

## **WHAT THE BEEPP?**

There is a risk and promise to technology. If you have children in preschool and primary school, I have developed a BEEPP checklist for you to test if you are over-using tech/on-screen devices with your children. Here is the BEEPP acronym explained:

- B      Babysitter
- E      Emotional crutch
- E      Experience thief
- P      Pacifier
- P      Prompt

### **Devices as babysitters**

How often do you use technology to babysit your child to free you up to do other things? Young children need and want you in their lives. When you are absent, even though they are occupied, there is an emotional void that a screen cannot fill. Do you see me? Do you hear me? Am I important to you? These are three questions they ask of you, non-verbally, every day. When side-lined to a device too often, they are not getting yes answers to those questions. They will assuage their pain with a device, but it's no substitute for you!

### **Devices as an emotional crutch**

Is technology/a screen being used as an emotional crutch to put your child to sleep or to get them to eat? Many parents report that their children can do neither without the aid of a screen/device. This means they are not developing the self-regulation skills and self-discipline for the basics in life. If they cannot fall asleep without the aid of a digital tablet now, imagine what kind of tablet they may need in the future!

### **Devices as experience thieves**

Is technology an experience thief, stealing/displacing real life experiences from your child that are essential for their development? What is technology displacing, remembering that young children learn best through concrete learning experiences with real people, real toys in real time, to give them multisensory experiences of the world? Tech has so much to offer, just make sure you create real foundations first.

### **Devices as pacifiers**

Do you use a screen to pacify a tantrumming or upset child? While it most certainly will shut a child up, it also shuts them down and then they don't get to experience and reconcile their emotional world. You do not want an emotional dwarf so beware of how you use devices to manage your child.

### **Devices as prompts**

Is your child reliant on technology to prompt them what to do next? Children are losing their initiative and creativity because they are becoming so used to be instructed by an adult or a programme on a device. Help your child to develop their

own initiative vs being helpless, something increasingly being witnessed by teachers in the classroom. Showing initiative will help to get them a good job one day.

We are not living in an 'either/or' world. Technology is part of the fabric of our lives. As conscious parents, awake to our children's developmental needs in the early years, we need to ensure a balanced approach. Use the BEEPP checklist to find your middle ground.

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