



Parent Guide

This Guide is one place to turn as you prepare to talk with your tweens and teens about mental wellness. Consider having short weekly conversations on topics in the film such as stress resilience, emotional intelligence, and establishing healthy screen time habits. Tech Talk Tuesday (TTT), our weekly blog, has helped thousands of families have such weekly talks. Sign up for it, get other resources, and more info on the points below at www.screenagersmovie.com.

Building Skills for Stress Resilience

- **Validate Feelings:** There is an art to validating our teens' feelings effectively. Work to tell them you see and appreciate the challenge of what they are feeling, and try not to follow it with statements such as, *"Oh don't worry, it will get better."*
- **Empower Problem Solvers:** Rather than jump in to try and fix their problems, ask, *"Do you have any solutions in mind?"* or *"Let me know if you want any input from me."*
- **Talk About Your Emotions:** Let them know about how you work to handle stress and other difficult emotions. It is not about burdening them but sharing them appropriately.
- **Support with Resources:** If your teen is systematically avoiding the social time, school work and other activities due to anxious and/or sad feelings, get support and find resources for help on our website. This includes learning what you can do at home, such as opposite action, exposure interventions, and behavioral activation.
- **Prioritize Sleep:** The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends 6–to 12-year-olds get 9 to 12 hours of sleep a night, and 13–18 year-olds get 8–10 hours a night.

Keeping phones and other devices out of their room at night is important. For teens with devices in their bedrooms, 36% report that they wake up and check it at least once a night. Another study shows that just having a phone (or other mobile devices in the bedroom) negatively impacts sleep duration and quality even if teens report not checking them.

- **Teach the 3 Ex's of Worry:** This is a great skill for both youth and adults regarding everyday worry. Author Lynn Lyon teaches the 3 Ex's strategy. **"Expect"** -recognize that worry often arises and practice accepting it; **"Externalize"**-pull it out and personify it, *"Hello worry"*; **"Experiment"** do the opposite of what the worry demands, -it demands attention. Instead, don't get into a discussion with it, but pivot into other activities or thoughts. This takes practice.
- **Prioritizing Face-to-Face Time:** Find more ways teens can have screen-free time with peers, younger kids, and adults of all ages. Examples include jobs, getting to know their friend's parents, having neighbors for dinner.

Seeking Support

Unfortunately, "parenting and private" are two words that often go together. We are in a major tech revolution that warrants open conversations and help-seeking. We agree with the teacher in the film who says, *"The most successful people in life are those that can ask for help."*

SCREEN AGERS NEXT CHAPTER

- Letting your kids know examples of when and how you have reached out for help, is a great way to have discussions and model this important skill.
- Ask your teens whether they know where to go if they want to seek outside help, and if needed, help them find resources. Ideally, they have at least one teacher they can talk with and another adult in the family or a friend's parent.
- Get support yourself when you are facing the emotional challenges of your teens.

Advocate for More Stress Resiliency Skills in Your School

More and more schools are implementing programs to build resiliency skills. Parents can make a big difference in organizing together and working with their schools.

- **Social-Emotional Curriculum-** Visit our website for the programs in the film and others.
- **Wellness Clubs-**Where teens teach their peers important in-person communication skills, conflict resolution, and relationship building.
- **Peer-to-Peer counseling and leadership training.** Ample data shows that if teens are properly trained, that teens teaching teens about important skills is effective.

Examples of Screen Time Guidelines

In conversation with your teens, determine guidelines for your family. Sometimes you will decide on a rule that your teens will disagree with—that is OK, but explain your reasoning. For example, let's take sleep. Share with them the science of sleep and that you want to parent inline with **your values**. You value good sleep for their emotional wellbeing and having tech off and away is essential to achieve that.

- Car rides without devices (we allow them for directions and other quick planning issues)
- Phones and other electronics out of the bedroom at night
- Family meals without devices
- Plan ahead. For example, consider emailing guests before they come for dinner that it will be phone-free because you want to ensure everyone gets to have undistracted time together —kids may groan for a moment but so often they are truly happy afterward
- When together out in the world, i.e. doing errands, have phones mostly away

Tech Talk Tuesdays

We have hundreds of blogs, full of relatable stories, examples, and science to help you with all sorts of parenting issues. Also, we know it is hard to decide what limits are right for your family and hard to see them through. On the TTT blog there we have many writings on making rules work! **Sign up for new weekly blogs:** <https://www.screenagersmovie.com/tech-talk-tuesdays>.