SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe Middle School | September 2024

A Child's First Phone

According to Ofcom, about a quarter of 5-7 year olds own a smartphone, while by age 11, 91% of children have one. If you're considering getting your child a phone or passing down an old device, here are four crucial questions to think about:

• Is your child mature and responsible enough?

- Evaluate if your child can adhere to screen time guidelines and use the phone appropriately. Have they shown responsibility in other areas like taking care of their belongings?
- Make sure your child understands the potential risks of smartphone use, such as exposure to inappropriate content and cyberbullying.

• What are your child's communication needs?

- Think about whether your child truly needs a smartphone. If they're occasionally away from you and involved in activities where they need to stay in touch, a smartphone might be helpful, but not always necessary.
- If it's for educational purposes, consider whether they should have their own phone or if it could be a family device.

• What safety features does the device offer?

- Activate parental controls before handing it over to them to limit access to unsuitable content.
- Explore apps on your phone to monitor their usage.
- Research the device to understand the available safety features.
- What boundaries should be set to ensure your child's safety when using a smartphone?
 - Establish clear rules regarding phone usage, including when and how it can be used, permitted apps and guidelines for communication with others.
 - Discuss consequences for not following the boundaries and model healthy smartphone habits yourself to set a positive example for your child.

In this issue:

- A child's first phone
- Better sleep routines
- App focus: Snapchat

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SETTING BOUNDARIES WHEN GIVING YOUR CHILD THEIR FIRST PHONE:

Parental access:

- Passwords shared
- Regular checking of social media and messaging services
- Approval of apps before download

Phone-free time:

- Daily limits
- Phone-free activities
- Designated time set aside for phone use, then returned to a central place when not in use

Phone-free areas:

- Phones are not to be taken into bedrooms or bathrooms
- Phones turned off and stored in a central place (for charging), 30 minutes before bed

Conduct:

- Respect and kindness shown whilst using the phone
- Open dialogue and no secrecy about what it is been used for

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SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

10 WAYS TO IMPROVE SLEEP FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN	
Consistent	Sleep - friendly
bedtime	environment
Aim to put	Create a quiet,
your child to	cool, dark room
bed at a similar	with as little
time every	distractions as
night.	possible.
Limit screen time	Encourage
Avoid all types	physical activity
of screens for at	Encouraging
least 30 minutes	physical activity
before bed.	can tire them
Swap for a calm	out, aiding in
activity.	better sleep.
Diet and nutrition Avoid sugary, rich and heavy foods in the evening as these can disrupt sleep.	Address anxieties If your child has fears about bedtime, spend time reassuring them.
Be mindful of	Teach self-
naps	soothing
Avoid naps,	Teach them to
especially in the	fall to sleep and
afternoon and	get back to sleep
evening.	by themselves.
Calm routine	Model good
Create a calm	sleep habits
routine before	Let your children
bed which.	see you
includes activties	prioritising sleep
such as reading,	and maintain a
colouring or	consistent
gentle play.	routine.

The Significance of Sleep

For children, sleep plays a crucial role due to the significant changes happening in their bodies and minds. Here are some key reasons highlighting the importance of sleep:

- Physical growth and development: Sleep triggers the release of growth hormones necessary for physical growth.
- Brain development: Quality sleep is essential for brain development, especially in areas related to decision-making, impulse control and emotional regulation.
- Emotional well-being: Sleep aids in emotional regulation, stress reduction and is closely linked to mental health.

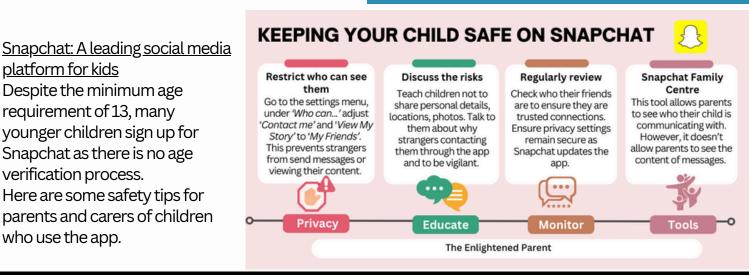
Ensuring that children get enough quality sleep is essential for their growth, learning and overall wellbeing. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that children aged 5-12 get 9-11 hours of sleep a night.

Barriers to good sleep

There are many reasons that children don't get good quality sleep. Some of these are:

- Irregular sleep schedules, especially on weekends., can disrupt a child's sleep routine.
- Use of electronic devices late into the night can be a significant barrier to a good night sleep.
- A noisy or brightly lit room can make it difficult for children to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- Consuming caffeinated or sugary foods and drinks, especially in the evening can impact on a child's ability to fall asleep.
- Children might underestimate the importance of sleep, leading to a reluctance to create good sleep habits.

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