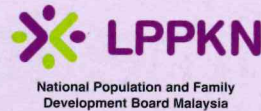


Disconnect Digitally, Reconnect Emotionally



Without a doubt, digital is the future. However, we do need to know where to draw the line and prevent ourselves from overindulging in it. Failure to do so could lead to digital addiction. It is fairly common nowadays to see parents handing their smartphone or tablet to their child to keep them entertained.

However, this is where parents will need to exercise self-discipline on their part to avoid the pitfalls. As parents, you should lead by example and serve as a role model for your child to emulate as he grows. As the saying goes “Too much of a good thing is a bad thing!”



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No Replacement for Parents

One of the most common uses for electronic gadgets is as a ‘digital nanny’. All too often, parents take the easy way out by handing their toddler or young child a gadget for them to watch shows or play games, all for the sake of some peace and quiet.

However, this strategy is risky especially if it is an integral part of your child’s routine (the next section of this feature article will highlight the danger to his development). What starts off as an innocent way to pass the time could turn into a dangerous habit, and children as young as four are reportedly becoming hooked. Allowing toddlers to play with a tablet or smartphone excessively could lead to an addiction to digital technology and cause serious long-term effects.

Family Time Is Important

Without a doubt, quality family time is equally as important now as it was in the past. Sadly, too many Malaysian families are falling into the digital trap – families used to connect (especially over meals), but now it is becoming more common to see whole families together with their eyes glued to their gadgets and not talking much with each other.

As parents, you will need to build your relationship with your child. A solid relationship is critical and spending quality time together will ensure that he feels important and loved, thus allowing you to build a stronger bond as a family.

While there are numerous ways to achieve this, the key to succeeding is undivided attention. Every parent must commit to this – this means no multi-tasking during family time, i.e. no screen-time of any sort (e.g. games, texting, watching movies, etc.). You can establish some simple ‘traditions’ within your family, such as:

- **Family meals**– have these as often as possible. It can be a simple matter of sitting down together for a meal or preparing for a big gathering with family or friends. Involve your child in all aspects including menu selection, food and table preparation, serving the food, ensuring everyone eats together, and when clearing up after meals. All these activities give you plenty of opportunities to bond with your child, so you should make the most of it.

