



Navigating the Digital Jungle

Where tech meets family life

EP 10: Keeping Children with SEND from Getting 'Lost in the Digital Jungle'

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, Angeline Corvaglia, creator of Data Girl and Friends. Empowering young minds with online safety and AI literacy videos, games and educational materials, and 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.

So we're all here to guide you through the digital jungle, and the topic of the week this week is children with additional or special needs. SEND. Today's episode is a crucial one, really, for parents, caregivers and educators. We'll be discussing the impact of social media and technology on the mental health of children with special needs.

We'll also offer tips on managing screen time, fostering positive online interactions and finding supportive online communities.

Internet Matters, and this will be in the show notes, was launched aimed at children with special additional needs and disabilities, and they believe that all young people should be empowered to have a positive time online. Their findings identified key areas where children with SEND needed greater support and more focused advice to stop them from what they call 'falling through the net', and the findings, which have been detailed in the 'Life Online for Children with SEND' report, again will be in the show notes, identified areas where young people with SEND differ from typical children in relationship to online safety. Now, young people with additional needs, they use social media in precisely the same way as every other teen, to socialise, to connect, to be entertained and to learn.

However, there are three things that are profoundly different for this community. Often, they lack the critical thinking skills and sometimes the consideration for consequences that other young people have. Secondly, they are much more accepting of parental mediation or intervention up to and including those regular checking of their devices by their parents, so they accept them more.

Thirdly, most existing resources and all community standards and terms and conditions are too densely and complicated the way they're written to be meaningful for these young people. So, the overriding message of the 'Internet Matters' report is that young people with additional needs need simplicity and parents themselves want simplicity too in how online safety is delivered.

So my advice is kiss, keep it short and keep it simple. So we're going to look at now the impact of social media on mental health. Now, as we know, social media is a powerful tool, but it comes with its own set of challenges, especially for children with additional needs. So let's start by examining the impact of social media on their mental health.

Children with additional needs might experience social media differently due to their various factors like their sensory sensitivities, or their communication difficulties, or unique social interactions. And studies have shown that excessive use of social media can lead to addiction to anxiety and depression and feelings of anxiety in children.

And this is particularly true for children with special needs, who might already feel isolated or misunderstood. Because children with additional needs, social media can be a double edged sword. On one hand, it offers a platform for connection and for learning, and on the other hand, it amplifies their feeling of exclusion if they encounter cyberbullying or if they struggle to understand the social cues online.

So, it's really crucial for you as parents and caregivers to monitor and and guide your children's social media use so you make sure and try and ensure that it remains a positive experience for them. So here are a few of my tips for managing screen time. Set clear boundaries. Establish specific types of social media use because I think this helps create a routine and prevent excessive use.

Use parental control. We're going to hear later from Dr. Beth Molesley, and she talks about the fact, and I've read it too, that parents are resistant to using parental controls. But it's a really important thing for you to take on board and to get involved with, particularly if your child has additional needs.

Of course, as we talk about often, encouraging offline activities, so you balance activities with your kids, so they're playing outside or reading or engaging in their hobbies. And of course the other big thing that we've all read about a lot is your way of dealing things. You model healthy behaviour because children often mimic and copy their parents.

Those show them how to use social media and their tech responsibly by setting a good example. What additional tips do you have Tara for helping children with additional needs?

Tara: Yeah, so following on from that great comment about mimicking behaviour, I think that's an important place to start. If you bend the rules, your children, they're going to follow suit.

Take, for example, we always talk about no phones at the dinner table. If you were to make an exception for yourself because, you know, you might be waiting for an important email, for example. Your child's going to remember that and they're going to expect then similar sort of bends in behaviour. So that's why when we talk about, you know, making agreements, family plans, our non-negotiables are so very important when setting boundaries.



The minute you, you know, might just blur, and I get it, it might be a really important email, but if you blur those boundaries or confuse the rules, that's going to be really complicated for our young people. And we know this, don't we? Let's think about schools. I'm often working with young people and take behaviour policies as one example.

They have got to be so super clear, so it might be a warning, then some sort of physical you know, that the child can see a visual prompt and then the consequence. I was working with a family recently, and there was some inconsistencies and sanctions. So for example, the child had gone straight to a red without being given the warning and that change in the rule really had a great impact for that child.

Exactly the same when we talk about digital controls and any sort of screen time restrictions. Have a very clear process. So, the key rule here is consistency.

Sue: Now, do you have any additional tips, Angeline, on screen time for children with additional needs?

Angeline: It's important for parents to remember that SEND children can be more at risk for certain bad online influences, uh, that everyone faces on social media.

Such as echo chambers and content created by algorithms. They can also have much more of a challenge controlling impulses and dragging their attention away from what they see on their feed. And so, considering this, it's always important for parents to really pay attention to how the online world impacts their children.

Because each one will be different. But in the case of SEND children, it's even more important for parents to pay close attention to what exactly it is that's keeping their child from wanting to go offline and to take specific action to counter it. Obviously, Beth, her resources are absolutely excellent in this case, but you know, things like co -watching content, talking through what they're seeing and experiencing, encouraging critical thinking and discussing why it's hard for them to get offline can really go a long way with any child, but especially children with special needs.

Sue: Yeah, I think you're right. Yes, great tips there. I think it's also helpful to involve children in creating their own screen time schedule because that gives them a sense of ownership and a sense of control and it makes them sort of buy in perhaps to some of these rules. So it's not coming top down, you're being the boss, you're actually saying, look, how can we manage this together?

Because we all know that excessive screen time is not good for us all. So how do you think we can manage it and what are going to be some of the consequences to it? So, I think the next thing I want to chat about is the positive online interactions. Social media can be a great way for children with additional needs to connect with others.

We know that it's important to them and, you know, we want to keep them positive. What can parents do, Angeline, do you think around this topic?



Angeline: Well, I think first and foremost, really help them learn how to curate these positive interactions and recognise them, understand the risks so demonstrate positive online behaviour yourself, obviously, I mean, for, for younger children especially, you're their heroes.

If you show them how to, to interact respectfully and kindly, you know, help them to translate their online, real life social skills to online interactions and really understand, okay, it's online but it's still the same thing. The way you select people to trust in the real world. The same instincts, you know, same emotions can work in the online world.

Obviously discussing etiquette and avoiding conflict and understanding that conflict is much different online because it can feel more like conflict, even though maybe you're just misreading what's written there. And obviously encouraging them to really find groups and communities that are positive and help them understand how to do that.

So this can be great places to connect for, with like minded individuals and children with special need. That's, that's a superpower of social media for them is finding like minded individuals with positive relationships. And obviously what I said earlier, children with special needs can be more at risk for bad players.

So it's really important to, to discuss the cyber bullying and how to handle it. Role play scenarios so they, they're empowered. Yeah. And just to be, teach them to be critical consumers, you know, fact checking, all of this. It's important for anyone.

Sue: Yeah. It's maybe harder for a child with additional needs in that you you just don't say it once, but you don't say that to any child, just you say it once and then they got it. These are open conversations that we need to have regularly. And with a child, perhaps with additional needs, you might have to have them quite often or repeat the same thing a few times or over and over.

But if the messaging and the way you say it, your tone of voice, your body language, your, your mindset, and that whole approach to it is to support them, not judge them. They can come to you. And keep asking you, and you don't mind how many times they ask you the same question or the same problem they hit, until they do learn to manage it and find their way around it and navigate it.

Because it is a digital jungle and we really don't want them to fall through the net. So, Tara, what should parents look for in a supportive online community?

Tara: Supportive was key there to that question. I'd be looking for communities that yes, they're moderated to prevent harms, but that they do promote positivity.

It's beneficial if the community has resources and information that are tailored to your child's specific needs. So engaging with other parents and caregivers in these communities. That's going to provide really valuable support and advice. I'd find those that feel like the right fit and where the messaging really resonates.



Language is very important. And to that point, I'll mention one that I follow on Instagram. So the account's called Protect Young Eyes, and they often talk about language. There was a post that I kind of saved and I've referred to this lots of times. It was about parental controls and said that we don't use parental controls so we can catch them doing something bad. We use them to prevent the internet from doing bad things to our kids. And this might seem like, you know, a subtle shift in words, but it's monumental, a shift in mindset. Because it's not us versus them. It's us with them. We're rooting for our young people. It's why you're listening to this podcast, right?

We want our kids to succeed online. So, remind them that we as parents, always with parents, but the boundaries. It's so important to have them around powerful things. Boundaries for adults and for children in life are important and in technology, it's no different. So, let's think of a real life explanation.

You could think about icons, you know, like screen time or downtime as a limit, an icon. Why we've got that and you can show and explain it to your child. It means that we care about them. It's an action, just like locking the front door, you know, that physical thing. It's a step that as a parent we take to keep you safe online, to keep the bad stuff out.

So, I quite often have this with my son, you know, his, his phone will go into sort of lockdown screen time. It's completely off. And I say, yep, that's, that's a step I've taken. That's something I've done to protect you. As a parent, that's how I show you I love you.

Sue: I know that there are quite a few Facebook groups. There are numerous actually, I saw, dedicated to specific social and special needs. Look for groups that align with your child's needs and interests. For example, a really good one is Special Needs Jungle. Let's talk about Send. That's a great group on Facebook. On websites like Reddit, they do have some forums.

NASEN, the National Association of the Special Educational Needs. It's a charity that exists to support and champion those working with children and young people with SEND and learning differences. So these can be great places to ask questions, to share experiences, to get advice and some tips. There's non profit organisations like Autism Speaks or the National Down Syndrome Society.

So we'll put all of these into the show notes so you can go and find some online communities. We can direct you there so you can go and explore them and get the support that you need. There really are a plethora of programs and services offering that. There's something actually called the Friendship Circle.

They've pulled together 10 must see organisations that offer services to individuals with disabilities and additional needs. So again, lots of places for you to feel that you're not alone trying to navigate this particular digital journey. The other thing I'd like to mention just at this point is I work with a lot of parents with children with additional needs and I always talk about me time to the parents and the caregivers because having a child with additional needs can be absolutely exhausting, worrying and, you know, really distressing sometimes as well as enlightening and wonderful and joyful.



But, me time and getting away from sometimes, going out with a friend, going to the cinema, meeting a friend for a drink or a coffee, all of this is not selfish, is what I call self care. And I'm big on self care, whether you have a child with additional needs or not, you need to have some fun times, but certainly if you are managing a family and juggling all sorts of extra things too.

It's a bit like putting the oxygen mask on your mouth first on an aeroplane so you can help your child. So just remember, me time is not selfish. I call it self care and there's an article on my blog called 'Me time could be the best hours you give not only yourself but also your children', so we'll put my my blog on my article in the show notes There's another one here about special needs or additional needs is like an umbrella sheltering and hiding a huge collection of diagnosis underneath, because it's a huge term.

So there's a blog that we'll put in the show notes that I wrote a while back for you to have a look at too. The key for me is balance and involvement. If you're engaged with your child's online activities, you can provide some guidance. You can create open lines of communication. You can encourage your child to talk about their online experiences.

Then I think you'll be there to support them through any of the challenges that they might face. So, let's look at ADHD technology. Now, ADHD is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and it can present unique challenges for children and their families, especially in today's digital age where technology is pervasive.

So, here's a bit of advice that I hope you'll find reassuring, helpful, that you can take away. Understand the impact of technology on ADHD because it can both help and it can both hinder children with ADHD. On one hand, it can provide tools for organisation and learning and entertainment, but on the other hand, excessive screen time and exposure to certain types of media can exacerbate those symptoms, such as impulsivity, distractibility and difficulty with sustained concentration and attention. So you need as a parent to sit down and have a think what works for you. It's not about me telling you what to do. It's about what works for your family, but do set some clear limits and boundaries around technology use, where it can be used, when it can be used and for how long the devices can be used.

Set consistent routines and boundaries because this really does help children with ADHD manage their time and it reduces their impulsive behaviour. Again, encourage healthy tech habits, encourage breaks from screens, 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off type thing, and foster, of course, interests and hobbies, such as outdoor play or hobbies outside and away from the screens.

And that will help balance the tech, as well as having the tech as part of our real lives and use technology strategically. I think there are many apps and tools designed specifically for children with ADHD to improve their organisation, as I've mentioned before, that helps them with time management and productivity.

But go and explore some of those because not all apps are bad. In fact, some reminder apps are fantastic for helping children manage their tech time. Again, monitor their content and their screen, stay involved, communicate with them, and remember, of course, every child is unique, whether they have ADHD or not, whether they have additional needs or not, every child is unique and special and marvellous in their own way, and it might be, trial and error to find the right balance of technology that works for your family.

So be patient, be flexible and be supportive as you navigate the journey together. And this leads me on to our guest, Dr. Beth Moseley. So I'm delighted to say we're joined today by Dr. Beth Moseley, MBE, and she's a highly respected clinical psychologist specialising in child and adolescent mental health.

With over two decades of experience, she has dedicated her career to understanding and addressing the complex psychological needs of young people, particularly in the context of an increasingly digital world. Her expertise encompasses a wide range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression and behavioural disorders.

And recognising the profound influence of digital technology on young minds, Dr Mosley has become a leading voice in the field of digital well-being. She has investigated the research on children and teenagers, and her work aims to provide evidence based strategies to help families manage digital usage, and promote, of course, good, strong mental health. She's known for her compassionate approach and commitment to improving the lives of children and families through her work. So thank you so much for joining us today.

Beth: Thank you for having me here. It's a real pleasure.

Sue: So listen, I started briefly to say what all about you, but tell us a bit more about yourself and your professional background.

Beth: So I guess I've really had an interest of working with children and families since I can remember really. And the whole of my career has really been dedicated to supporting families and young people who sometimes are in extraordinary situations. I've worked with a lot of families in hospital settings where they might have an additional health need. But more recently, in the last decade, I've been working much more closely in children's mental health services. And I must say, in my whole 20 years of working in this field, I've never seen the need at the level as it is right now. And for so many families, they're having to wait a long amount of time to get any support.

And so my passion really is how can I provide advice and guidance and knowledge that might equip parents early in their journey, if they're worried about their child, that they can early on help their child or make sense of what's going on for their child to avoid them hopefully ever needing to go into a mental health service. So that's driven my passion outside of my NHS work.

Sue: Gosh, interesting, isn't it? And rather sad to hear that it's really escalated and the waiting list for families and children takes so long. Can you tell me and explain how you think digital technology and particularly social media are impacting the mental health of children and teenagers today.

Beth: Well, it's interesting because I've got three children of my own. I've got a 19 year old, a 15 year old and an 11 year old and I'm a single parent. So for me as a parent, I have a love hate relationship with digital technology and my children because I rely on digital technology a lot to keep them occupied and entertained, especially working full time.



But at the same time, when I'm ready, to do something with my children I get so frustrated about the fact that they don't want to do anything with me because they're more interested in what's going on in their online world. And I think this is a challenge that many families and parents are facing. We have this kind of ambivalent relationship.

We're using digital technology as well. And I think what we know from the research is, is that it's really difficult to show through the research what might be causing mental health difficulties in young people. What the research tells us is there's an association between increased screen time usage and mental health difficulties.

So the more time a child might be spending online or on their screen, the more likely they are to struggle with something like anxiety or low mood or depression. But what we don't know is it's a bit of a chicken and egg scenario. Is it that young people, when they are struggling with their mental health, end up spending more time on their screens?

Or is it the screen time extra use which is creating the mental health problem? And, and my sense of this is, we do need to use a bit of a common sense approach whilst the research is growing and developing. Because ultimately, we know what's really important for children's development. We know what's important for good well being and mental health.

And so if digital technology is getting in the way of our children being able to do those things, then in all probability it's going to be having an impact on their well being and their mental health. So, the things that we know are so critical or connections with others, so relationships with others.

And a lot of young people say, Oh, social media, it helps me have relationships with others. Um, and then other young people describe extreme distress when they have situations within their social media or online world where relationships break down, where they might be experiencing cyber-bullying. So, it can go both ways.

We know physical activity is massively important for our well-being and mental health and I cover this in my book in the well being now because so we know that doing physical activity quite often when you're sitting in behind your screen, you're not doing that activity. Sleep is so important. We know that quite often screen time can interfere with sleep. So it's almost going back to what is digital technology getting in the way of for my child or young person that I know is important, good for them. And therefore, how can I bring in balance in family life to make sure those things which are integral to good childhood development are not jeopardised by the use of screens. Does that make sense?

Sue: It's so interesting what you're saying. Yeah, absolutely does, because Jonathan Haidt's book, which I've read and nearly everyone else has, he talks about, and we've talked about it before in another episode, about experience blockers. That was quite a big thing to think that the technology can be blocking real life, everything in life.



Balance. I'm always on about balance, not banning anything. But you're right, it's nuanced, it's complicated. And in fact, the research isn't necessarily all out there on that. But what you're saying about common sense speaks to me as a parent as well, that you know your child and you know, sort of, if you keep the conversations going, if you keep connection with them and find some sort of balance around it, then I think, you know, we can support children and help them through the challenges that digital things offer them, as well as all the dangers that it offers them as well. So, I'm, I'm, I'm agreeing with you there. I mean, what are some of the common digital related issues that you encounter in your practice? Can you describe a couple of those for us?

Beth: I certainly can and this is a really interesting one because I work in a service where we get hundreds and hundreds of referrals a year and you never see on a referral from either a parent or a child or a professional saying my child is struggling because they're spending too much time online.

The difficulties that we tend to see in mental health services are really around things that are going on in a young person's life. So I think we have to acknowledge that young people's lives are becoming more complex and more pressurised just generally. So young people are coming in because there might be a bereavement, a significant loss.

They might have parental conflict or some kind of relational conflict in their life, which is making things more challenging for them. They might be experiencing more pressure at school, breakdown in relationship with friends. So they're the typical types of scenarios that we would see that would explain why a young person might be experiencing heightened anxiety.

Or low mood. Now what you do is when you meet with young people and families, you unpick things a little bit. What you might find is, is that some of the habits that young people are in around digital technology are compounding those difficulties. They're making them worse. So, for example, sleep is a big one.

We know, for example, that anxiety and low mood have a big impact on sleep patterns, typically making sleep more challenging at night time. So, if you're a young person or a teenager and your phone is there, as a substitute for boredom, what might happen is, is that you, you, anxiety, we know that for a lot of young people, actually it's the anxiety about not going to sleep that becomes a problem, rather than not being able to go to sleep.

You know what it's like if you've had a bad night's sleep, you've got a big day ahead of you the next day, you're terrified the next night you're going to have the same problem. Because if it's a one off thing you can handle it, but if it becomes a pattern, it becomes really challenging. So for lots of young people to avoid the fact they can't, they're struggling with sleep, or avoid thinking about the things they're worried about at school, they might use their phones as a distraction.

And of course, that is going to interfere even more with their sleep pattern. And we know that reduced sleep creates more of a threat-based system in our bodies and minds. So you struggle the next day and you get into these cycles and patterns. So, I think what I see in my work is, phones aren't necessarily creating the reason your families are coming into the service, but they are compounding them, adding to the problems.

So another example would be, uh, breakdown of friendship groups, hugely important in adolescence. It's one of the most important things for an adolescent brain, is to have a sense of belonging and connection and relationships with others. Now, the challenge with phones and, and the way that young people connect with one another through social media and Snapchat.

In the heat of the moment, you can do and say things online that can lead to huge escalations and distress. And that, for a young person who so cares deeply about their social status, it's the thing that's most important to them. Because their brain is wired, for it to be that way. In order to protect them, if you imagine a herd of antelope in the wild, they, the teenagers, need to stay together in order to avoid being picked off by a predator like a lion.

And it's exactly the same for adolescent brains. Our adolescents need to look like each other, behave like each other, fit in with a group. Or otherwise, their biology is telling them, I'm going to get eaten by a lion. So when your child is desperate for those new pair of Nikes, you know, it literally to them feels like a matter of life and death.

So if you imagine that's going on in an adolescent brain, and you end up kind of getting caught up with various things online, the escalation of potential drama and distress can be huge. I mean my 15 year old daughter, I'm always being dragged into the next thing that's going on. So I think for some young people managing that is incredibly difficult.

It's, it's hard managing it as an adult, and I've got a fully developed brain. So when you are a young person and your brain's developing and growing, I think these things are even more challenging. So again, it adds to some of the challenges that young people might already be experiencing.

Sue: So what can parents do to support their children and how can they recognise those signs that their child's digital use might be negatively affecting their mental health?

Beth: So, I think, whenever I'm speaking with a young person or family, I'm thinking about how is whatever is going on in their life having an impact on their ability to do the things that we all need to do every day.

So, we probably need to get to school or work. We probably need to have family. Opportunities to spend time with our friends, we need to look after our bodies, we need to wash, clean our teeth, that kind of thing. So, when you notice that digital technology is really stopping your child engage with life.

It's stopping them being able to get up in the morning, it's stopping them being able to get to school, it's stopping them doing the activities that they maybe previously really loved, like going to football club, or maybe hanging out with friends. When you start to notice that the kind of desire to be online exceeds, the desire to do anything else and that's starting to have a real impact on your child's levels of happiness and ability to kind of just even come down for an evening meal with the family.



And you probably know that the technology is taking over and we know that it's got a massively addictive properties. And one of the things that I kind of talk a lot about with families is try not to demonize the digital technology because if we take the position of, I told you so I know this is bad, I don't want you on this. I'm taking it away. If we take that tone, it means when our children or teens face a challenge with technology, so they might see some content, which is really to stress them, and we know, for example, that 80% of young people have seen violent porn by the time that they're 18. So if your child sees something, and they won't necessarily be looking for this thing, it will pop up, the algorithms know how to put this content in their stream, then they will be less likely to come to us to say, you know what, I've seen this thing online and it's really bugging me, it's really worrying me.

Because they'll be concerned that your reaction will be, well, that's it, we're taking the phone away, or we're taking that device away. I told you, this is what I was worried about. So what we want to do as parents is move away, I guess, from being quite judgmental, which is a natural thing to do. I was so judgmental about TikTok, I hated it, until I then realised I needed to do some of this stuff myself to help promote the work that I'm doing. And then I, I got more curious about it and got more curious about it with my daughter, showed an interest in her world and I actually learned some really important things about it, which changed my viewpoint. So there's something about moving away from kind of judgment to curiosity, spending more time just wanting to be part of our child's online world. So my son is always asking me to watch him on Fortnite. And I can't think of anything worse. If I'm honest, it bores me to tears, but actually for him, it's really nice to have my interest, but me, I get to understand why he values this so much and I start to see that he's really interacting with all of his friends from school and they've got shared goals and they're doing team building and I start to have a different perspective of some of the positive attributes of why this is important to him.

And that means that when things are going well or not going so well he can trust that he can have a better conversation with me about some of the issues that he might be facing.

Sue: Yeah, Angeline, you talk a lot about that, don't you? In past episodes, you've mentioned that being curious and getting stuck into the apps with the kids.

Angeline: What you're saying is music to my ears. My whole 'Data Girl and Friends' concept is getting parents and children just to talk and parents involved because it really makes such a difference and try out the apps. So this really, I really love that. And I appreciate your expert opinion. It's the same. If I may ask you about something that that I'm very curious about, really passionate about, is this whole AI chatbots, especially going back to what you said about not enough mental health services being available. And there's a lot of providers that are offering, oh, you know, these chatbots, AI therapists, all of this, or you can use, I don't know, people use their chatbots kind of in that way.

Can I have your opinion on that? I mean, is there some value in it? Is it just risk? I mean, really, I would love to know your view on that.

Beth: It's a really good question. What we know from young people is, is that if they're worried about their mental health, for example, the first thing they're going to do is going to go online and they're going to Google it and they're going to try and get some help online and this is what young people are telling us.

You know, when we've got a problem, we've got a question, even if it's not a mental health question, it could be a health question or any, any question that you could ever imagine, they will go online for that question to be answered first. I guess the key thing is, and the thing that we have potentially power as parents is giving our children guidance and access to the more trusted places to get that good advice from.

So there's some really lovely apps which are really healthy and they're designed by experienced clinicians and they, they're going to give your child really good sound advice and guidance. The risk, of course, and we know this is one of the challenges with technology, is that for young people who might be coming online and be worried about their mental health, we know that it doesn't take long for the algorithm to get them to some really unhealthy sites, where actually unhelpful strategies like self harm, for example, are offered as a, as a way of coping with distress.

So the more that we can do to have conversations with our children all the time about this is a good place to go for advice and guidance. This is something you need to be mindful of. So they're developing their critical thinking about the online world, the better. And I would say I've, I've got a list of apps in the back of my book, which I would highly recommend, which cover a range of areas.

Just saying to your child, worth having these in your phone, or just giving them a list so that they've got a trusted place to go. But I think more and more young people are relying on chatbots. The challenge is that there's a selling mentality online, so someone is trying to sell your child something.

So, for example, my 11 year old, I came home from work one day and he told me, yeah, mum, I've got clinical depression. I said, really? He said, yeah, I've got clinical depression and it's really bad. And I said, how do you know this? He said, well, something popped up on my screen and it asked me to do 10 questions and I had to do a thumbs up or a thumbs down and I got this many thumbs up which means I've got really bad clinical depression. And I said, well, you know, I'm your mum and I happen to be a psychologist and I don't think you have clinical depression. He said, no, I have. It's because of school.

It's because I hate school and I trusted it online way more than you mum. It's got seven times more knowledge than you. I thought seven times, there we go. It really was just such a poignant moment, so many layers to that. One, my son was on YouTube watching something about whatever he's interested in. Two, this thing popped up, took his interest, he completed it, and he was certain this thing was telling him the truth.

Over me is one who knows him well because he has a sense that the online world is a font of knowledge. And I just thought this is so dangerous. So the challenge for a lot of our young people is they are being targeted with these types of enticing questionnaires. You might have ADHD because you can't concentrate, for example.

That's a big one. I've seen a lot of young people just saying that. Well, I've seen it pop up for me as an adult too, and I think the same is true for the harmful content. So, we know that a lot of young people are not looking for harmful content. But it's popping up on their stream. And again, what do you do as a parent?

It's terrifying, isn't it? It's terrifying to think someone's telling my kid they've got depression. It's terrifying to think my kid might see sexual images, which he's 11, he's 11. You know, it just boggles your mind. I said to him, I, I have been doing that thing with a parent workshop with families about this.

And I, we were driving to football actually and I said, you know, my son's name, I said, you know, quite a lot of pornography pops up on, on young people's feeds. I couldn't believe it. It was saying 50 percent of 12 year olds have seen pornography, not because they're trying to see it, but because it's just popping up.

I said, has that ever happened to you? You know, you must, you always feel like you can talk to me about this because, you know, I know that it's not gonna be necessarily that you are looking for this. And he said to me, mum pops up all the time. I just shut it down. And I thought, he's never told me. That pops up all the time by having the open conversation, knowing I wasn't gonna tell him off he was able to say, mom, it popped up all the time and I said, well, I'm, you know, proud of you for, for managing to shut it down.

But if you ever wanna talk about it, please just, just, and it's awkward, he did say to me, it's so awkward, mum, it's so awkward, and I said, I know it is, but it's a reality of, you know, there's the upside of technology, but this is one of the tricky bits.

Sue: And that's what we've got to do, isn't it? I used to have great conversations, funny enough, when you said about going to football, I used to drive my teenage son to football training on a Thursday at six o'clock and I used to resent it a bit because it was all full of traffic and I was working full time and all that and then I started to realise this was our time. And actually with the teenager, because you're looking out, driving, you're not intense and looking at them. We used to have sometimes really good, deep and meaningful conversations and one of the episodes we talked about was pornography and the allure of it and you've just hit the nail on the head.

There he is, Mr Sophisticated at 11 going, yeah, pops up all the time, but I get rid of it. But at least because you're having that conversation, you can then talk with him. And what's scary from what you've just said as well is here he is doing a test and saying he's got this depression and you know how to chat with him and also ironically you're, you know, in that field.

Yeah. But at least if people are listening to this I'm hoping they're going, you know, God, I better have some sort of conversations with my kids, even though I don't know, you know, officially, but we could talk about those, those sort of quizzes that come up on my Facebook, and perhaps why it's not a good idea because you're giving away all your data. If nothing else, so it's really interesting, it's quite scary for parents, isn't it? What do you tell them then? How do you handle it? Is it just through these open communications and staying connected with them?

Beth: Well, the first thing I always try and do is say, try not to panic, because as soon as we go into panic mode as parents, we tend to make rash decisions that are not sustainable. And I think most things are recoverable in life. And a lot of the young people who get themselves in a fix with sexting, for example, get so distressed because they think that's it. They think they've done something now, which is going to follow them and ruin them forever.

And that's why I always say, don't use that language with young people with education too, because although you're trying to use it as a threat to say, don't do that, then what if that kid does do that thing, they've got that hanging over them, that they've, they've got something now in the digital world that's going to follow them around for their whole life.

So, I think we have to be careful about language and, and how we use that, to be mindful of that, that we're not trying to use fear to stop our children doing the things that we're afraid that they might do get involved with, but we're using a bit more kind of, you know, curious conversations. I think the other thing is, it's really interesting.

I looked at the recent Ofcom report. Now, parents are the most worried they've ever been in the history of mankind about children's use of digital technology and screen time. Ironically, they're doing the least they've ever done about it. This is in the off common report, 2024, so it was published in April.

And I know there's a bit of a revolution going on in some areas now where parents are really saying, yes, I'm gonna, you know, not let my child have a smartphone until they're a lot older. But what they're finding is, is that parents are sort of resigned to this. There's nothing I can do. And interestingly, there's a real sense that they don't want to use parental controls.

Sue: Yes, I've read about that! Yeah.

Beth: They don't want to use the parental controls to sort of restrict access to harmful content.

Sue: Is it because parents want to be their kid's friend? I've noticed over the years of what I do, you know, working with parents, they don't like to say no to them. They don't like to sort of upset them. Is that the reason or are they frightened of the parental controls because they think they're too complicated?

Beth: I think it's multi layered. One is, I think it's, it requires a bit of additional effort. And I'm, I'm terrible too. I haven't really used my, my parental controls that come with my broadband and I need to do that. I still, I need to do that. It's on my to do list. I think.

Sue: Do that by Thursday.

Beth: Yeah, exactly. Two, I think that parents We're like a lot of things in life. We kind of want our children just to learn this stuff without, or be able to manage that themselves without us having to provide the boundaries. And three, I think what you've said, it's, I think as parents we are finding it harder and harder to enforce boundaries, particularly ones that our children do not agree with or do not like.

And that's a massive challenge in this space. And with my 15 year old daughter. The arguments we have about the use of her phone are just incredible and actually we do get exhausted as parents. And we also get anxious, I think, about the backlash that our children have when we impose boundaries. And I think we overly worry that somehow those boundaries and that backlash equals our child being damaged and hating us forever.



And so, one of the things which was in the big ambition survey, which has been recently published, where they asked lots of adolescents, older adolescents, what advice they would give to parents. They said, please, impose boundaries on us, whether we like it or not, we need you to do it, we need you to help protect our childhood.

And I thought that was fascinating because I see this with my 15 year old daughter. She goes through the roof when I impose boundaries, but then I see a sense of relief when things have calmed down, that I've taken control and I've taken her out of the misery she's got stuck in by not being able to manage this stuff herself.

Sue: There's an interesting thing between authoritarian parenting, like my granddad did with my mother, you know, seven in Ireland. He was rather authoritarian and then the authoritative. Well, you know, that difference between do as I say, because I tell you, and then this kind of thing about having fair, consistent boundaries and they adapt as they grow and change.

There's been a change from that, that parents don't tend to like to tell kids. But I listened to Jeremy Vine on the radio a while back and there was a child who was year six, he was in a WhatsApp group because parents don't always think that WhatsApp is social media but it is. So he was on that group and they were backwards and forwards.

He joined it at four o'clock and by seven o'clock he had 400 messages and he was overwhelmed. Now they weren't cyber bullying, it was just a load of, you know, backwards and forwards and sort of what we would call as a grown up bit of nonsense. But, he was overwhelmed, almost tearful, and she said, would you like me to take you out of the group so you could actually blame me and say my mum took me out, etc.

And he looked visually relieved and he said, yes, please. So actually, by putting some boundaries in around some of this, not the negative, closed down, nagging kind of stuff that you was, you know, we were talking about, this open curious, protective parent, who is open minded, but on the other hand takes the role of the parent sometimes, in fact is doing the child the best because they can feel, okay, I don't have to carry this all by myself.

So it's a difficult one to balance, isn't it? But I hope people listening to this are thinking about perhaps just not giving the keys of the 4x4 to their teenager and letting them, you know, go away with it. Because we tend to over protect them in the real world and under protect them online, don't we?

Beth: It's so true. I agree with everything you've said. I always say to families, think about the two hands of parenting. One hand is that warmth and care and the other hand is boundaries. It's absolutely an essential part of the parenting role, and it can sometimes, for some parents, it depends on your parenting style and what comes naturally to you, but for some parents that boundary element can be really hard, and for other parents, the warmth bit can be really hard.



And I think the challenge with the phone is, is because it's so addictive, I keep saying the phone, it's because that, but digital devices, because it's so addictive, your child has a biological response to you taking that phone away or restricting that phone. So, in the heat of the moment, when you're saying to your child, get off your device or you actually come and turn it off, as I have done before, when I've given enough warnings to go around for dinner, the reaction that you get is sometimes absolutely staggering.

Sue: Yes, explosive, isn't it?

Beth: Explosive, yeah, real withdrawal of fury, I mean, real physiological response and that's the withdrawal of dopamine in a child's system. So I, I talk about this, the dopamine crash in my book and understanding that so that parents can talk to their children about it. So I've told all of my children about this.

My son talks about it all the time. I'm in the dopamine crash! And, and what it is, is whilst you're taken away from something that like, yeah, your gadget, which is giving you so much dopamine. You go into dopamine deficit, which feels horrible because you need to go through that in order for your body to start producing it and your brain start producing its own dopamine.

So you have that period, high intensity risk period of time from coming off a device, transitioning to another activity where your child is going to be particularly explosive or difficult because they're going through a withdrawal and until they've gone through that withdrawal their body's not going to produce its own dopamine and we can sometimes get in habits of moving kids from one dopamine activity to the next to help with that or have a chocolate bar or do this and to kind of keep those levels up.

And it's nothing worse for you as a parent. You want to take your kids out for a nice day at the beach or whatever it is, and they won't come off their devices. They're moping around for about an hour. It's misery. And you're thinking, why have I gone to all this effort when all I actually want to do is be back on their screens.

And they're going through that dopamine withdrawal. And my advice to any parent is if you're aware of that. That kind of time frame after coming off the device. Don't do anything or say anything that's going to be super triggering. Because I worked out with my youngest that that's when we were having these big disruptive fights when things got broken because he would react like that, then I'd be, "What are you doing? How dare you do that?". And then he would, because he was in that state, then he would really react. He would actually get really physical, start punching his bed. So, uh, exactly. So, I have learnt now that there is going to be a cost section of time where your child is going to be exceptionally difficult to communicate with and may do and say things they don't actually mean.

Sue: How long will that be Beth?

Beth: Well, it really varies between children.

Sue: Yeah.



Beth: It varies between children and I think for neurodiverse children it can be a longer period of time because we know typically for neurodiverse children they do struggle more with transitions between activities. For some young people, it might be that five minute flip, but what I try and do, so a few tips really.

Sue: Yes, please. Yeah, do.

Beth: Getting off gadgets as predictable as possible. So, create routines and rituals that give your children adequate warning, so they get time to, because I think some of the challenges with gaming, for example, is they are in a game, and they've got their, they've got their kind of where they are in the league.

And if you say it's dinner now, they cannot come out of that game without impacting their score. And that's one of the biggest arguments I always have with my sons. It's dinner now. Why are you in another game for 20 more minutes? So I'd say if you as a family can come together. Sounds like a really weird thing to do, but it was so effective.

So having these conversations at the right time for everyone in your family is the best, rather than the time when you, your child is having a meltdown and you're like, that's it from now on, you're never going on your screen before dinner, you know. So, if you can come round the table, get some pieces of paper, there's, I've got some links I can give you at the end for families where they can, they can link on to get some help with doing this.

But basically, you can map out what do we think should be our family rules about digital time, because we all know, for all of us, including me as the parent, that the digital technology can get in the way of the stuff that's really important for us as individuals and our family. Then come up with some shared family rules about it.

And when everybody's calm and happy, it's actually quite easy to come up with sensible rules. And if you as a parent commit to the rules as well, then actually you're much more likely to have a good outcome. Because my kids love to remind me, you're telling me to get off my phone, but you're always on it.

I'm like, yeah, but it's for work and I'm doing this and I'm doing that and I'm doing a shop. But they're like, it doesn't matter. I'm doing all these different things and they're just as important to me. So there's something about how do we also build in a bit less digital time as adults. Because the research does show that the more time you spend on your phone as a parent, the more time your child is likely to spend on a phone. So there's a really strong link there.

Sue: We talked about that before, yes, there is.

Beth: So, if you can make some family rules and then what I suggest you do is simple things, like meal times are Gadget free time. I mean, that can be challenging for some families if you have very stressful mealtimes or you have children who really don't like eating and you've got into habits around using their screen to help them eat.



So don't make things worse for yourself, significantly worse for yourself. But there are certain times of the day that I'd be encouraging you to think about saying, these are digital free times. Let's all agree those. And I think also agreeing, how do we work together to give you enough warning to get off your device because there is this thing, the dopamine crash, you know what that feels like?

Let's avoid these predictable problems because they are things that happen every day in every household. And those kind of family conversations mean you can come up with a sensible plan and you can think about what do we do when this doesn't go right? What are the consequences when actually I do throw my controller out the window because I'm so angry that you told me to come off my device. So you can, you can build into that consequences for things when things do go wrong. And then that's doing the beautiful job of the two hands of parenting. You've got the warmth and the curiosity. But you've also got the boundaries and you're kind of doing it collaboratively but you probably have to take the lead as a parent on that.

Sue: That is absolutely fantastic advice and this conversation about the dopamine is so enlightening for people listening to this because actually, oh that's what that is then and then they can think about how they're going to handle it. Beth, I'm very mindful of your books. Tell us about your wonderful books and resources and where we can find out more about you.

Beth: Well, I've written a book called 'Happy Families', and it's all really about giving parents the tools to understand their children's emotional well-being and mental health, and there's things that they can do to build good, strong mental health, but also when they're worried about their child, what they can do to support them if they might be struggling with anxiety or low mood.

So it kind of covers the full range of both protecting, so you're, doing things proactively and also if you have got any anxieties about what's going on for your child, it gives you all the tools to be able to understand your child better, the tools to communicate whether your child is quite young or an adolescent and also the tools to support them around things like anxiety, low mood, kind of difficulties managing emotions.

So I do a whole chapter on screen time and it's really practical and it's really realistic because I'm a parent too and I can't throw out screens because I, I need them actually as, as, you know, sad as that might sound, but I really do, and now my son is 19, I can really see how some of the things that I was worried about when he was 15 have not come into fruition.

He was a big gamer and he was 15 during the pandemic, and I just thought, oh my goodness, he is going to be stuck. gaming for the rest of his life. He's never going to get a job. He's never going to know how to communicate with anyone. He's never going to do anything other than game. But actually, you know, now in his life, he's got a really well balanced life and he does do a bit of gaming here and there, but he's, you know, he's got a job, he's studying and, and he's got to that point where he's got that balance.



So, but when I look back and I remember how anxious and worried I was, I think, some of the things I did, like turning the Wi Fi off at 11 during Covid so that he got some sleep, even though his mates were like, what, your mum, she's so old school, she's so tight. My son actually said to me recently, he said, it was so embarrassing, you were so humiliating, but I am grateful to you for doing that, mum, because if you hadn't, I don't think I'd have passed my GCSEs and then I wouldn't have gone on to do A Levels and I wouldn't be at uni now. So he did say, in hindsight, that he was grateful and I think the thing you said about children sometimes needing you to be the reason why they're not doing things online or why they're pulling back out or something or why they're going to bed at 11 o'clock and not staying up gaming all night.

Sometimes your children need that, that reason. So don't be afraid to, to put those boundaries in.

Sue: Be the baddie. And that's hindsight, isn't it? Looking back, you can see, and they can say, thank you, I didn't realise it. But they won't say thank you when they're 15, but they will when they're 19. So that's hopeful.

And this has been such a wonderful conversation with you, Beth, because it's so real, because we all battle these real issues. So I hope listeners listening will have taken a load of solace, some great tips, and tell us where we can buy your book again.

Beth: Well, it's on Amazon as everything is these days, but it's also in all bookstores. And I, you know, one of the most wonderful things about writing my book is that it's being published around the world in so many different languages, including Chinese next month, and it's just been published in the US.

Sue: Oh, congratulations.

Beth: I know. And what is so wonderful is that it really is providing access to families, other, other parts of the world.

This is what I'm discovering as I'm doing this, do not have access to any mental health guidance, advice or support for their children. So the parents are so desperately looking for, you know, really credible, relatable, because that's the thing I want to say about my book. I've written it from the point of view as a mental health professional and a parent, you know, because what you, are already feeling as a parent is guilty and you're judging yourself already.

So you need to read something that A, is going to be easy to read, but B, is also not going to feel, make you feel worse about yourself as a parent. And I really believe that my book doesn't do that because.

Sue: And it's practical.



Beth: It's practical and it's talking about it from the beginning. It's telling you all the things that I'm constantly doing every day, which, you know, are the things that everyone will be doing and saying, look, this, this is, this is it.

This is, this is life of being a parent in a very busy, pressurised world. But here are some of the top tips and things you can do to manage that.

Sue: Wonderful. Well, I love that's what I hope podcast gives people is relatable tips and advice. So thank you so much for your time today, Beth. It's been a pleasure talking with you.

Beth: Great. Well, thank you. Thank you for inviting me on and I hope that people found it helpful today.

Sue: 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'](http://worlddigitaldetoxday.com) to learn more about becoming involved with the world's largest digital well-being initiative. Start your digital detox journey today to better mental health and well-being for your whole family.

Tara: It's time for our family change segment where we suggest a small change that will make a big difference to your family's tech. So, grab your digital machetes, let's tackle this together. We're going to think about tech and a tracker. Creating a visual tracker or chart to monitor and limit screen time.

Involve your child in setting goals for daily or weekly limits and track their usage together as a family. You can offer rewards or incentives for staying within the limits or safe space. We always say it's not about how much time you spend online as important as what our children and young people are doing online.

And then they can earn, you know, extra playtime or choosing a special activity. And within that, my advice is to focus on what the children are doing well. I mean, of course, we'll have tricky days, but if we bring awareness to things that they're doing right. And we give our energy and attention to what they're doing in line with our boundaries for that tracker, that's the behaviour we want to focus on because whatever you pay attention to as parents, that's the behaviour that will expand.



VO: Listener questions.

Angeline: So now it's time for the listener's questions, which is something we are very grateful for. Any questions and comments that you send in and we've received some really fantastic ones.

And so let's just dive in and provide some answers. So, some questions are related to what kind of apps are appropriate for children with additional needs. The types of apps and programs suitable for children with additional needs can vary, obviously depending on their specific abilities, interests, and goals.

So, I'm just going to tell you some categories of apps and programs that you can look out for. There are many different kinds, fortunately, educational apps. Communication apps for children who might have difficulty with, with any kind of communication. Sensory apps. Those are designed to provide calming and stimulating sensory experiences.

Fine motor skills apps. They can be beneficial for children who struggle with handwriting, drawing or other tasks. Social skills apps is another one. They can help children with their social communication difficulties via some kind of practical practice. Behaviour management apps that can assist parents and caregivers in tracking and managing their child's behaviour. Executive functioning apps, as you mentioned, suit children with ADHD or any other kind of executive functioning difficulties, may benefit from apps that can help improve their organisation, planning and time management. And then they're also accessible gaming apps because gaming can be difficult with children with additional needs.

So there are a range of different games that can be more suitable. And another thing I'd like to just point out, Beth mentioned it as well, just really look out for the quality apps. So you talk a lot, Sue, about Common Sense Media. Common Sense Media is a great place to start. To look. What it says about the app before you pick the apps, just to make sure you have the right quality.

Sue: Common Sense Media have a great article on ADHD, social skills and motor skills, and yet they're playing Nintendo Switch. So, you know, it gives advice specifically about that, or what kinds of technology are good if a child has dyslexia, or a child who might be visually impaired. There's just masses of wonderful content on Common Sense Media, so we always recommend them as a wonderful place to go. And we're mindful that we're going to pop those all into the show notes for you so you can have a quick look and click on them to find your own things that suit you.

VO: Now for some top tips.

Sue: And now it's time for the weekly quick tips, where we share bite sized nuggets of wisdom to help you navigate the digital jungle more effectively, if you haven't had enough tips already.

So, Angeline, what are your quick tips for this week?



Angeline: So this is my last quick tip for the first season of Navigating the Digital Jungle. So mine is just don't give up. No matter what challenge comes up and you feel like you're not going to manage, then suddenly you find out about the existence of the dopamine crash and it can change everything.

So that's my tip. Don't give up. Know that there are additional resources out there for whatever problem that you're, you're facing. And that's probably not a quick tip, but it's a mindset.

Sue: It's quick enough. And Tara, what are your quick tips for this week? It's a quick mindset. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And Tara, what are your quick tips for this week?

Tara: I would advise all parents to download the apps that their children are using. to familiarise yourself with how they work. I'd even go as far in this tip to say download it first. You download the app first, you can monitor what your young person would see, what they are exposed to within that app, and then consider if it's the right fit.

App ratings, they're not always accurate, especially some of them are in this very broad category of teen. And what happens there is that the ads in particular don't match the app rating. By downloading it first and having a play, you could have a seven day rule. I'm going to have the app first and see if I think this is a good fit for you.

And be really aware of parental controls, if any, they've got them. But also you need to determine and have a look at whether there's a chat functionality, any location sharing or settings. So, we hear this often, don't we? Kids are way ahead of us. If you take that step and download the app first you can get ahead of the game.

Sue: So, Angie, what are you working on at the moment? I've just seen some new beautiful characters that you've created. Tell us a bit about those.

Angeline: Yeah, I do. I have a series of eight animals that I've created for small children to help get all of these kind of messages that we've talked about in this, uh, in this season to help them understand them on a different level.

So basically each animal has their own interests and their own actually digital challenge or not challenge. And we tell stories, they talk to each other. Uh, they talk to Data Girl and Isla AI Girl just to help young children relate to the topic a little bit better. It's quite fun.

Sue: Oh, they're absolutely divine. I love them. They're so cute, but they have such wonderful messaging behind it.

And actually in my Sue Atkins book club, I've just interviewed Wendy Goucher. She's the author of Isha and the Mud Monster Mystery, and we can put that into the show notes if you would like to see my interview with her on YouTube, but she's actually a cyber security consultant of over 15 years and she's written a whole swathe of wonderful books called Netty in Cyberland.



It's a wonderful series and this other book now is for 10 year olds. The Netty series is for younger children, but again, I love celebrating and telling everybody about all these wonderful resources, you know, because you can sit and read a book with a child that actually has a lovely message and they don't realise they're getting the message and the same with your lovely characters.

They're so lovely and watching the videos together is a wonderful way to talk and teach them and educate them and empower them and so that they are ready to embrace the digital world safely as best we can. So, Tara, what are you working on at the moment?

Tara: I'm continuing my work with schools and young people.

You can find out more about that over at PHOMO Tech. That's with a PH, like a phone, 'PHOMO.tech'. But just a personal anecdote. Last night was my son's transition evening, getting ready for high school, secondary school, the big step in our house. And I really loved that they have this sort of contract book. So all the policies and the documents relating to uniform, homework, equipment, being ready.

But within that, there was also the phone policy. Really clear. And it was very visual. Never used, never seen, never heard. So if phones are going into school from 8.55, they're in the bottom of the bag. Zips locked away. And not to be used. Really clear, you know, I talked about consistency earlier in this podcast.

A visual, like a traffic light system on boundaries. If it's seen or heard, it's going to be taken away. There's a consequence. Handing it in, SLT involvement, parental involvement. And what I loved was within this sort of contract going out to parents or policies, there's a space for the parent to read through and sign it.

And then for my son, so even, you know, sort of age 11, they're going off to secondary school. They've got to sign and take responsibility for the policy, and specifically here, the mobile phone policy. Really well done by the school, I'm impressed.

Sue: Now before we go, I've been working on the 'Summer Change'. Now, you may be listening to this in the dark nights of December. But at the moment, we're coming up to the summer holidays here in the UK and it doesn't really matter whether they're summer holidays, Christmas holidays, or any time, to be honest, because we don't say challenge, we say change, because I believe small changes can make a big difference.

So, look at screen-free, we're calling it Summer Adventure. Schools out. So let's go screen-free. So I want you to transform your family's summer with our 'Screen Free Summer Change'. Saying goodbye to perhaps excessive screen time. Not all, just excessive. And say hello to creativity, outdoor fun, and unforgettable family moments where you make some memories together.

So, I want you to dive into this, build with engaging activities. Very simple. It will help with your personal growth and help you with your meaningful connections with your kids. It's 'Turn Off- Tune In'. So you can join us on Facebook and find out the joys of some of the summer free activities. They're very simple and they're very fun.



So one of them is Designate Daily Outdoor Time. So make nature your playground. 2. Remove screens from bedrooms. Create a tech free sanctuary there. 3. Cultivate creativity. Dive into arts and crafts, or storytelling, or imaginative play, or dressing up play. Focus on developmental rich activity. So, that's playing outside, that's physical activity, it's climbing a tree, riding a bike.

Unstructured play. Let kids go and let them just play and let them have time with friends. We need to down time in the holidays too. It's not all about learning and keeping all that summer slippage from going. Go and play, have fun and encourage independent play. Let kids solve their own boredom and discover their creative passions.

I was bored quite a lot as a kid. That's why I think I'm so creative now. And another simple one, tech- free meals. Make all your family meals screen free zones to encourage conversation and bonding. Don't nag about eating the broccoli and holding the knife and fork properly. Talk, chat, laugh, ask questions, be inquisitive, share magic moments together, the very simple things.

So, join the change. Ready? If you're ready to embark on a screen free summer, sign up on the show notes here to join our Facebook community. Get access to our exclusive resources and receive weekly tips and inspiration joining the screen free summer change. Share your journey. We'd love to hear how you're getting on.

Thanks. Share your photos, share your stories, tag us on social media, screenfree summer. And if you've got any questions or you need some support, we're here at 'info@navigatingthedigitaljungle.com'. So let's make this summer one to remember. Filled with creativity, adventure and meaningful connections.

VO: Navigating the digital jungle with Sue Atkins and friends.

Sue: So until next time, thank you for joining me on this particular episode. And throughout the whole season, I have really enjoyed all the guests that we've had, all the tips that Angie has shared, all the tips that Tara has shared, all the wonderful group activities around navigating this digital jungle. It's not easy, but I hope you've picked up some practical ideas. And so until next time, stay safe, have fun and keep exploring.

