Fearfully AND WONDERFULLY — MADE

A digital guide for a successful school year

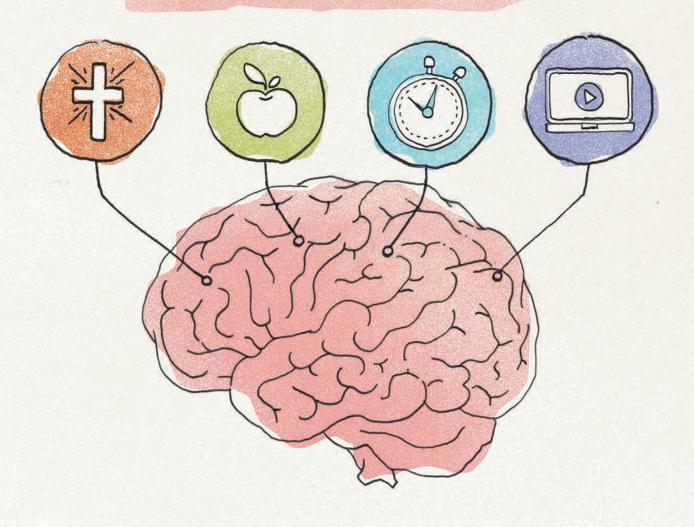


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"I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, my soul knows it very well." — Psalm 139:14

What if we lived as if we fully believed that we are fearfully and wonderfully made? Wouldn't things be different? I picture God designing us as His masterpieces of creation made for incredible journeys with distractions, challenges, doubts, surprises and unexpected gifts along the way.

Each new school year presents families with a wealth of opportunities for engagement — opportunities that can be taxing on their brains, souls and relationships. By fostering healthy and balanced connections and providing appropriate fuel for both the brain and the soul, parents can give kids a solid foundation to work with throughout the school year.

In this download, we offer you four ways to build and maintain the brains and souls in your home.

- Personality Differences Personality is essentially how we each filter reality. We have provided you with summaries of seven ways we can connect with God. Keep in mind that there is not one way that is better or superior to the other, and that we all have multiple ways we filter the world around us. Your family can identify each of your dominant ways that you tend to most attentively and energetically connect with God. In doing so, we can encourage one another toward a deeper relationship with God. Is God truly relational or a distant God? If He is relational, He is ready for connection any time. God does not stop speaking. It is we who need to manage ourselves to become attuned to Him. God's word and prayer fill our souls to overflowing, so that we can pour into others. Imagine a school year where your family taps into the free refills for your soul that God offers as you pour into those around you.
- The Right Fuel Our brains are three pounds of pure miracle! Our brains consume an incredible amount of calories, require lots of

- water and are constantly working. As a result, our brains need sleep to create memories and optimize learning. They also need fuel to function at their best. In this download, you will receive great advice from a pediatrician about how sleep can effectively fuel the brain.
- Time Management Time is so easy to spend, yet impossible to buy. We get to be stewards of our time. I picture time as an investment. What are you investing in and why? Kids need visuals to learn how to best manage and invest their time. From youth group to music to sports there are many good things to get involved in, but what are the most important? In this download, we provide a practical visual to help your child have self-awareness and purpose when it comes to spending time.
- Technology and Entertainment We hope to come along side of you as a resource to help you navigate and discern well as you lead your child toward freedom in their soul. It is so easy to just let our kids consume music, video games, television, movies, social media and apps, but a lot is at stake. The messages they receive will have a direct impact on their perceptions, beliefs, behaviors, thoughts and emotions. What is your family mentally consuming and how does that impact what they believe, say and do? In this download, we give suggestions about technology and how it is used.

We hope this download helps you facilitate important discussions and habits in your home this coming school year based on spiritual truths. Research supports the fact that spiritual security results in a higher likelihood of prosocial behaviors, complementing the benefits of self-control for both others and ourselves. We are fearfully and wonderfully made to be contributors in God's kingdom story. We hope this school year is full of growth, freedom, pursuit, relationship and purpose through God's steadfast love and guidance.

Daniel Huerta

Vice President of Parenting and Youth

SPIRITUAL



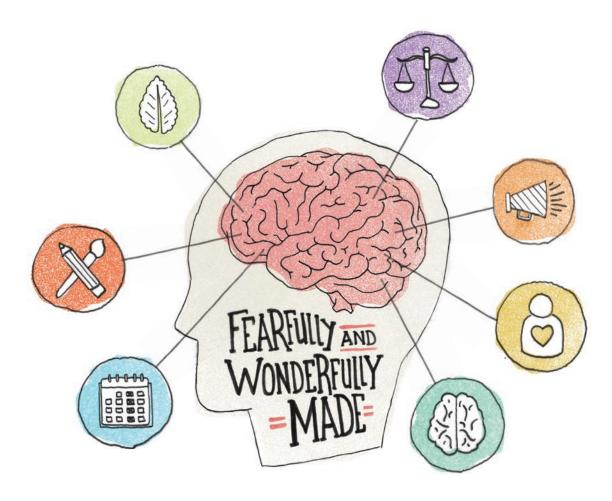
How Your Child CONNECTS to God

Is there a formula to connect with God the "right way"? Many Christians have grown up believing so. Quiet Bible study, daily prayers, going to a church service with upbeat music and a three-point sermon—these are the "proper" ways we worship and grow in our faith.

But not everyone fits the mold, and as children grow, they can begin to recognize that God has built their brains and bodies to approach His throne in a variety of ways. As parents, we can help our kids recognize their unique wiring to help nurture their faith. Children can connect

with God, learning about His world and His truths, at the same time they are learning who they are and what their place is in the world.

In his book *Sacred Pathways*, pastor Gary Thomas describes different sets of patterns and practices believers may have a preference for in their relationship with God. Most children will exhibit a mix of these spiritual learning styles, and as parents, we have a precious opportunity to allow our children to find the pathway that allows them to connect best with their Creator and Savior.





Naturalists love God through His creation. The psalmist was thinking along these lines when he wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1, NKJV). Naturalists love being out in nature —camping, listening to birds, looking at flowers, and thinking through analogies of relationship through nature. This is where they feel closest to God. They also love journaling, self-study, photography, and other creative pursuits.

You can nurture their faith as you:

- Take walks and hikes, observe God's creation with awe.
- Visit zoos, gardens and aquariums.
- Read their Bible outdoors as the sun rises.



Sensates love God through their senses. They love art, music and beauty. King David is a good example of this kind of person. He was a poet, a harpist, and a singer, and when he brought the Ark of the Covenant back to the tabernacle — a place richly decorated with gold ornaments, beautiful fabrics, and lots of small artistic touches — he sang, "Oh worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!" (1Chronicles 16:29, NKJV). Sensates love audio dramas and are more emotionally sensitive to smell, light, and sound as they have time with God. Some enjoy listening to soft background music as they relax and have quiet time.

You can help Sensates grow in their faith when you:

- Visit an orchard—pick fresh fruit and experience the wonderful flavors that God has given us to enjoy.
- Have family "art worship" times to reflect on God's truth through the creation of paintings and pottery.
- Go to parks, smell flowers, do art together, listen to music, sing, talk about the miracle of the senses and what our senses tell us about the world.
- Encourage them to draw as they listen to a sermon or a speaker or when they are having quiet time with God.



Traditionalists love God through tradition and long-established patterns of worship. They thrive on routine and ritual. They love using words and talking through concepts, and will likely take notes during sermons. Psalm 119 — all 176 verses of it! — celebrates this brand of spirituality from beginning to end: "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart" (Psalm 119:1, 2, NASB).

Help your kids draw closer to God as you:

- Choose a regular night of the week to read and meditate on a Psalm.
- Consider family devotionals that use a set liturgy, perhaps using the Book of Common Prayer or another prayer book.
- Develop and memorize a "family prayer" that you can say together at mealtimes.
- Help them find devotional books and develop a reading plan.



Activists love God by standing up for His Truth and righteousness. They get frustrated at injustice, especially when others are hurt by it. They want to be active, speaking, and especially involved in a cause. The apostle James encouraged all of us to adopt the attitude of Activists when he said, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22, NKJV).

You can show them more about God when you:

- Serve as a family at food pantries, homeless shelters and pregnancy resource centers.
- Practice tactful confrontation together, focusing on gentleness, love and persuasiveness.
- Focus on God's faithfulness, studying Scripture that teaches how He is working when we cannot see it.
- Adopt an elderly neighbor or child who could use a friend, or open your home to show your kids faith in action.



Enthusiasts love God in the midst of joy and celebrations. They love to see the evidence of God's work around them, and enjoy role-playing as they learn. They like hands-on and physical learning. Here again King David comes immediately to mind. On the occasion mentioned above — the return of the ark to the tabernacle — David "danced before the Lord with all his might," so that the Scripture says, "So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the trumpet" (2 Samuel 6:14, 15, NASB).

You can nurture this child when you:

- Allow your child to participate in group worship services.
- Talk about dreams together, especially if your child has experienced dreams that were spiritual in nature.
- Encourage your child's sense of wonder for God's work.
- Invite new friends into your family's life and share your faith with them.



Caregivers love God by helping others, especially those who are hurting. They enjoy working in groups, and feel a sense of worship when they give their time to serve others. Jesus exhorted Peter to live out his faith in this way when He said, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17 NIV).

You can help caregivers see God more when you:

- Invite lonely or hurting people to your home for dinner, encouraging your child to help with the preparation.
- Give your child a chance to volunteer in the nursery during the Sunday sermon.
- Have them verbally share what they are learning.



Intellectuals love God by using their mind. These kids feel closest to God when they are reading books about Him. They do not like "soft-intellect" devotional books. They want to think deeply and figure out answers to life's questions. This approach is exemplified by King Solomon, who tells us that he wrote his proverbs "To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice, and equity: to give prudence to the naïve, to the youth knowledge and discretion ..." (Proverbs 1:2-4, NASB).

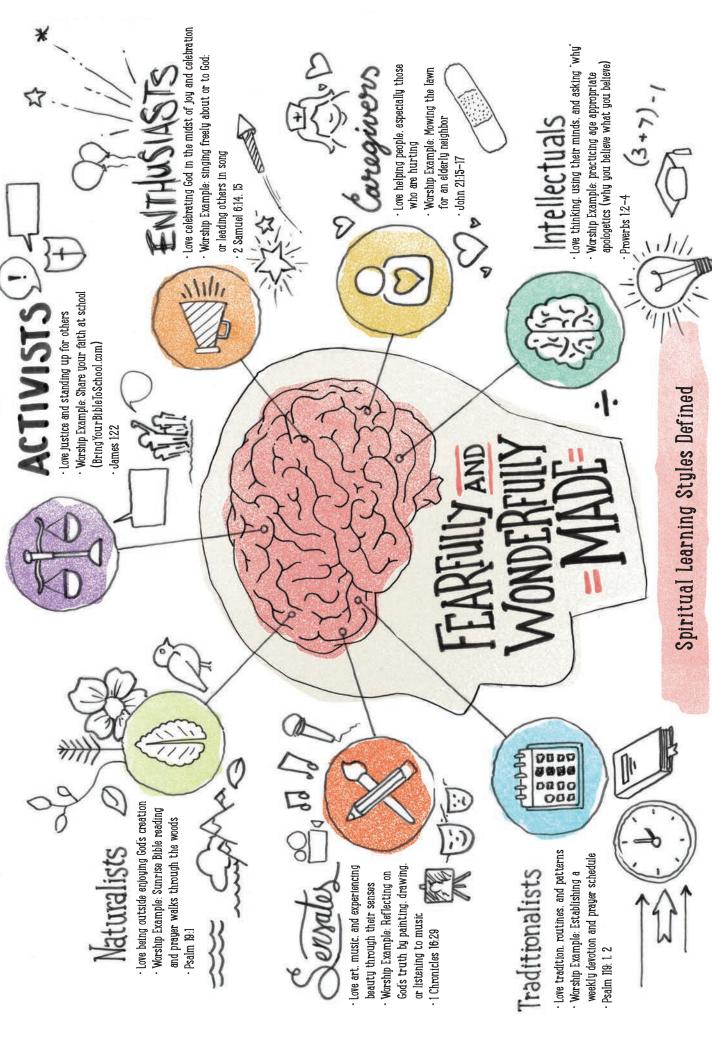
Help these kids think through their faith as they:

- Work on crafts and projects that help your children get engrossed in a Bible character or certain portion of Scripture.
- Study age-appropriate apologetics resources and prepare answers for those times when your child is called to account for their faith.
- Ask "Why?" a lot when in the car together.
 Talk about answers or ways to find the answer together.
- Create lists and systems. They love to use lists and read theological books.

Adapted from "7 Ways Your Kids can Connect with God" by Christie Thomas.

Enjoy talking about your child's faith more as a family with the "Ways Our Family Can Connect With God" activity included with this guide.

For more information see: FocusOnTheFamily.com/FearfullyandWonderfullyMade



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Activists

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- Focus on God's faithfulness, studying Scripture that teaches how He is working when we cannot see it.
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· Visit zoos, gardens and aquariums.

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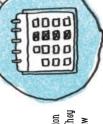
Naturalists

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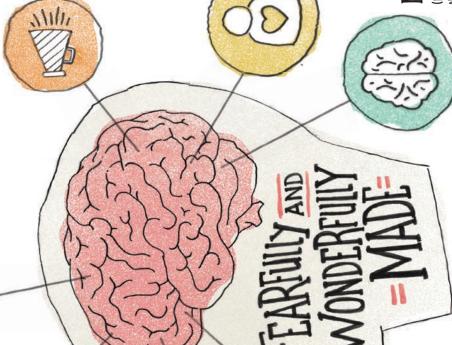
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Ways Our Family Can Connect With God.

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- · Invite lonely or hurting people to your home for dinner encouraging your child to help with the preparation.
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- Ask "Why?" a lot when in the car together Talk about answers or ways to find the answer together

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SELF CARE



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Understanding how the brain functions is important when assessing our children's spiritual gifts and strengths. Keeping their brains healthy requires careful attention and management, and one of the most important aspects is rest. Ensuring that your children get enough sleep is just as important in their spiritual and mental development as it is in their physical development. By creating bedtime habits and regulating sleep patterns, you can help provide your child with the appropriate tools to help their brain stay healthy.

Facts ABOUT Sleep

How to Help Your Family Get Better Sleep: 10 Steps

Every May, like clockwork, groups of students come into my office with one complaint: They are exhausted. Many are convinced they have mono, anemia, chronic fatigue syndrome or some peculiar disease they have read about on the internet. And they want blood work taken to find out what is wrong with them.

And every May I ask the same question: How much sleep have you gotten over the last month? While most believe they have gotten sufficient sleep, the truth is, they haven't. Majority of the teens and young adults I query have gotten less than 6 hours per sleep at night. No wonder they feel like they have a disease.

Inadequate sleep is a very common problem among children and adults. Unfortunately, there are serious ramifications of too little sleep. In fact, research shows that 30 percent of people are sleep deprived. Adults with inadequate amounts of sleep are at risk for physical, psychological and even neurological health issues. These include cognitive impairment like confusion and an inability to concentrate,

depression, anxiety, irritability, cardiovascular disease, immunosuppression, metabolic disorders, obesity and more.

How Much Sleep is Needed?

So how much sleep do you need to avoid these side effects? The short answer is that it depends on your constitution. But here are some recommended guidelines for adults. Average adults need between 7-9 hours routinely. Those who get less than six hours per night consistently over several months are considered sleep deprived. Teens need 9-10 hours of sleep every night and almost 30 percent say that they aren't getting enough sleep. When teens are sleep deprived, their grades go down, they experience mood volatility and their driving can suffer.

The younger the child, the higher the sleep needs are. Elementary aged children should get 10–11 hours of sleep at night and preschoolers should get 11–13. Many parents read these numbers and are shocked because most of their children don't get anywhere near this much sleep particularly in their teens.

Why Aren't We Getting Enough Sleep?

In an age when we are so concerned about eating organic food, getting enough exercise, lowering intake of cholesterol and managing our weight, why, we should ask, do we fail to pay attention to one of the most important facts to good health? The answer is simple: We believe that we can't get more sleep. Most of us parents spend hours in the car driving kids from one activity to another, other parents spend late hours at work and still others can't sleep because of insomnia or a mood disorder.

Many adults and kids simply don't know how to get better sleep. After all, when was the last time (if ever) your doctor talked to you about healthy sleep hygiene? One would think that a physician would always ask about sleep. But we usually don't because we, like you, feel that everyone's lives are so busy, that we can't increase the amount of time we sleep.

However, we must pay attention to the need that God gave each one of us to rest. After all, in Genesis God rested. He made our bodies to need adequate time of refreshment to function well, serve Him and enjoy life.

Adults and kids who are sleep deprived can't focus, perform well at work, school, sports or keep their moods up. In fact, sleep deprivation can look exactly like ADHD, depression and anxiety. I wonder how many kids are inaccurately diagnosed with disorders that really stem from too little sleep?

How to Get Better Sleep?

So what can we do to improve the amount and quality of sleep for our kids and ourselves? First, we must pay attention to good sleep hygiene. Here are important things to remember.

- Regulate your circadian rhythm. Our circadian rhythm is our body's 24-hour nighttime-daytime cycle. It cues our body when to sleep and when to wake up. Sleep deprivation throws our circadian rhythm off and our body doesn't know how to respond. The best way to keep your rhythm consistent is to do tasks as close to the same time every day that you can. Exercise, eat, work and go to bed about the same time every day.
- Control light exposure. This is one of the easiest things we can do to improve sleep. Open and close your bedroom blinds at the same time each day. Minimize light when you are sleeping and don't be around bright lights before bedtime. If you awaken in the night, keep lighting in your room low.
- Exercise. You don't have to be a gym rat or marathon runner to improve your sleep. A brisk walk after dinner around the neighborhood, kicking a soccer ball in the back yard with your child or going for an easy bike ride can be sufficient to help you fall asleep faster and improve the quality of your sleep.

- Keep your bedroom temperature cool.
 Sleeping in a warm room can make you restless so try to keep your bedroom a few degrees cooler than the rest of your house.
- Create a bedtime ritual. Yes, even grownups need time to wind down and get ready for bed. You can read, listen to calming music or pray. This tells your body that it's time to relax.
- No electronics the hour before bedtime.
 The light from electronic screens tricks our bodies into thinking that it's still daytime.
 So, turn off the television, computer and cell phone one hour before you go to bed.
 Also, while a show may help you fall asleep, it won't help you stay asleep.
- Keep your bedroom free from electronics. The bedroom should be a place of rest and quiet. Many shows, computer games, etc. cause us to be charged up. It is important to create an environment where your mind doesn't have to concentrate on anything—even a game of solitaire.

- Stop caffeine and nicotine at least 4 hours before bedtime. These are stimulants and can prevent you from falling asleep.
- Skip that glass of wine before bed. Some people take a little wine before bed because wine does help most people fall asleep. The problem is, it won't help you stay asleep and sleep quality will not be as good.
- Eat turkey and drink milk. It turns out that mom was right when she told you to drink warm milk before bedtime. Milk and turkey have L-Tryptophan, an amino acid that can help you sleep.

God created our bodies so that we can enjoy life, honor Him and serve others among other great things. He calls our bodies the temple for the Holy Spirit and if we take Him at His word, we have an obligation to take the best care of that temple that we can. And let it sleep.

Dr. Megan Meeker is a pediatrician in Michigan and a best-selling author of several books on parenting healthy kids

For more information see: FocusOnTheFamily.com/FearfullyandWonderfullyMade

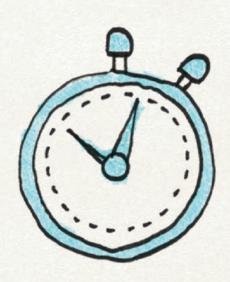
TIME MANAGEMENT



Time management can be difficult for all ages, especially younger children who are often not the time manager of their daily activities. Helping your child learn to map out the time they spend during the day can aid in their understanding of where their time actually went. Take time to talk through how we train our brains to learn and think in different environments doing different things. In opening this conversation, you can show your children that how they spend time affects virtually everything about their day.

Time Management

The activity will help you assess if your children are over-scheduled. To help you dig deeper in managing your family's time well, we have included the following resources.

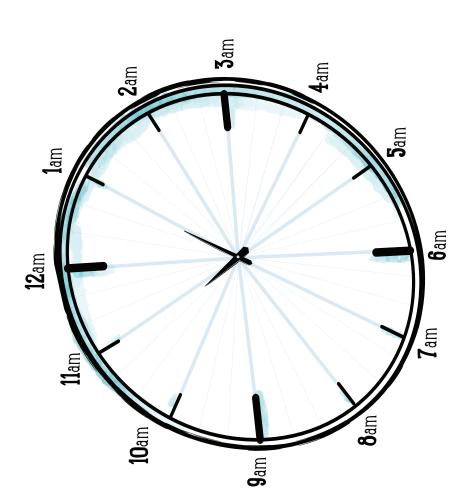


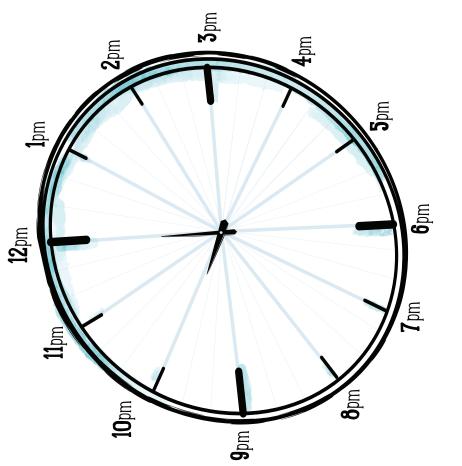
For more information see: FocusOnTheFamily.com/FearfullyandWonderfullyMade

How do you spend your time?

Take time with your children to map out how they spend

their days. Using different colors, label and color the time they sleep and the time they are at school. Then focus on one recent day and map out how they actually spent their time—not how they think they spent it.





Talk about how we nurture our brains through certain activities and not through others. For example, taking time to play outside nurtures the brain more than playing video games.

Have your children map out different days so they get a picture of how they spend their time and how this might affect the care of their brain.

MEDIA DISCERNMENT



As the body needs food, water, and sleep to function, the mind requires mental nourishment as well. The media our children consume can impact decision-making. It's important to be discerning about media choices so that children can understand what they are feeding their brain.

Responsible use of Technology

"Should I just deny my kid getting a smartphone?" he asked, raising his hand at one of my parent workshops. "The negatives just seem to outweigh the positives?"

It's a great question, and I don't blame the Dad who asked it. I think we all have had moments where we wished our kids grew up in the 80's spending too much time listening to Journey on their clock-radio. Now we live in a world where kids have access to social media, music, TV and the internet, all in a little device that fits neatly in their pocket. This device not only follows them to school, to church, and to the bathroom. . . it follows 4 out of 5 teenagers into their bedroom every night.

"Delay, don't deny them getting a smartphone," I answered. And then I went on to explain how a Smartphone is like a car. Mom and Dad don't just hand their kids the keys to the Explorer when they're 11. They sit in the passenger seat right next to their daughter and teach her how to merge into traffic and follow at a safe distance. Once she proves herself—then she can drive by herself. Cars can be used for good or bad. You can drive your car to church, to school, or to have lunch with your Grandma. Or you can choose to speed, drive drunk, and text while driving, all habits that may hurt people. The car isn't bad or evil; we just need to learn how to use it responsibly. It's the same with our child's smartphone, gaming system or iPad.

Keep our eyes on the calendar

Here's the reality. The day is coming when our kids are going to be out on their own making media decisions about what apps to download and what entertainment to watch. The one question we might want to ask is—am I preparing them for that day? Because chances are they aren't going to call us up from that college dorm and ask, "Hey Mom, can I watch the new HBO show that all my friends are watching?" They are going to make that decision based on the values they adopted from you. So how can we teach our kids how to use tech wisely?

Create a Climate of Comfortable Conversations

I have noticed parents tend to panic if they get a glimpse into the world of social media and entertainment only clicks away on their kid's devices. I don't blame them. Today's screens offer plenty of dangerous distractions: the newest music video from a Top 10 artist, the stories of the celebrities young people follow on Instagram, hardcore content easily accessible on the internet and predators perusing social media pushing friend requests to children—children who now live in a world seeking followers. When most parents realize these dangers, the tendency is to overreact.

One problem with overreaction. It doesn't help. In fact, it makes you *unsafe*.

Here's the problem. The best chance we have of teaching our kids values—like choosing what kind of entertainment they consume—is through conversations. Don't worry. I'm not suggesting you let your kids do whatever they want with their screens. Far from it. I'm just suggesting we think about our approach. And that begins with turning our overreaction into interaction.

Sadly, most parents don't engage their kids in conversations about social media and entertainment. Whenever parents truly see the dangers available on today's screens, their first response is to enforce a bunch of rules and restrictions on their kids. Rules aren't bad, but they shouldn't be imposed without reasoning. One of the most famous parenting passages in the Bible: Deuteronomy, Chapter 6:6-7, encourages these ongoing conversations: ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (ESV)

So don't give rules without providing the reasoning.

Try it out. The moment you tell your kids, "Sorry, you're not going to have your phone in your bedroom at night," they'll demand reasoning, probably in one word: "Why?!!" And if they do, welcome the question. Because the why is an invitation to a conversation. The why will equip them to make these decisions on their own in the future.

When you respond to that "why?" it's your opportunity to turn your overreaction into interaction:

"Glad you asked. I'd love to hear your opinion. Mental health experts agree that it's not good for us to have our phones in the bedroom at night. Why do you think they recommend this?"

Don't hesitate to read an article on the subject, briefly share some of the research with them and ask, "Do you agree? Why or why not?"

You might say, "Let's read this book together and we'll go out to breakfast every Thursday and talk about it. When you finish the book, you can have a phone."

In the meantime, some realistic rules can reinforce this reasoning.

Apply realistic rules reinforcing the reasoning

1. Delay smartphone ownership

Don't be so quick to hand your kids devices. Yes, some people out there have the mindset that we live in a technological world so we should teach our kids young. I wouldn't disagree—teaching our kids how to use tech is important. But there is a difference between sitting down with our kids to play a video game and giving an 11-year-old free range to talk with strangers on a social media app. So delay smartphone ownership if possible. Most social media sites require them to be 13-years-old anyway, which leads to my next recommendation.

2. Dont allow social media until 13

Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook all require users to be 13. This is actually enforced by the Federal Trade Commission's Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) which prevents websites or online services from collecting information from anyone under 13. That means when your 11 or 12-year-old middle school student tries to sign up for SnapChat, the first thing SnapChat does is ask for their birthdate. If they're not 13, then it won't allow them to sign up. So why are countless 10, 11 and 12 year-olds on social media? Because they lied about their age. It's tough for parents who are actually adhering to the law (COPPA) and abiding by the recommendations of mental health experts who recommend kids wait until

at least 13 for social media. We live in a world where the average age a kid gets their first smartphone is 10-years-old, 89% of teenagers have smartphones in their pocket, and 97% are on social media. So when kids come home and whine, "But aaaaaaaaaall my friends have smartphones!" just remember; we also live in a world where depression, anxiety and teen suicide are at an unprecedented high, and most experts, like Dr. Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University, link this to social media and screen time.

3. Limit screen time

Maybe you read the first two tips above and have already concluded, "Whoops, too late. I already gave my kid a phone and I'm pretty sure she's on social media." It's not too late . . . and you're not alone. Most of the parents I meet at my parent workshops already have given their kids devices and didn't regularly monitor their kids' activity with those devices.

That's ok. You can start setting those limits now. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 2 hours of sedentary screen time daily and that kids don't sleep with devices in their bedrooms. Sadly, most parents don't listen to this advice. In fact, 79% of teenagers go to bed with their smartphone in their bedroom, 68% keep it within reach, and 29% actually sleep with it in their bed. This introduces our kids to all kinds of risks, the biggest being sleep problems, which have an intrinsic link to depression.

Jim Steyer, CEO of Common Sense Media summarizes it well:

"There are times and places where phones, in particular, but all digital platforms should not be there. The bedroom is the obvious one."

I find that when families have simple screen limits like no devices at the dinner table, these limits can actually enhance conversations because there are no distractions. It's okay to say, "Sorry, game time is over. I guess you gotta go play outside." Or better yet, "Well, since screen time is over, whataya say we go take a walk together?"

Enhance our Kids' Faith with Media

Sometimes parents become so distracted with blocking out the lies, they forget to talk about the truth! In a world so potent with lies, today's parents need to be that much more proactive about engaging their kids in conversations about truth.

Psalm 78:4 says:

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. (ESV)

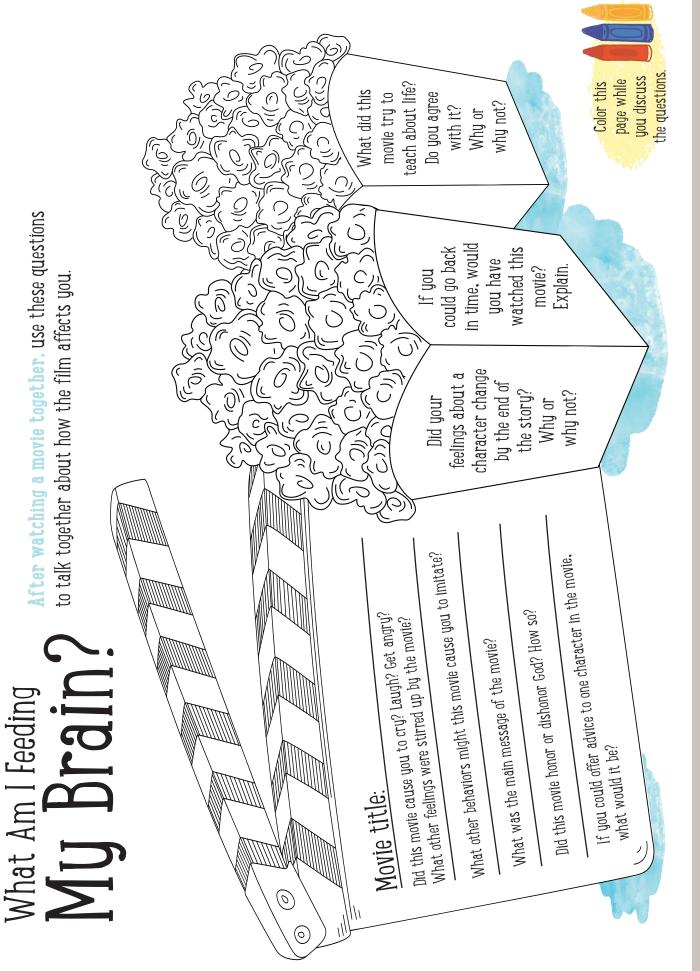
What if screens actually helped us do that? Sometimes you might find it helpful to encourage screen time... using screens and media to enhance our kids' faith. Check out FocusOnTheFamily.com/FearfullyAnd-WonderfullyMade for a few electronic options that might benefit the family.

Do you ever notice that it's random relational times that open the doors to some of the most meaningful conversations you'll ever have?

But you never know when those moments will happen...other than, "when you are at home, and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up."

Jonathan McKee is an author, speaker and Focus on the Family Associate. Learn more about Jonathan at his website, TheSource4Parents.com

Enjoy talking about Media Discernment more as a family with the "What Am I Feeding My Brain?" activity included with this guide.



After watching a movie together, use these questions

Fun Resources FOR Kids

FocusOnTheFamily.com/Store

Bible Kidventures: Stories of Danger and Courage

Doomsday in Pompeii

Adventures in Odyssey The Imagination Station® book series

Passages™. volume 1 (includes Arin's Judgment. Darien's Rise and Annison's Risk "The Marus Manuscripts" series