Screens, space and your family

Why this matters for your child and teen - every brain is the same!

WEEKS 4-5

If you've introduced a device curfew over the past few weeks — well done. That single change is one of the most meaningful things a family can do.
This week, we want to share something a little different: not what to do, but why it matters — and why it matters especially for teenagers, not just children in general. Understanding the science can make the hard conversations at home a little easier to navigate.

The teenage brain isn't finished yet

The part of the brain that manages impulse control - the prefrontal cortex - isn't fully developed until the mid-20s. Teenagers are not being defiant when they can't put a device down. They are quite literally, not yet wired to resist it.

Sleep loss compounds - every single night

Screens suppress the melatonin that signals the brain to sleep. One late night on a device costs far more than one tired morning — it accumulates across the week. Concentration, emotional regulation, and memory all suffer.

These platforms are designed to be irresistable

Social apps and short-form video are engineered by teams of experts to maximise time-on-screen. Infinite scroll, notifications, likes — each triggers the same dopamine response as a poker machine. This is not a character flaw in your child. It is a design feature.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT DISTRUSTING YOUR CHILD

It's about understanding what they're up against. A teenager who struggles to step away from a screen is not weak-willed or disrespectful — they are responding exactly as these platforms intend. Your job as a parent is not to shame them out of it. It's to change the environment so the struggle is less frequent.

This week's ask

Nominate **one screen-free evening per week** as a household. One night where no one — adults or children — is on a device after dinner.
It doesn't have to be elaborate. Dinner, a walk, a board game, some reading, early bed — anything that isn't a screen.
Do it on the same night each week so it becomes predictable. Predictability is what turns a rule into a rhythm.

What you might notice

- **Restlessness or boredom in the first few weeks** — this is normal, and it passes.
- Your child seeking your company more than usual — lean into it.
- Better sleep on screen-free nights — you may notice it too.
- **Pushback, negotiation, or sulking** — hold the line warmly.

The discomfort your child feels is not a sign something is wrong. It's a sign that the habit was stronger than you both realised — and that change is actually happening.

One evening. Same night. Every week.

A note of encouragement

The families who make the most progress are not the ones who do everything perfectly. They're the ones who keep trying, keep the conversation going, and don't give up after a hard week.
You are already doing something important by reading this. If you'd like to talk through what you're noticing at home — or if you need some support in navigating a particularly challenging response from your child — please don't hesitate to reach out.

WHERE WE'RE HEADED THIS TERM

WEEKS 1-2: FIRST STEPS | WEEKS 2-3: THE CURFEW | WEEKS 4-5: THE WHY | WEEK 6: WHEN IT GETS HARD | WEEKS 9-10: READY FOR TERM 1

COMING NEXT WEEK: Pushback is not a sign that you're failing!