



**A Parent's Guide to
Calming Your Kids**

WITHOUT A SCREEN



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CALMING YOUR KIDS WITHOUT A SCREEN

Pulling out a tablet is often the easiest thing to do when your child starts to fuss. However, there are alternatives that are safer and more effective in the long run.

You've probably heard recommendations about limiting screen time for children, but the context matters as well. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises against relying exclusively on media to calm children because it may interfere with their learning how to manage their emotions on their own.

In fact, playing games and watching videos can backfire. Some studies have found that excessive screen time contributes to behavior issues, including hyperactivity, impulsiveness, and difficulties with paying attention.

What can a parent do when kids are bored at home or about to throw a tantrum at the supermarket? Discover how to calm your kids without a screen.

Steps to Take with Your Child

Limiting screen time can be a tough job when you're surrounded by devices at home and away.

Be prepared with a variety of technology-free responses that you can use:

- 1. Show empathy.** Give your child your full attention when they need to talk with you. If circumstances prevent that, let them know you want to sit down together as soon as possible. Validate their feelings even if you disapprove of their behavior.
- 2. Let them cry it out.** Teach your child that strong emotions are natural. Give them a chance to find their own solutions. They're likely to settle down faster if you stay calm.
- 3. Arrange playdates.** Solitary screen time sometimes crowds out social experiences that are essential to your child's development. Encourage your child to hang out with friends and participate in after school activities.
- 4. Assign chores.** In addition to teaching responsibility, routine tasks can be soothing. Prepare meals together or assign each child a day to vacuum.
- 5. Read books.** Brain scans show that reading is associated with superior structure in white matter cells responsible for learning. Keep books around the house and use your library card.
- 6. Go outdoors.** Nature and exercise both relieve stress. Take a family bicycle trip or play catch in your backyard.
- 7. Make crafts.** Expressing creativity is another way to relax. Browse online for project ideas and repurpose household materials like fabric and gift-wrapping paper.
- 8. Encourage mindfulness.** Introduce your children to meditation and yoga. Walk around your living room slowly chanting happy words. Do simple stretches and breathing exercises.
- 9. Enforce bedtimes.** Children engaged in excessive screen time tend to go to bed later, fall asleep slower, and get fewer hours of sleep each night, according to The National Sleep Foundation. Set a curfew for turning off electronic devices at least two hours before bedtime.

Steps to Take by Yourself

Your children pay more attention to your actions than your words. Consider how your daily habits affect your children, so you can provide a positive role model.

Try these strategies:

1. Interact as much as possible. Your time and attention are the most valuable things you can give to your children. Plan family activities and one-on-one outings. Staying connected will help your child to feel safe and calm.

2. Slow down. What are mornings like at your house? Children are more likely to cooperate when you plan for enough time to avoid rushing around.

3. Design a family plan. Negotiate a media use contract for your family. Agree to basic rules for using electronic devices, so you can make technology your ally.



Nickelodeon and Super Mario can be fine **in moderation.**

However, teaching your children to **manage their emotions** and entertain themselves offline will prepare them for a healthier and happier life.

