers. Do you want to go with that?

Cerys: Listener questions.

Tara: Yeah, super. I really like this first question that I'll put to you. Anyone can answer. We're thinking about, or the question was, the actions of parents and how they influence children with regard to tech usage. So obviously my work in education, this is huge. What about parent influence? Do you want to start us off, Sue? What do you think?



Sue: Well, modelling is my big one. Modelling the behaviour. You know, kids often mimic or watch, they're looking, listening, observing, noticing what we do, what we say, whether we like it or not. So I think if you're frequently on your phone, even if you're feeding the baby, you know, late at night or even in early in the morning and your toddler or your other children are around, they're going to be noticing your habits, so I want you to think about your tech habits this week, such as, you know, maybe setting some limits around it or just thinking about how you could maybe do things slightly differently.

What do you think, Angeline? What else would you suggest?

Angeline: Well, I'm really big on communication. I think I mentioned it before. And education. I think we really need to understand that this is, is the digital generation. We're not the digital generation. So it has to be a different level of communication.

We won't be able to understand it. And if we set comments that it's going to be this way, the rules need to be this way, go do this without the two way street, then it's just not really going to go places. This morning, I was finding all sorts of amazing research. It was asking kids, different ages, what privacy means to them.

And obviously, we're talking a little about privacy, and obviously to a 5 year old, something completely different to a 10 year old and a 15 year old. And if we don't get the communication going both ways, And also the online safety. There was another thing. Children are very confident that they know how to keep themselves safe online, but they want help to be happy online.

Sue: So Tara, you and I have also chatted at different times around offline activities, and I'm a big on play, and I've got a whole section of stuff that I pump out on social media, on my Twitter account around, you know, all right, this is the digital, but play is the antidote to some of this. Yeah. And we've got to get that balance between online and offline activities and hobbies and things like that.

What do you think about play?

Tara: Play is huge. It's how we develop, isn't it? It's how the brains develop. It's, was fundamental to our upbringing. And I think it's one of the really important elements that's being discussed as missing. And again, we talked about a movement at the start of this podcast, smartphone free childhood or Jonathan Hyatt's work on the anxious generation.

All positive. So it's great to hear. And it's great to see this notion. But while I feel a slight discomfort on the encouraging play is that it's not magically going to happen. Be able to take phones away from our children and say, go on, throw them outside because their other friends aren't playing out and they're not playing out in the street.

It does need to be a societal shift, a change in expectations. We have got a generation who have had an incredibly different upbringing. Angeline, you know, you've captured this brilliantly earlier and Lucy talking about the workplace and preparing for the workplace. For quite a while, our kids have grown up in a different way.



We now have the research, we're better informed. We can understand it. So we need to think about if we take away the phones, what do we replace them with? How do we encourage the play? What are the activities? We don't have youth groups in the same way. Kids off, you go on a Friday, you've got a couple of hours to all hang out.

Young people are hanging out online because that's where the other young people are. So that play based Childhood that we're all advocates for. We're going to have to come together and provide the play based childhood and really encourage a shared approach to this. So the movement will only work for a smartphone free childhood.

If we bring back some of the grey elements of childhood we had. I want my kids to be out with dirty knees, ripped jeans, climbing trees, and coming home when they're hungry. It's not always set up for that to happen. Lucy, I could see you nodding away there as I was talking, you know. Yeah. Experience value, something to add.

Lucy: Yeah, it's something that my daughter actually put in the guide because the big thing is replacing the time that you spend online with something else.

But that's not just for the kids. That's for us as adults as well, because you mentioned earlier, Tara, about the pickup and the time that was spending online. Well, what do we replace that time with? If you put that phone somewhere else and we don't automatically then go to pick it up, what are we doing instead?

How are we occupying our, our time and our minds? So replacement is just a massive thing. I'll also say the changes in society have really, really driven us into this space. Kids don't play with kids in their street anymore. My kids don't really talk to people in the same street as us. And they go to schools miles and miles away.

We didn't do that. Well, I did actually. Um, but most people went to school close to where they lived. So your friends were in your community. And nowadays they're half an hour's drive away from each other. They can't go out and play with their friends.

Sue: And the other thing that I'm going to get and throw into the mix as well politically actually playgrounds have closed and so I'm hoping that, you know, everyone comes together and thinks about this on a kind of governmental level as well.

Kids can't go to playgrounds and hang out and then we'll talk about it another time. I'm mindful of helicopter parenting where you don't let them take a risk or even walk to the shops. or even go on their bike round the corner. So that all feeds into two, but that's another episode.

Tara: Well, it is another episode Sue, but it's really interesting because as you know, I've got a son starting high school and it's not his high school, but another school that there's overprotection of children.

So for the first few weeks, they're not allowed to cycle to school. They can have smartphones. They can have unlimited access to the internet. You know, everyone's laughing. We know the harms of the internet, but there's overprotection in the real world. Let's get them all settled in before they're allowed to cycle to school.

That's those higher level problems that we're talking about.

Sue: Is that coming from the school? Yeah. So you see these conversations we need to get some teachers on. There's the conversation actually really interesting, isn't it? What messages are the schools giving to parents then?

Tara: But I get it because you know, if something happened with to a young child, But there are risks in life.

Yes. And I think that that's what we, you know, we talk about this over protection, playing out older kids. That's so crucial to child development. Anyone who's studied playing with slightly older children and having an independence and their modeling. And again, we're missing that because we're not set up to support it.

So I think that we all are of the same agreement. The worst thing that I sometimes see in the press is demonizing of young people and technology. It's not the kids fault. Kids are ace. Go and spend some time with children and talk to them. Kids are brilliant. They've not always got their heads down in screens.

We're made to believe that, and yes, it's an issue in some and in many ways, but there's also great things happening with our young people. They need better experiences and to replace some of that technology.

Sue: And if you're interested in that, I wrote about it on Substack about my experience in Ireland when I was young, growing up as an eight year old or seven year old.

I think I was playing with older cousins and things. And all of that stuff that you interact with the older kids, learn about how to take care of and encourage the younger ones, et cetera.

So go and check out my sub stack. It's Sue.Atkins at sub stack. It's time for our weekly quick tips section, where we share bite sized nuggets of wisdom, hopefully, to help you navigate the digital jungle.

Cerys: Now for some top tips.

Sue: Angeline, what's your quick tip?

Angeline: I have a quick tip. I'll continue what I was talking about before. Just start a conversation. Because say what happened to you online today and try to just get the conversations going more naturally. You can watch a Data Girl video and talk about it or you can just say, you know, I had this experience with someone today or I saw something funny today.

What's your thoughts? Because there needs to be a bridge. Step by step, building a bridge, building trust. Like Lucy, you described a trusting relationship with your children, which is amazing. through everything, you had the communication, yeah, which really, so it was really inspirational also from that point of view.



Sue: Thank you. And Lucy, have you got a quick tip for people listening today?

Lucy: Okay, so my top tip is to look at what you do and maybe take your phone or take your tablet and any apps that you go to straight away, like for me, it's LinkedIn and Facebook. I've moved them to other parts of my phone or even better.

Delete them from your phone and just look at them on a laptop or just look at them on a tablet. Because you then have to intentionally go to it rather than automatically go into it. So my top tip is to move an app or apps that you automatically go to.

Sue: Brilliant. Love that. Before we finish up, tell us Angeline where people can find out more about Data Girl and Data Defenders.

Angeline: You can find Datagirl either on LinkedIn or on the webpage datagirlandfriends.com. You can look in the show notes. I also wanted to say I just launched a workshop series for parents to learn about AI, especially how to learn exactly enough that you need to know about AI. A lot of people don't want to know about AI, but enough to be able to support your children.

On my website, my personal website, so you can also look in a show notes for that.

Sue: Wonderful. And Tara, where can people find out more about you?

Tara: Thanks, Sue. Yep. I've got a website called FOMO. tech, but that's FOMO with a PH for phone. And we've got examples there of the work I've been doing with schools and in the community.

Upcoming, we've got an event called Me, Myself and iPhone, and that's working with year sixes as they get ready to transition to high school, and it's crucially that time when they get a first phone. So we've got an in person event, workshops with peers, year sevens, exploring phone use.

Sue: And you can find out all about me at thesueakins.com, the one and only because there's a lady sitting on a yacht that's not me. And of course. Join us all on our website, navigatingthedigitaljungle.com, and don't forget to explore all the great ways to have a digital detox or World Digital Detox website, which is worlddigitaldetoxday.com.

Cerys: Navigating the Digital Jungle with Sue Atkins and friends.

Sue: So that's it all for today, everybody. Remember to subscribe, leave us a review and tune in next week as we continue our journey through the digital jungle, where we'll be talking all about the impact of technology on our mental health and our well being. And we'll be chatting to Marneta Viegas from Relax Kids.

So until next time, stay safe and keep exploring.

It's a jungle out there.

