

Ten steps to successfully unplug children from technology

1. BECOME INFORMED regarding the effects of technology on child development and learning.

Technology overuse is related to child attention problems, poor academics, aggression, family conflict, impaired sleep, developmental delays, attachment disorders, impaired body image, obesity and early sexuality. The signs of technology addiction are tolerance, withdrawal, unintended use, persistent desire, time spent, displacement of other activities, and continued use. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one to two hours per day of combined technology use, yet elementary children use on average eight hours per day!

Need Help? Get informed by checking out the Zone'in website www.zonein.ca to watch the [Suffer the Child](#) and [Reality Check](#) videos, review the research on the [Fact Sheet](#), read [articles](#) and comment on the *Moving to Learn* blog www.movingtolearn.ca, sign up for the free Zone'in [Child Development Series Newsletter](#), or order Cris Rowan's book *Virtual Child – The terrifying truth about what technology is doing to children* www.virtualchild.ca.

2. DISCONNECT YOURSELF – Be available for your children!

As child technology use patterns that of their parents, technology addicted children are likely to live in a high technology usage household. Parents need to determine how much technology is too much, and set limits. Parents should then model balancing technology use with other activities. Schools could sponsor a *Tech Unplug* week where classrooms compete to reduce technology use in home and school, or have one day per week with NO TECH.

Need help? The Zone'in [Mixed Signals Workshop/Webinar](#) offers the participants research based information regarding school, family, and community technology reduction strategies. Parents, health and education professionals can purchase the [Tech Tool Kit](#), complete with screens, questionnaires, schedules, and a variety of strategies to help reduce the use of technology.

3. RECONNECT - Designate "sacred time" with your children.

The underlying causal factor for addiction is fear of human connection or "social anxiety", and results from poor parent/child attachment formation. Parents and teachers might benefit from exploring past experiences of attachment with their own parents, and think about how this experience may have affected how they relate to their own child or students. Designation of "sacred time" in the day with no technology (meals, in the car, before bedtime, and holidays) is a first start toward reconnecting with your children.

Need help? Zone'in [A Cracked Foundation Workshop/Webinar](#) offers participants information regarding parent/child attachment and addictions, and profiles *Attachment* and *Addiction Questionnaires*.

4. EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES to technology as a class or family.

Not all children are interested in or value the same activities as adults. Fostering a tolerance for differences and respecting individual preferences can go a long way toward promoting children's motivation to unplug.

Need Help? Have each family member make a list of ten realistic, inexpensive things to do by themselves, with a friend, with another family member, with a pet, indoors, and outdoors. Help children create a game, song, joke, poem, story or dance. Buy a book of games, create a story night, play wrestle, make up a play, build a fort of couch cushions, or family cooking night are but a few of a myriad of alternatives to technology use.

5. ENHANCE SKILLS PRIOR to unplugging your children.

Children with technology addictions have poorly developed skills in other areas. Self-identity, social skill, relationship to nature, and sense of spirit, are often disconnected in children who overuse tech. Drastic or sudden reduction in technology with a child who has an addiction, will result in chaos at school and home, as the child is now alienated from what has become their whole meaning for living. Help build performance skills by exposing children to alternate activities that are “just right challenge”, not too hard, not too easy, to build skill.

Need help? Zone'in offers the new [Unplug'in Game](#) for school and home settings, a developmental tool to build performance skills and confidence prior to a tech unplug.

6. ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING through engagement in the four critical factors for child development - movement, touch, human connection, and nature.

Children need to rough and tumble play 2-3 hours per day, and spend time connecting with their parents, teachers and other children, in order to achieve optimal physical and mental health. Rough and tumble play promotes adequate sensory and motor development of the vestibular, proprioceptive, tactile and attachment systems needed for achieving literacy in printing, reading and math, as well as paying attention and learning.

Need help? Zone'in [Harnessing Energy](#) and [Back to Basics Workshops/Webinars](#) offer participants information regarding sensory and motor development— or — purchase the new [Zone'in](#) and [Move'in](#) educational programs for schools and families.

7. ADDRESS PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY – Go Outside! Go Green!

Parents' perceptions of safety correlate with child time indoors in front of TV, internet, and video games e.g. if a parent perceives the world as unsafe, that child will spend more time indoors using technology. Fear of litigation in schools and communities, has drastically changed playgrounds, making them boring and unchallenging for most children. Outdoor rough and tumble play is a biological need for children, and has been proven to significantly reduce problematic behaviors, aggression, and attention deficit, as well as improve depression and anxiety.

Need help? Zone'in [Why Children Can't Sit Still](#) Workshop/Webinar offers participants the [Nature Directive](#) and [Playground Design](#) handouts to enhance attention restoration through increasing access to nature, and enhance development through creating “sensational” playgrounds.

8. CREATE INDIVIDUAL ROLES and foster independence.

50 years ago, children had family jobs and chores that if were not performed, threatened the very sustainability of the family. While life was tough, children had a strong sense of who they were, and their purpose in the family. Children benefit from knowing their role in the big picture, and



6840 Seaview Road, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A4

www.zonein.ca

self-esteem comes from being independently productive. Realistic challenges and expectations by parents and teachers promote defined roles for children, and provide a structure where they can begin to try out new skills. When faced with a task that is perceived to be beyond a child's skill level, frustration and poor self-esteem will be the result.

Need Help? Zone'in [Foundation Series Workshops/Webinars](#) offers participants the *Child Inner Drive Directive for Schools and Homes* – or – purchase the new [Unplug'in Game](#) to establish self-identity, roles, and a sense of purpose in life.

9. SCHEDULE BALANCE between technology use and activities.

Follow the *Zone'in Concept* of an hour of 'energy in' (technology use) equals an hour of 'energy out' (movement, touch, connection, and nature). Make up a weekly schedule with designated time for technology balanced with time for healthy activity. When beginning the *Tech Unplug*, it's important to alternate between familiar, predictable, structured activities and novel activities. The parent and teacher's job is to skillfully *dance* the child between predictability and novelty during the initial unplug period. Children can't do what they haven't been taught, so need to teach children how to explore new activities, while providing predictable structure and consistency.

Need Help? Zone'in Programs Inc. offers parents, teachers and therapists' products, workshops, consultation and training to help address child technology addictions. See www.zonein.ca for more unplug information and suggestions, or purchase the Zone'in [Tech Tool Kit](#) for help.

10. LINK CORPORATIONS TO COMMUNITY to create sustainable futures for children!

Zone'in Programs Inc. offers an invitation to all corporations involved in technology production, to re-direct a percentage of their gross profits back into building healthy communities. Awesome playgrounds, free recreation passes for children, building safe parks and nature trails, and school camping trips are but a few sustainability initiatives to ensure children stay unplugged.

Need help? Zone'in [Diminishing Returns Workshop/Webinar](#) offers participants the *Productivity Designs for Classroom and Gym* handouts to improve student productivity and learning, and provides ideas for attaining technology corporate funding for playgrounds and exercise equipment. Check out www.zonein.ca for more information on the *Linking Corporations to Community Initiative*.

Technology Use Guidelines for Children and Youth

Developmental Age	How Much?	Non-violent TV	Handheld devices	Non-violent video games	Violent video games	Online violent video games and or pornography
0-2 years	none	never	never	never	never	never
3-5 years	1 hour/day	okay	never	never	never	never
6-12 years	2 hours/day	okay	never	never	never	never
13-18 years	2 hours/day	okay	okay	limit to 30 minutes/day		never

© Zone'in Programs Inc. April 2014

A division of Sunshine Coast Occupational Therapy Inc.

email: info@zonein.ca • Toll free tel: 1.888.8zonein (1.888.896.6346) • Toll free fax: 1.877.8zonein (1.877.896.6346) • tel: 604.885.2666 • fax: 604.885.2668