

Help! What can we do to replace screen time?

If you've been immersed in all-things-screens for awhile, or find it creeping into your life more and more in ways that don't necessarily feel good, then you may also be finding it more difficult to remember what you used to do before screens became the norm. Or maybe, if you are a technology native, you've never had the exposure to many non-screen activities. Below is a list of every day activities children and families have engaged in and loved for many years prior to all-things-screens. Simple, do-able, and relationship-building all the way.

Ideas to get you started:

- Listen to music together—in the car, lying on the living room floor, while doing chores; play or make instruments (pots and wooden spoons make great drums, paper towel tubes with beans become rain sticks...); sing along with and dance to favorite songs.
- Play board or card games together—learn new ones, teach old favorites, make up a few!
- Play tag! Or Hide-and-seek, Capture-the-flag, Sardines, Kick-ball. Indoors or outdoors, rules adjusted accordingly ☺.
- READ. Books, books and more books. Head to the local library for more. Make up silly stories. Share stories from your childhood; share stories about current funny and meaningful experiences. Make up stories! Kids love to listen to and tell stories.
- Color, draw, paint, glue, squish play dough, make up yet another story, do origami, fly paper airplanes, make, write, and mail a card to Grandma (she'll love it!).
- Watch birds, visit the zoo, walk your dog, create a string toy for the kitty to chase, discover the insect world out in your yard, find the new buds in the spring, splash in puddles!
- Plop on the floor and stare at the ceiling and share "I remember when..." stories.
- Go swimming, hiking, skiing, sledding—or just head outside and take a walk.
- Have a snowball fight or build a snowman...or just gather up some (clean) snow in a cup, grab a spoon, and eat! Brrr...
- Write a letter to a friend. Or if a letter sounds too daunting, try a postcard. Maybe even gather up all the cutting work your little one did—you know, those little snip-snip-snips that left a pile of paper bits on the table? Gather them up, put them in an envelope to someone special, and label them with, "Look at all the cutting work I did!"
- Have a scavenger hunt, go exploring to nowhere in particular, or make Garden Soup with a bucket and sticks, leaves, rocks, grass, dirt, water...
- Enjoy a cup of cocoa and a conversation together—elbows on the table allowed ☺
- Watch the sunset, look at the stars, admire a sunrise, gaze at the clouds and find all kinds of dragons and critters and faces in them. Go on a rainbow hunt!
- Have an indoor campout, build a fort, throw a blanket over the table to make a cave or bring in that empty box big enough for your child; add a flashlight and book and watch the fun unfold.
- Bake together! Then take some of your goodies to a neighbor to share; or let your child mix up a "recipe" with all kinds of kitchen ingredients to share with the label of "for eyes and noses only!"
- Curl up in a patch of sunshine and daydream...

Let the ideas flow! Try today, right now, to lessen screen time and (re)-discover what really can leave you and your children feeling deeply, meaningfully, and joyfully connected. Go live today!