



Navigating the Digital Jungle

Where tech meets family life

EP 05: Turn Off - Tune In: The Benefits of a Digital Detox s

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 ed-tech consultant, working with families and schools around tools and interventions for healthier, more purposeful phone use.

And Angeline Corvaglia, creator of Data Girl and Friends, empowering young minds with online safety and AI literacy videos, games and educational materials. So we're here to guide you through the digital jungle.

So welcome back, Tara. How are you? How have you been? And what have you been up to?

Tara: Oh Sue, it's great to be back and I love that some of our listeners have been in touch to say our top tips are helping and supporting them. So I am this week working with a load of schools, really looking forward to that.

So we are all getting together in person and thinking about phone use at that crucial time, that transition to secondary school. It's almost become a rite of passage that time, hasn't it Sue? That, you know, we're moving on to secondary school. That's the time to hand over a smartphone, but I'm going to be working with the schools and families to unpick the steps to take prior to that.

We've talked about this before. You can't just hand over the keys, can you Sue?

Sue: No, not really. And I'm kind of a fan of delaying, not denying kids. They don't have to have a smartphone at 11. You know, they do need to contact you, of course, on the way to school or they get left behind or something, or they turn left like my daughter did and got on the wrong bus when she went to secondary school for the first week.

But I don't think they necessarily need smartphones. So that's a conversation that we, we keep on having, don't we?

Tara: Yeah. I just thought it was really interesting that you said then about your daughter on the bus, and I was thinking that some of our listeners send into a panic, that's exactly why they, they feel the need that they've got to have the devices or the, the children need to have them.

It's that to keep in touch, but to, or to be able to communicate instantly. And just reflecting. I spoke to a school leader recently and he said, you know, kids getting phones out in classes and quite often parents are the ones sending messages that really could wait. Lost on a bus is one thing, but sort of what did you want for your dinner tonight?

So a theme of what I'll be talking about today with you guys is really that parental reflection on phone use and what we use them for and what we think our kids need them for. It's really crucial to unpick that. If your child's going to secondary school and you feel as a parent, they need a phone, that might be okay, but what do they need it for?

And if that first goal is communication, well, what type of phone does it need to be? Or what restrictions can we have on the phone? I always think there's a lot of thought that needs to go into the steps before that first phone or even once they've got it from a family perspective. What does this phone sort of agreement look like in our household?

So that's where a lot of my work is at the moment.

Sue: Well, Jonathan Haidt talks about banning phones in schools and what he means by that, and as former deputy heads, both of us, I get that. All right, you go to school with it and you're on the bus and all the rest of it, but you put them away in a locker and you don't have them until you go home because actually at lunch times you're sitting in the sort of the refractory or the restaurant or whatever you wherever you have your dinner or you're out on the playground you're not communicating, you're not chatting, you're not making friends, you're not looking at people so that's why he says ban phones. It's not just ban them forever but it is in the school day not to have access to them I digress. Angeline you are waiting patiently how's your week been?

Angeline: Uh, I've also had a quite busy week, I'm focusing on different things than, than Tara, but I think that's usually the case.

That's why we're here together on the podcast to talk about different aspects. This week I'm really focused on AI for parents because I launched a workshop with a fantastic group of cyber moms. They're at home mothers who had learned cybersecurity and I'm offering them this AI workshop, just uh, what parents need to know about AI just to be able to keep their kids safe and guide them.

So that's been an amazing experience. I'm also working with cybersecurity expert in Nigeria for us, a class to teach the kids privacy. So I've really been working on how to convince our teens that online privacy is something to be taken seriously, which isn't always easy, but it's been extremely interesting.

And I found that these are lessons that adults can also take. It's been a very interesting, fulfilling week, I have to say.



Sue: We've got so many topics that we can talk about, and I'm even planning season two, can you believe, with different topics, big issues. I'm not frightened to talk about them, all sorts of big things that people worry about.

But today we're going to be looking at the benefits of doing a digital detox. Now I'm a great fan of that, and I'm a great fan of little and often, and regularly because I think it's a topic that resonates with many families and we'll discuss a bit later on as we go through practical small steps that you can take, perhaps even each day just to reduce your screen time and improve your family's well-being.

So whether you're driving, making dinner, or relaxing with a cup of coffee, sit back and join us on this journey as we talk about the benefits of a digital detox. In today's fast-paced, technologically driven world, finding that balance can be challenging. And we all know that, especially when it comes to screen time.

And we talk a lot about screen time. Tara talks a lot about good quality screen time. You know, it's a whole topic in itself, but as parents, I think it's really important to understand the importance of fostering meaningful connections and memories that are not based on screens. So I'm a great believer in unplugging regularly.

I know Angeline, you have switch off Sunday. Tell us a bit about that. Why that came about and what you do.

Angeline: Well, it was quite simple because here where, where I live, the kids have school six days a week. So Sunday is the day that my daughter doesn't have school. So obviously this is the day that we all do digital detox Sunday.

I post a picture about it. That's why people are aware of it because I just think it's important to show that different aspect and what we're doing. We, we plan the day together. There's only three of us. I think it's more difficult in bigger families. You know, we usually have something outside. We have to have alternatives, right?

That's what makes it work all day is to come up in advance with a list of things that we could possibly do. It's not easy to do that. Honestly, as, as a parent, you're usually tired and would be happy just to sit down and do nothing and while away in front of a phone, uh, but obviously, uh, as you said, uh, Tara, as you were going to talk about that, it's so important to be a good example.

And so the alternatives, right? It's also the advantage that you have things that you're going to like too. You can help convince your child to do something that's fun for everybody.

Sue: Well, it could be simple things, you see, I've written a new book called Unplugging Adventures, a book of digital detox ideas for the whole family.

And I've written 52 themes so that people can dip in and out of it with just small things and big things that you can do. But you're right. It's a bit of planning sometimes. And I think with anything around digital detox, you don't just go on your trainers and run a marathon of 26 miles. Do you, you do things incrementally.



You build up. So I actually believe you build down from the old detox. You don't just say no phones forever. You just say, well, how about we have a mindful Monday? We come off it for an hour at a different time. How about tech free Tuesday? You know, those sort of ideas, or you even say when you're sitting down to eat, oh, we're going to have gadget free grub time. I mean, you know, I love alliteration and messing around with words, but for me, those sort of simple daft words and sort of alliteration things gets you remembering it, and then you put in some simple things that you can do with your kids. I mean, even binoculars and going out in the garden and looking for mini beasts is a simple thing you can do that's off screen.

And, you know, some of them, when they get older, they kind of, Oh, I don't know. And I don't want to do all that with you. But actually, once you get out there, even walking the dog, you have conversations and you have a laugh. And you make it compelling to do things. Some are big deal things like go to the seaside.

Some are small things like, I don't know, let's build a tent in the garden and build an obstacle course and have a laugh in the sunshine, if we ever get any in the UK. So for me, the benefits of detox, once you know the benefits of why you're doing it, I think that will help parents sort of change their mind and get stronger on their confidence.

So with all these things, tablets and constant interconnectivity, kids are spending hours and hours glued to screens and that can affect their eyesight, their neck muscles, actually I was talking to someone about that yesterday, their sleep problems, they're physically not active and running about and they're not really using their social skills and there's so many downsides for too much screen.

So it's not about banning it, it's about balance. So we're going to be looking at ways to detox really. I mean, what do you think Tara? What are ways that you perhaps think about it?

Tara: It's really interesting and you've just brought me there when you talked about sort of the outdoors and the impact. It's quite a scary statistic I suppose to share and it was originally in a group chat from smartphone free childhood, which I know Yeah, yeah, you've done some work with yeah, and it was a parent who messaged in and they said that in the last decade, and you know, we would need to fact check this one, but it was within the group, that there have been 70 percent less outdoor accidents, but 93 percent more incidents of self harm.

Sue: Wow, what a statistic that is.

Tara: And this, it was a GP and said, as a GP, I promise you it's much easier to mend a broken bone than a broken mind. And I know you've just put your hand to your chest as a parent. It really hits me that. Yeah. I, as you know, I'm pro tech. I'm all for the benefits and balance, but just this reflection of how our children's sort of outdoor world has really shrunk.

Sue: And the pandemic didn't help that. I grant you that, but we are through that.



Tara: Nor is this weather Sue. Very, very true. You just mentioned it. It is harder when the weather is, isn't great. And it's the summer and Angeline, you know, we're, we're all pulling together from shared perspectives. It's not easy, you know, people might be listening and thinking, I've tried, I've tried to get the kids outdoor more.

Angeline: I do think it's really important when we're talking about this to, to be mindful of the fact that there are a lot of parents that will be listening that are thinking, wow, this is, it sounds really nice, but that's not going to work in my case. And I think it's really important not to give up, um, because as long as it takes to get to where you you're at, it might take that long to get back out of out of it.

Um, so I think that's just really important to not give up as a parent. If you know what's important, it's not all dreams. It took me years to get in the position where I am with my daughter as well, where she trusts me, that I know how much screen time is good or not.

Sue: It's about your why, isn't it, as well?

If you know why, and we've talked about that today, the why is important, and then just keep at it. Don't, you're right, don't give up.

Tara: Yeah. And some of the discussions we've had and a lot of the work that I do is in that preventative space. But we're very aware that some of our listeners might be a bit further along than that and really struggling.

And actually the thought of, oh, well, there's no way I'm going to get my kid off the phone to go for a walk. It's not as simple as saying, come along. We're very aware that their listeners have got some bigger complications, but it's that little and often. Not a sudden detox. What changes can we make? What conversations we can have?

What first steps are there?

Sue: And think how to connect, isn't it? Thinking about how to connect. Conversations and connection, then over time you can lead them away from some of the technology.

Tara: And realistic expectations. Yeah. As a parent. Yeah. We've really got to be aware of how long this path might be, but that, that goal and the hope that it's worth it.

Angeline, you were honest, you said it's a couple of years.

Angeline: Years, yeah, yeah. Yeah, because I didn't necessarily start out the right way, so. I, she had too much watching her little tablet when she was younger. So I realized I had to slowly wean her off the tablet.

Sue: And make it, as I say, make it compelling. Not like come off, you know, whatever you're doing on TikTok and come and do your science homework.

You know, that's not going to hack it either with an older teenager.



Tara: We can't expect the same as what happened generations ago because the whole street isn't out in, the whole street isn't full of children. You know, all the neighbours aren't out in the street. So we can't just kind of kick our kids out, perhaps as we did as children, and expect there to be opportunity and everybody at the park and everybody playing.

And that's why I think we're talking about societal shifts. And back to Jonathan Haidt saying, we've got to have the opportunities ready and there for the children. If your kids head down in the screen and you say, "What should we do? Shall we do something?" You will get a grunt. You will get shrugged shoulders.

If you say, "I'm gonna walk the dog, shall we go and walk the dog and get an ice cream?" And that's the plan. They're much more likely to engage or "this morning the plan is". And maybe let them know and later on you get a little bit of time on your device or whatever. It's not as easy as today's Detox Day.

It's not that simple.

Sue: And for me, when we had summer holidays or when we were on Easter holidays or whatever holidays we were on from school, I used to have a plan for the week. So some of it was, you know, it's not all climbing Kilimanjaro and going to Disney World. It was kind of like, okay, this, you know, this morning we're going to, I don't know, hang out around here and we'll play with the dogs and we'll get the old Lego out and we'll paint and we'll do some art and crafty things.

And then this afternoon we might, you know, go to the park and ride the bike. So I sort of broke the day up a bit into morning and afternoon. And then some of those things were a bit more exciting. Maybe on Thursday, we're going to go to the ball pond down in Red Hill and we'll have some fun and we'll meet, you know, my friend and her kids and all of that.

So you, you have to kind of plan it a bit and it all doesn't have to be expensive, but perhaps it is exciting in terms of you make it exciting or you make it interesting because your energy's up and you're up for having a good time and breaking the day up. And there is a place for tech and screens and all of that stuff, but not without thinking about it a bit more logically.

I mean, Angeline, how do you handle it with your daughter?

Angeline: I think it's really important what I said before. And I also feel I confirmed listening to you that it really needs to be parents really need to find things that they like to do. And they like to do with their children because children, they can see through it, right?

Sue: But I'm going to hold you there because I think it's about what the children want to do. I always think if you just say, right, we're going to do something educational and flashcards, they're not going to want to do it. So I used to sit down with my kids in a way and say, "Right. What do you think, you know, you'd like us to do?"



And nine times out of 10, you talked about it before Tara in another episode, uh, about the meal times. They don't often come up with huge grand things, that's Chessington World of Adventure. They actually want to spend time with you. So the conversation in a way, we have to be careful. We don't, we can lead it a bit, but I don't think we need to constantly lead it. We need to ask them too. What do you think?

Angeline: No, I don't think that's not what I meant. I meant to find things that you both like. Because there are things that you both like and I have some things up my sleeve. They work 95 percent of the time, depending on how much energy I personally have. And this is really the key to making it consistently work is having a list that I like and I know my daughter likes because even if I'm exhausted at the end of the day, it's like, okay, we can just sit down and draw pictures. I can do that. So yeah, I think it's true. It is important. It has to be what children like, but especially for parents who might feel a little bit overwhelmed with, I've tried, I've tried, really look at from this perspective.

I mean, especially if you live in a city where there's just not that much outdoor possibilities. I think it's even more important to have, unfortunately, more work, but more important to have your own list of things you can do no matter what the weather is.

Sue: Yeah, that's the thing here is it's the weather.

Tara, you were going to chat about, we read something, I read something this week about parents use of text. Yeah. Tell me about that.

Tara: Prior to going into that, there's a few things I want to unpick. Just thinking about our listeners and the title of the episode, because we're talking about detox. And detox, that's quite a scary word really, isn't it?

The thought of what, you know, is detox, is it that extreme? Is that what we're really thinking about? And, you know, I just mentioned generationally, there's been this shift of everybody playing out, you know, a lot of children are indoor and childhood and outside has shrunk. We do have to reflect on a time and a place and where we are right now in society and in history.

And why words like detox, screen addiction, why they're here in our vocabulary. And from a parenting perspective, we've got to be really open to them and up to speed and thinking about how current life looks. So my point on parenting, it was a post I saw, I believe the post is by Screen Sanity and it really resonated with me.

I think the post was called I might be paraphrasing, 'My mum is always scrolling on Instagram'. Okay, that got my attention. And the next slide said, 'But what's the reality?'. And of course the reality is that as parents, we're absolutely not always scrolling on Instagram. What are we doing on our phones?

Most likely work. Shopping, banking, appointments, at this time of year, you know, I've got four boys, so responding to a school request, PTA, productions, end of year, it all happens, it's a lot, and it's all happening in our phones. But if we were to reflect on our own parents, they were doing all those jobs. My mum, I'm actually the baby of five.



So she was very busy too, but she was sometimes sat writing a shopping list and dad or mum were reading the newspaper, writing cheques. So we physically saw those jobs happening. Whereas now for our children, they are just seeing us on our phones. That is a monumental tech shift. And I don't think we talk about that enough. So then there is this panic of everyone's on their phones when they must detox. But really, let's, let's just strip this back and narrate some of the language. And what I do in my house with my kids, whether this is right or wrong, I often narrate my phone use. So I'll tell my kids what I'm doing.

And that was what was in the post that I thought was great. An example for our listeners. So that your kids aren't thinking, what's mum doing now on her phone all the time? You could say, "Hey. I'm just, uh, I'm just doing the shop. I'm ordering some groceries. Is there anything you need for your lunchbox?". And you're almost putting it to them, effectively, I'm writing a list. And maybe be transparent. So that there's an awareness. What is mum up to on her phone? What is dad doing all the time? Kids aren't doing all of those jobs. It doesn't mean they should match our screen time. Or our screen exposure. You know, I don't particularly like the metric.

Sue: That's interesting. Yeah, it's really interesting. Yeah, I really like that. Yeah, because I wrote and that's where you probably saw it as well. I wrote on LinkedIn today. I was actually listening to Taylor Swift. Can you believe it? And it's, it's me.

Tara: Do you know what Sue? I can believe it! I can believe you're a Swifty Sue.

I can believe it. A hundred percent.

Sue: My daughter also is going to Poland to see cause she couldn't get tickets in the UK. So I put up this thing cause I was listening to it. And then I thought that I read this article. It's me. It's I I'm the problem. It's me, which. I linked to parents use. Like you've just said there it's, Oh gosh.

And so how do you get over it? You've just given a practical idea. You talk about what you're actually doing with it. And then parents have got to think about how they come off and do a digital detox each day or incrementally or an hour here systematically because detoxing is all this kind of like, I was, I was interviewed by the BBC yesterday and I did a, um, a voice thing for them in five minutes about a school and loads of young teenagers.

They came off and did a detox for five days. Now, as soon as I read it, I thought, God, five days, but yet their mental health, the kids themselves, the teens are all on this BBC article. We can put it into the show notes talking about how they felt so much better. Initially they went, Oh my God, what am I going to do for an hour not on it? But then as we can see, it builds up resistance to always using it and thinking about why am I on it? What am I doing on it? So all these little tips, you know, like you're saying for parents, talking it through what you're doing. So actually, do you need to let the kids not see you do that. Could you do that in another room, even if you're just doing an appointment on a calendar?



Tara: Yeah, well, I don't, I don't think it's a case of them not seeing. It's an awareness of what you're doing. This is always about this nuance of why screen time as a metric can be difficult. So there's a friend of mine who's, kid, we talk about it in school, they might be listening to the news or really demonizing screen news and I'm concerned about that.

Yeah. Yeah. And her daughter called her out, was like, mum, you're so addicted to your phone, you can't even cook dinner. And the mum felt furious 'cause she was glancing at her phone at the recipe. Yes. And she was, you know, and again. Don't then snap at your child. I'm not, you know, it's, whoa, it can. That's a perfect conversation point.

You may turn your boiling water off and don't overcook the pasta, but you might just want to say, "Oh, I'm really sorry it feels like I'm always on my phone. I was just looking at a recipe", and you might have a conversation. It's not a perfect solution. All you think about, could I have been using a cookbook?

But that's not the easiest in a busy life when you just wanted to quickly check something. Kids are going to quite quickly, if you say anything to them about screen time, oh boy, will they throw it back at you. So that's why this honest and open conversation about what I'm doing on my phone is helpful.

Because a recent study, this association between parenting practices and early adolescent screen use is really key. And one of the biggest predictors in how much time kids spend on their screens, and, crucially, whether that's problematic screen use, is how much parents are using their screens around their kids.

So there will be times when we need to, of course, but some of the study's findings might seem fairly obvious if you're in this space or, you know, you're really thinking about it, but not necessarily. Key findings were keeping mealtimes and bedtimes screen free because those strategies are strongly linked to kids spending less time on screens. Exhibiting, again, this is the language, I always think about the nuance of the language, it's less problematic screen use. Can we use our phones to glance at a recipe? Sure. If I'm scrolling on Instagram, mindlessly looking at reels whilst cooking a meal, that's problematic.

Sue: It's consciousness, isn't it? Being mindful of what you're doing. So that leads us on to our family change segment, where we suggest a small change that will make a big difference in your family tech time. So grab your digital machetes and let's tackle this one together then. So you've mentioned it already, screen free hour before bed, set a time, choose a specific hour before bedtime when all screens are turned off. And I'm mindful of that advert by EE, not that I'm sponsored by them or anything like that, but they talk about, Oh, it's going to go off in a minute and they will get ready and they're getting ready and getting ready for bed.

And then you see them, you know, jumping into bed, having stories read to them because actually they're switching off an hour before bedtime. And that is a good kind of guideline. Think about winding down activities, engaging and calming activities like reading books. Remember that? Stories, language development, vocabulary, bonding, telling stories, listening to stories, maybe doing a puzzle.



There's slowing, winding down activities, having a quiet chat. Relaxation. We talked to Marnetta Viegas from Relax Kids last time. She talks about gentle stretching or deep breathing, or meditation, even having a bath. That's what my kids used to do. The routine was, you know, have a bath, brush your teeth, have a bedtime story.

And that sort of slows you down. So screen free hour before bedtime. What else do you think we could do Angeline around perhaps detoxing a little bit and not loads and not all in one go?

Angeline: Well, I think just starting by paying very close attention to our emotions. And talking that through also with our kids, because often it feels at the end of the day, what I want to do is sit and just vegetate in front of my phone. But when, if I don't do it, then I actually feel better. And to really realize that and talk through, uh, also with your kids, that's a great start towards change because I think the kids will also realize in many cases they actually do feel better doing other things.

Tara: Even again, I've talked about narrating phone use and talking it through to say, especially if you're older teenagers.

I would love to sit on the sofa right now and just scroll on my phone, but I know that's not going to be good for me just before bed. Again, share. I'd like to do it too. It's not as against them in this. We have the same habits don't we? Oh yes, sure.

Cerys VO: Listener questions.

Sue: So that leads us into some listeners questions.

We've received some fantastic questions actually from our listeners, so let's dive in and provide some answers. We've got quite a few questions around detoxing. We had, why is a digital detox important for my family? How often should my family do a digital detox? What are some signs that my family needs a digital detox?

And how can I convince my children to participate in a digital detox? So, let me kick off with why is a digital detox important to a family? Well, it really does improve mental health. It enhances your family relationships. It reduces stress. It promotes physical activity. And it really helps families, to reconnect with each other, I think, in meaningful activities without those digital distractions.

How often should my family do a digital detox? Well, the frequency of digital detoxes can vary, of course, according to your family and your family's way of doing things and your schedules. It's not for us to tell you what to do. It's about getting you thinking about maybe how you could detox a bit. I mean, some families might benefit from a weekly digital detox, like a switch off Sunday or a tech free Tuesday or something, or a screen free evening or a couple of hours, you know, you find your own feet on this kind of topic, but it's about thinking about it. I think that's very important. Talking with your kids, not at them about what you're gonna do and make it compelling what you're gonna do instead of the screen. Someone said then with the question, what are some signs that my family needs digital detox?

Well, I think the signs are that there's increased irritability with the kids and perhaps with yourself. There's difficulty sleeping. There's reduced attention spans in the real world. There's less face to face interaction and that general feeling in your tummy where you feel, Oh, I think we're being overwhelmed by our digital devices here. And I'm beginning to get a bit resentful of it and a bit angry over it. So I think we need to look at it. So I write a lot and talk about when I'm working with my clients, family talk time, or you sit down together once a week or whenever, and chat about the topic of the week that you want to say, look, we've got a problem here I think with our digital stuff, what do you think? And ask the children, it doesn't matter how old they are. They could be five or six or 10 or 11 or 12 or 15. What do you think we can do to sort of get a bit more back in balance here. So that's a detoxing, but actually it doesn't have that heavily laden word around it really.

Someone then said, how could I convince my children to participate? Well, they take their lead from you, explain and do a bit of research, and have your bullet points in your head. Uh, about the benefits. There's so many benefits. We'll put some stuff in the show notes around it, but there are many benefits to detoxing, better sleep, more family time, better family activities, fun with each other, brothers and sisters playing, chatting, laughing, arguing, probably, and plan up your digital activities to make them feel something to look forward to.

It's something that's inclusive and it's exciting and you know, I'm not a great believer in bribing them with incentives or rewards. The, the reward of the ice cream would do for me. So that leads us on perhaps then Angeline to our weekly quick tips. What do you reckon Angeline? Do you want to start that segment?

Cerys VO: Now for some top tips.

Angeline: Yeah, I would just like to start kind of how you ended. Yeah, great. My quick tip is just to not give up. As parents on this because it will be difficult to convince, especially their teens to go less and do stuff with the family. So, um, don't give up and also take people around you as examples.

If they see others with problematic behavior, you can point out. We don't want to get that far. So this would, this would be kind of two tips. Brilliant. Tara, what about you?

Tara: I want to be quick and I think one of the most effective ways is to just try to detox a space, potentially the bedroom, so just have a family charging station if you can.

Ours is on the side in the kitchen. We all put our phones there. So mealtimes, phones go there. Bedtimes, that's where they're charged. So we've created this space that pulls the devices out of our bedrooms because we know that impacts sleep. And again, away. And if you have that, and it's almost known as a space, if you go for a walk, the phone stays there, you can make that part of sort of your family approach to using phones or not using them.

Sue: I read somewhere this week about no bedrooms, no bathrooms, no breakfast table. And I thought, Oh, yeah. That was quite nice and succinct. Also tech free zones, wherever you think it could be. It could be a dining room if it's yours, but it's where you encourage more conversation. And I think that's a better thing.



And you have these sort of specific times. If you don't kind of write them down and keep to them, you know, it's like, Oh, I must meet you for coffee. And you never meet that person for coffee. But if you say I'll meet you on Wednesday, 11.30. You meet them at 11.30. So again, put it into your diary or into your phone, uh, that this is going to be our, you know, our tech free time or our digital detox time.

And as we said, you know, your behavior sets the tone for your kids, lead them, lead them into sort of, you know, thinking of more interesting things to do and step up around some of that. And when they're a bit bored, we talked about the, the, the jar where you pick out something to do and that can help break the cycle.

All you're trying to do is create a new habit and habits take a little while sometimes to do, don't they? And you can go in the garden if the weather ever gets better in the UK and, you know, as I say, you can build a den or look for mini beasts or get kids involved in growing vegetables and tomatoes and all that sort of stuff.

Go for a walk because I've got three dogs. We used to just take the and every day you have to walk the dogs so you'd walk and talk. And that would be, you know, a chat and a laugh and silly stuff, and we still do that, even though we're all grown up now, but you could even do board games, have a detox time, it's a day, it's a Wednesday or whatever, or Saturday or Sunday, where you have quality time without the screens, doing some stuff that's enjoyable with your families, you're making memories.

That lasts a lifetime, I think.

Angeline: Yesterday I, I washed a car with my daughter and that was, There you go. That was a great thing. She loved it. I loved it. The car's clean now. We can do it once a week.

Sue: Yeah, it is. It's, it's so nice. It doesn't have to be exotic, does it? They have fun doing anything the younger they are.

So for me, I think it is about setting some time limits, taking some small steps that will make some big changes. 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, are you feeling overwhelmed by screens and technology? Take a break and join millions of people around the world on World Digital Detox Day because it's the perfect opportunity to unplug unwind and reconnect with the world around you for your mental health and your family and children's well-being.

Join this important movement with over seven and a half million people worldwide and visit worlddigitaldetoxday.com to learn more about becoming involved with the world's largest digital wellbeing initiative. Start your digital detox journey today to better mental health and well-being for your whole family.



Dr. Rekha Chowdhury is a distinguished figure in her field, renowned for her pioneering contributions and innovative approach to wellbeing and mental health. With a career spanning over two decades, she has consistently pushed the boundaries of what's possible. Earning accolades and respect from peers and industry leaders alike.

Her work not only exemplifies excellence, but also inspires many to strive for greatness in their own way. She is the founder of World Digital Detox Day. WDDD, which is an innovative approach aimed at encouraging everyone to take a break from their digital devices and reconnect with the physical world around them.

The 10th of December is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the impacts of excessive screen time, promoting a healthier, more balanced relationship with technology. Welcome to the podcast, Rekha. We're thrilled to have you here to discuss World Digital Detox Day. So to start, can you tell our listeners a bit about yourself a little bit and what inspired you to initiate World Digital Detox Day?

Rekha: Sue, thank you for having me. Jai WDD. We are a non profit organization on a mission to empower wellness worldwide. I started World Digital Detox Day to address the growing concern I had over digital addiction in India, as I could see the impact it was having on mental wellness and mental wellbeing. After witnessing the negative effects of constant connectivity, I felt compelled to create a day dedicated to unplugging and reconnecting with the real world.

Sue: What's been your main concern recently that you've noticed?

Rekha: I have seen more people feeling emotionally disconnected, where family members are there, but they are too focused on their devices than connecting with each other. This means less quality time together and weaker relationship. I have also noticed more behavioral problem in children like being more irritable and having trouble paying attention.

They also have more trouble in the sleep pattern because of screen time before bed. And you will see nowadays children are just playing less and scrolling more on the screen. Teenagers are not talking and connecting in real life. And I have seen a big rise in their anxiety and stress level. It's really affecting their mental health.

Sue: So tell us then, what activities people get involved with, with World Digital Detox Day? What sort of things do people do and where can they find out more about it?

Rekha: The theme for, uh, 2024 for the World Digital Detox Day celebration on 10 December is going around the smartphone free, smartphone free childhood, smartphone free life.

It highlights the importance of taking a break from smartphone to reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing. We are also encouraging people to engage more fully with their surroundings and the people in their lives instead of in the virtual world. World Digital Detox Day has designed a simple manifesto, which is very easy to adopt.



First is, prioritize your healthy sleep. Second, encouraging digital fasting, turn off once a week. Third, reduce screen time by taking notes on the notepad. Fourth, avoid mobile or iPad distractions. Avoid mobile while feeding your child. Fifth, promote tech free family meals. Sixth, track and take charge of your screen time, 7. Incorporate mindfulness and 8. Disconnect and reconnect with nature. These are very simple steps, which will definitely help you to reach your digital detox goal.

Sue: Wonderful. So, World Digital Detox Day is on the 10th of December. If you're interested in getting stuck in and finding out more about it, the website is, Rekha, tell us the website. Rekha: Please do visit worlddigitaldetoxday.com and enjoy the benefit of detoxing. Thank you.

Sue: So simple. So easy. So important to find balance. So get involved. 7. 5 million people were involved in World Digital Detox Day last 10th of December. There's going to be even more if you join in too on that day, join in, but not just on that day, as we've been talking throughout this episode, small ways to detox your family for better mental health and better well-being.

So thank you, Rekha, for joining us today. So listen, where can listeners find out more about you, Tara, what you're up to, what you're doing and what they can access from you?

Tara: Oh, thank you so much, Sue. So I have a company called PHOMO Tech. That's my website where you can keep up to date with all the work that I'm doing.

And at the moment I'm prepping for a big event with year six students. I'm being joined by a fantastic advocate. She is her 13th birthday tomorrow, and she's going to join me on the stage. Her name is Bella, and she will be talking about her journey from quite negative phone use at sort of around age 10 and 11 to calming the notifications, taking some time to think about where she was getting quite stressed and creating this positive relationship with her phone.

And peer to peer is great. Teenagers don't want to listen to me. But listen to somebody else. So PHOMO tech, PHOMO. tech, you can keep in touch with all the work I'm doing there.

Sue: Wonderful. Angeline, what are you up to? You've been busy working on some new topics, haven't you?

Angeline: Yeah, I've been very busy. I've been headfirst into the summer preparing for the upcoming school year, to get the privacy and online safety, AI literacy into schools. You can find me and my work, the best place to find is LinkedIn, Data Girl and Friends. We have a website, obviously, as well, or just me, Angeline Corvaglia. There's also Corvaglia.me.

Sue: And not everyone's on LinkedIn. That tends to be a professional place and I'm very keen for social media people to follow you.

We'll put them into the show notes. If I'm on Twitter or X or whatever it's called or wherever I am, I'll always lead people straight to your websites because not everybody kind of goes on LinkedIn.

Tara: But to that point, Sue. We're so grateful, aren't we? Our listeners are already reaching out to us on X and on Instagram.

We're getting great feedback and parents say, you know, it's making a difference and they're taking the tips. I love that Sue. Look, I printed this one off.

Sue: I've got it printed off. It says listener feedback from scroll by choice. Thank you for sending this in to us. We love how you've laid out so many options for parents to use to try and manage their digital distractions.

So thank you so much, Scroll by Choice. Really love it. Don't forget to send in your questions. Send in, you know, what you're up to with your family change.

Cerys VO: Navigating the Digital Jungle with Sue Atkins and Friends.

Sue: So that's it for today's episode of Navigating the Digital Jungle with Sue Atkins and Friends. I hope you found these tips helpful and that you're inspired to start your family's digital detox journey. If you've enjoyed this episode, please subscribe, leave a review and share it with your friends and family, schools, teachers, colleagues, pop it in your school newsletter.

Join us next time as we continue to explore ways to navigate the digital jungle together. And until then, take care, stay safe. And happy detoxing.

Cerys VO: It's a jungle out there.

