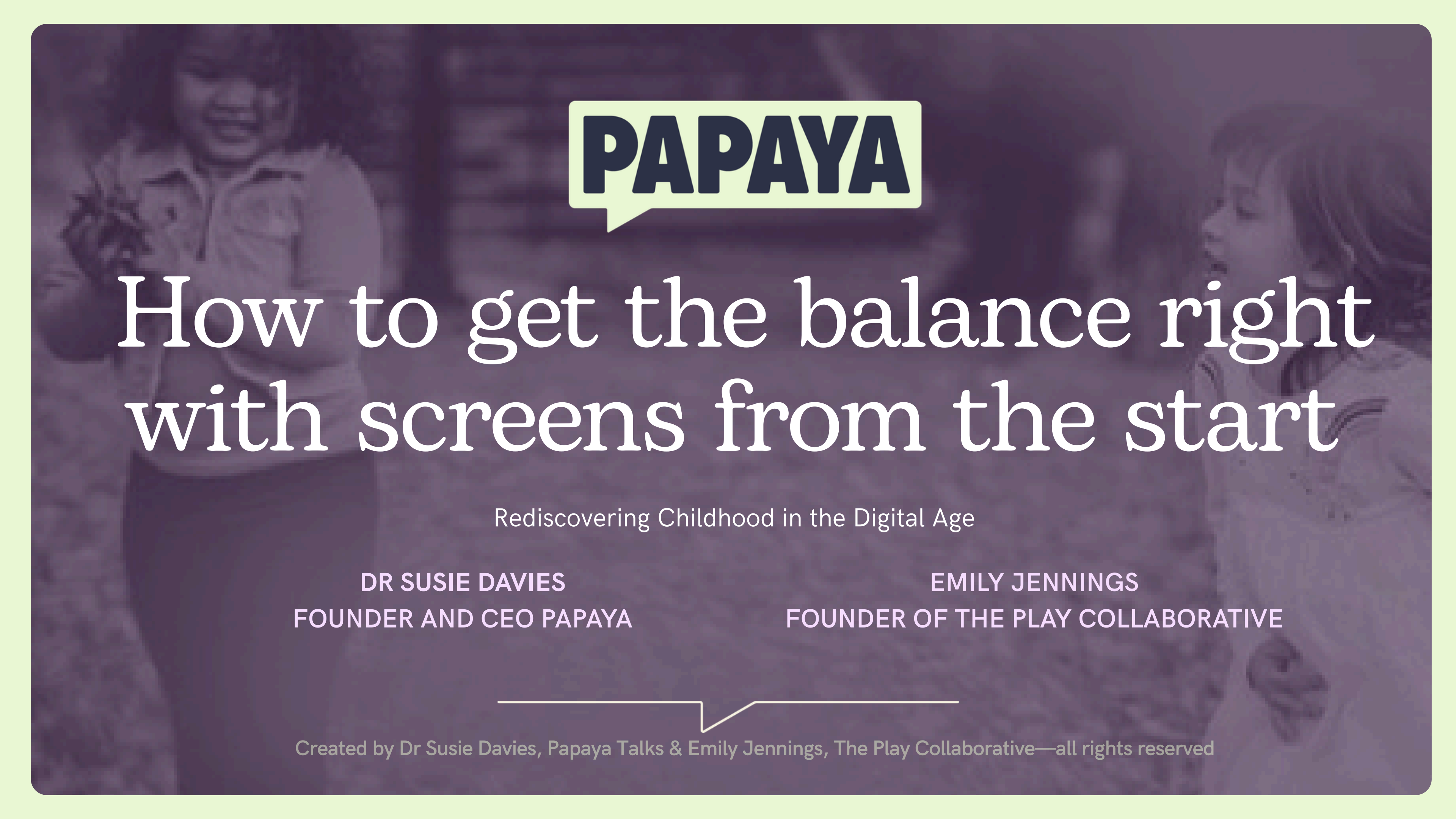




PAPAYA

How to get the balance right with screens from the start

Rediscovering Childhood in the Digital Age

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TEASER UNIVERSE

Free play is the foundation of a flourishing childhood

EMILY JENNINGS



Play is free fun expression



We don't stop playing because
we grow old; we grow old
because we stop playing.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



What do children 'learn' through play?

01.**SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS****02.****EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESILIENCE****03.****COGNITIVE LEARNING****04.****PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT****05.****SENSORY DEVELOPMENT**

1. SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS





Research consistently shows that shared reading boosts vocabulary, while excessive screen time harms vocabulary in 24-month-olds.

Rosslund, A., et al . (2024). Associations between shared book reading, daily screen time and infants' vocabulary size . Journal of Child Language



Higher childhood screen time is associated with increased perceived stress and depressive symptoms in adolescence.

2. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT





Studies have shown that the amount of screen time a child has at 3.5 years old can predict the increase in their anger and frustration at 4.5 years old.

Fitzpatrick, C. et al. Preschooler screen time and temperamental anger/frustration during the COVID 19 pandemic. *Pediatr Res* 94, 820–825 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-023-02485-6>

RESILIENCE

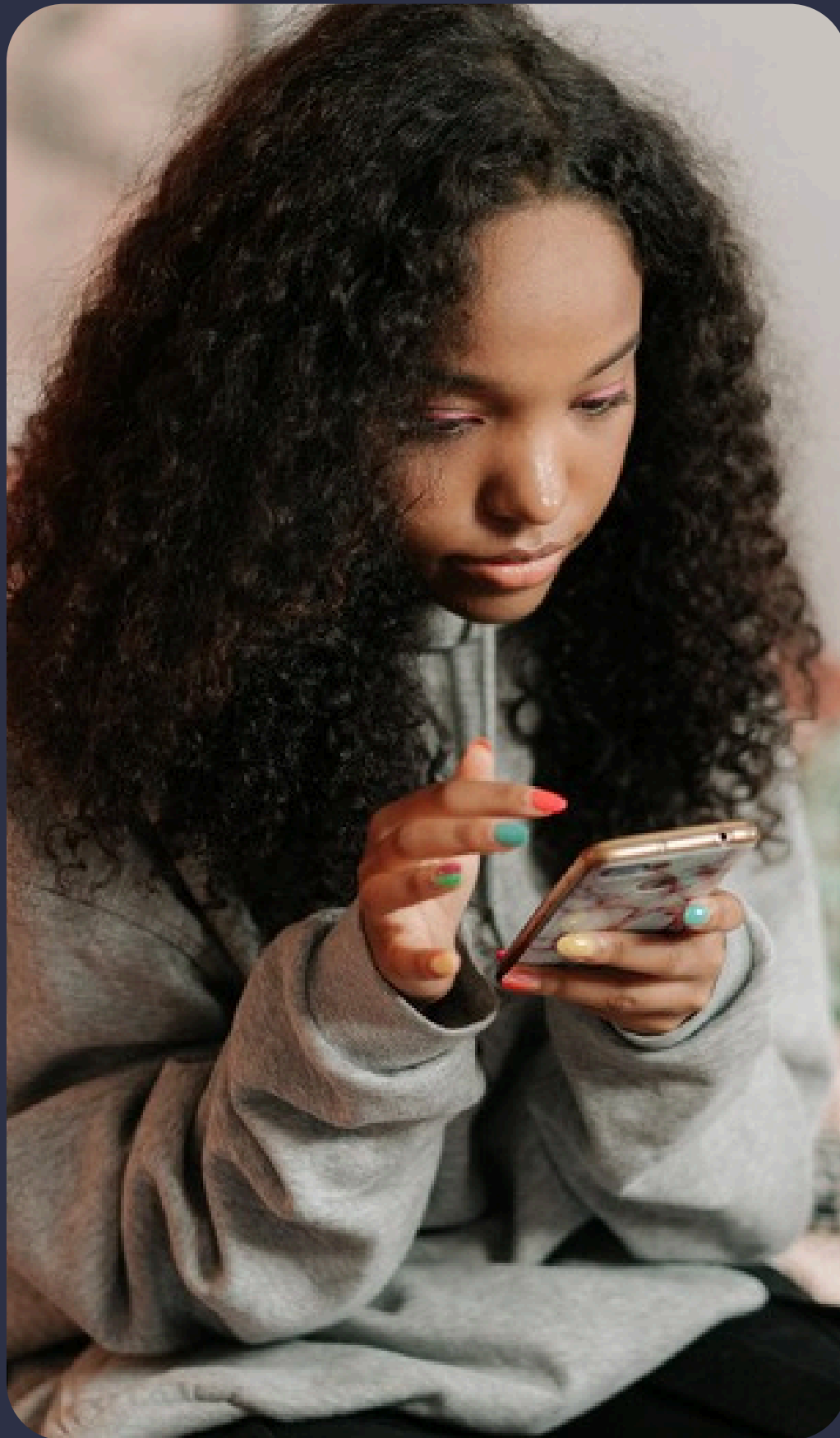




About
1 in 5
children use
devices for comfort, at
mealtime, or to fall
asleep.

3. COGNITIVE LEARNING





90 minutes
of daily direct screen time

is associated with lower
vocabulary, communication,
literacy, numeracy, and social
skills, as well as increased
peer-related difficulties

at age 4.5 and 8

Not everything worth learning
can, or should,
be made fun.
Learning is often frustrating,
taxing, complex, tantalising,
challenging, and occasionally
dull.

Repeated exposure to
algorithmically optimised, high-
stimulation content—such as fast-
paced videos on TikTok or
Instagram—can diminish
students' ability to focus in low-
stimulation educational settings.

Intrinsic Motivation

Students with
intrinsic motivation
enjoy challenges and
learning new things



01.

x3

More likely to make sure there are
no mistakes in their homework

02.

x2

To ask questions if they don't
understand

03.

x3

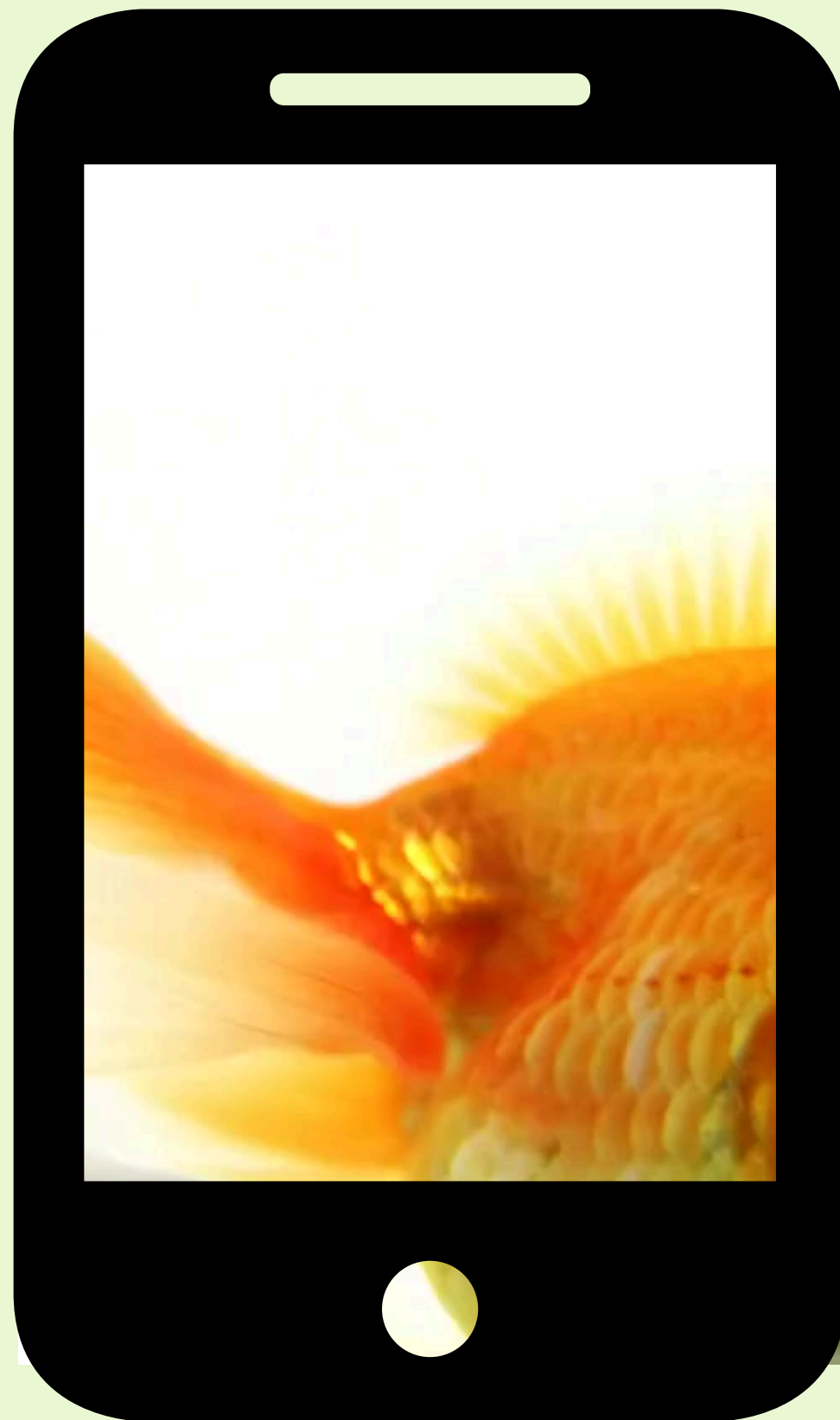
To check their homework

Learning

Smartphone addiction has negative impacts on student learning and overall academic performance.

The greater the use of a phone while studying, the greater the negative impact on learning.

The skills and cognitive abilities students needed for academic success are negatively affected by excessive phone use.



Our attention and deep contemplation — has become increasingly fragmented, divided across multiple channels, and persistently interrupted.

Attention is the foundation of higher-order cognition—without sustained focus, students cannot engage with complex texts, follow extended arguments, solve difficult problems, or create original work (Wu 2022).

4. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



1/3

Almost a third of children who live in the most deprived areas of England have obesity by the time they leave primary school

30%

Childhood myopia has increased from 24% in 1990 to 36% in 2023. 30% higher risk of developing myopia from excessive screen time on smart devices

*BMJ, 2023

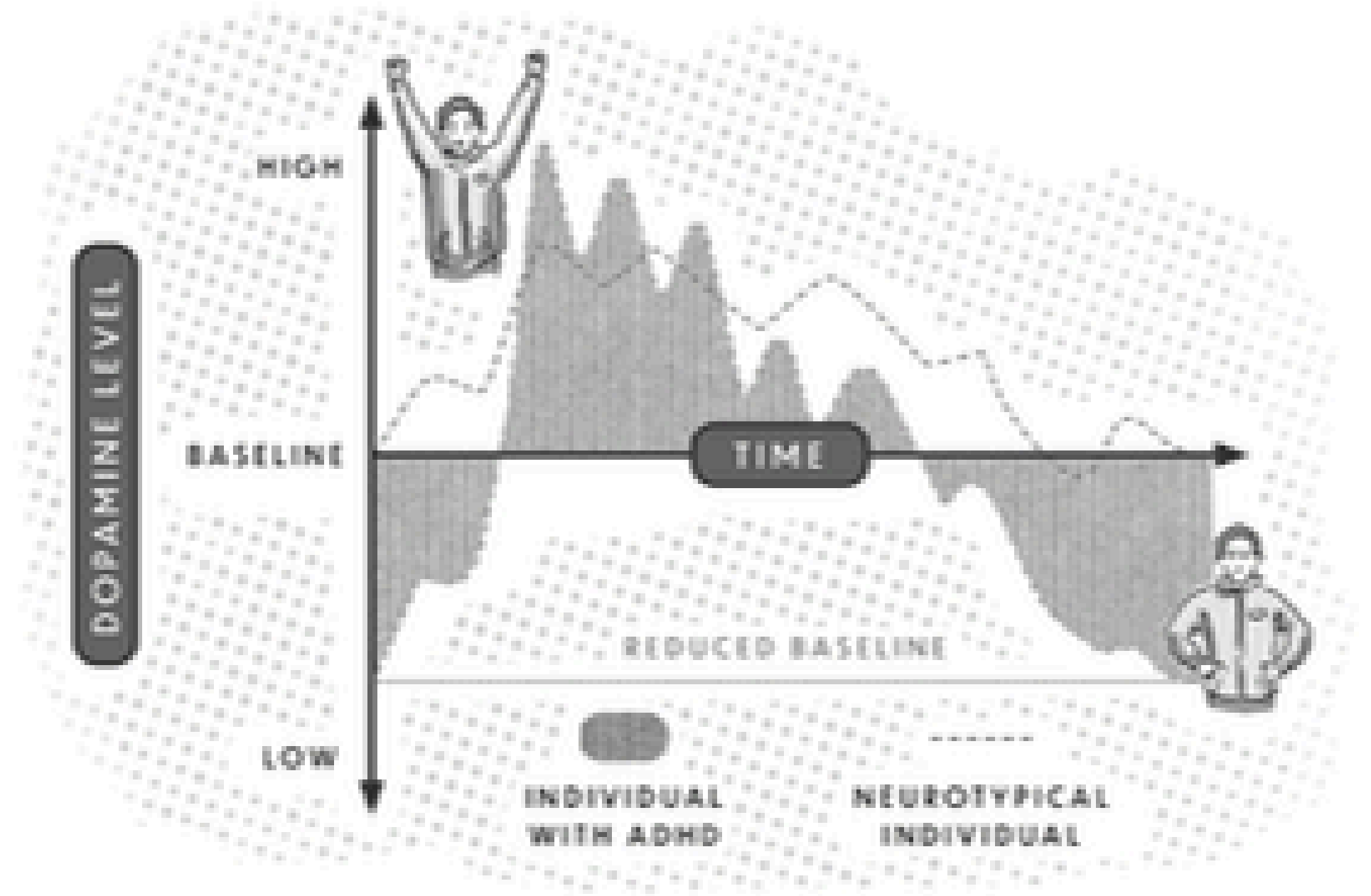
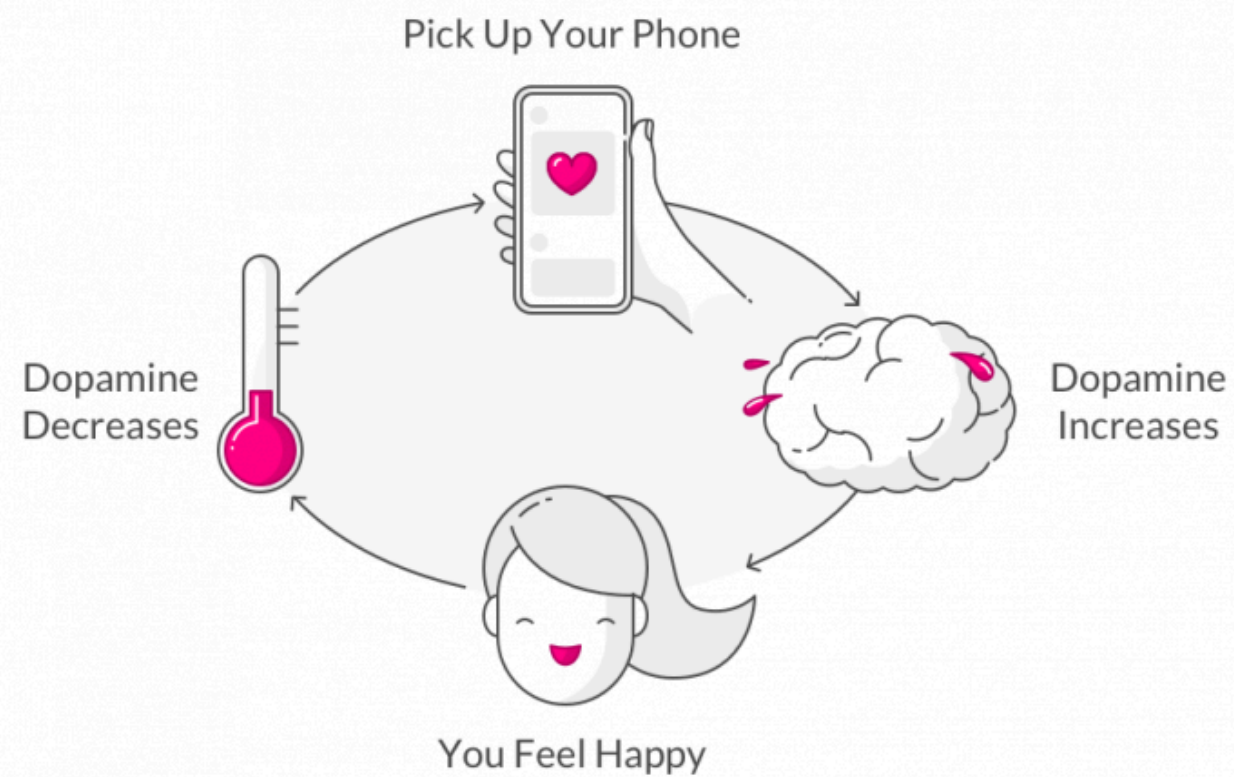
*British Journal of Ophthalmology 2024

5. SENSORY PROCESSING



5. DOPAMINE AND ADHD

The Dopamine Reward Loop



Graph 'The Dose Effect' by TG Power



Screen time

24%

of 5-7 year olds own
their own
smartphone.

76%

if 5-7 year olds
regularly use a tablet.

5-10 years olds
average

2-3 hours

per day

By the end of primary
school, some children
will have spent the
equivalent of nearly a
full year of their
childhood on screens

The opportunity costs

*Oxford Home Schooling and Tuition, 2022

*The Raising the Nation Play Commission ,2025

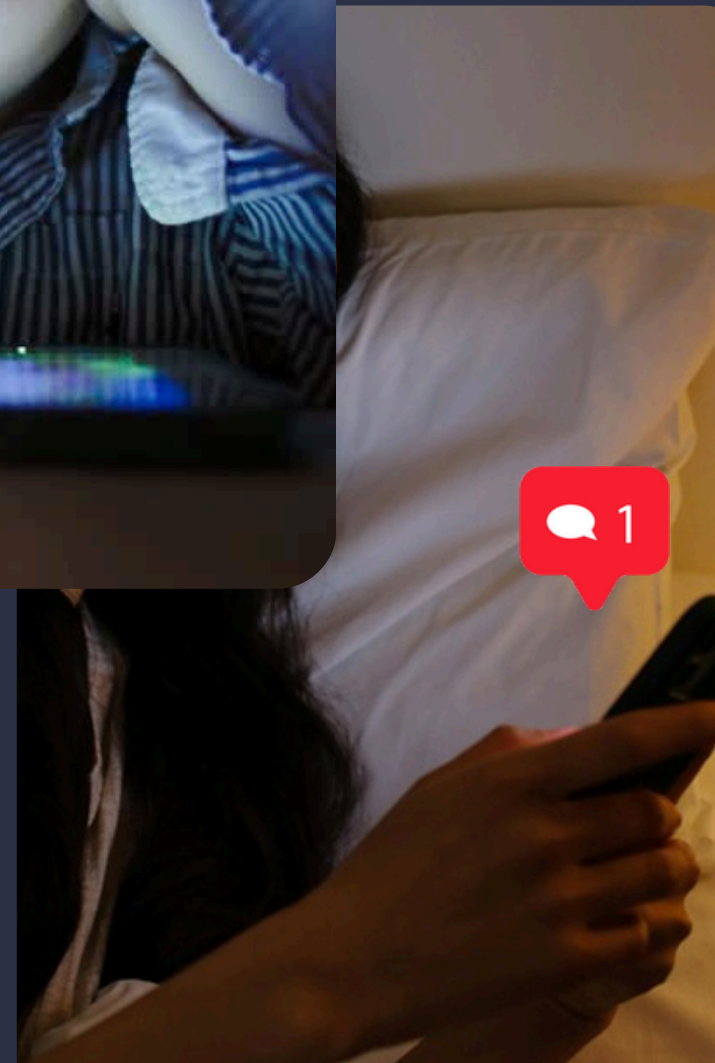
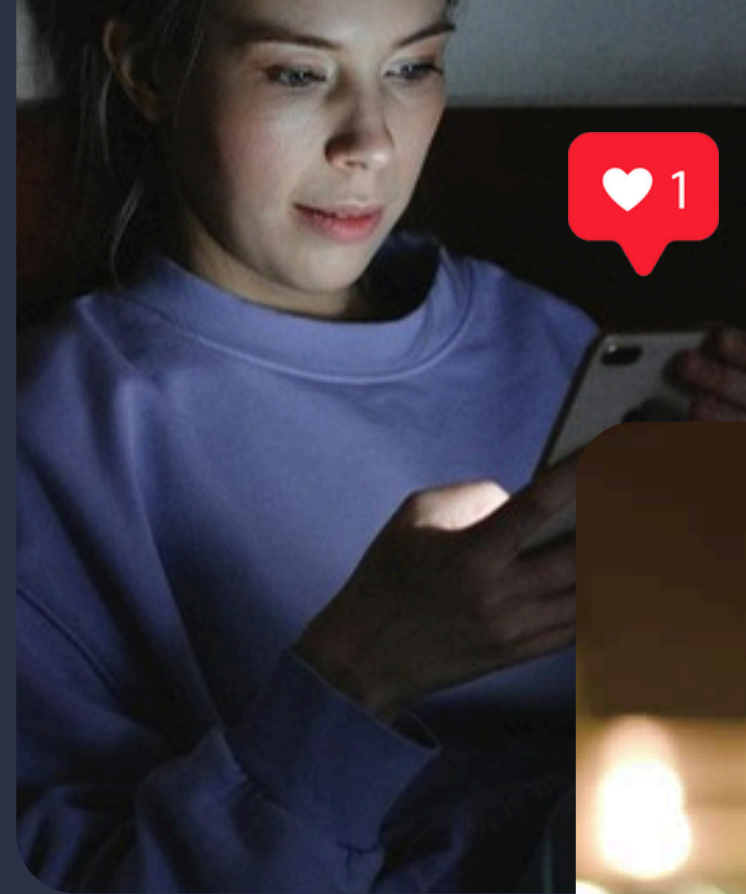
x2

Children spend
twice as long
looking at screens
as playing outside

↓ 50%

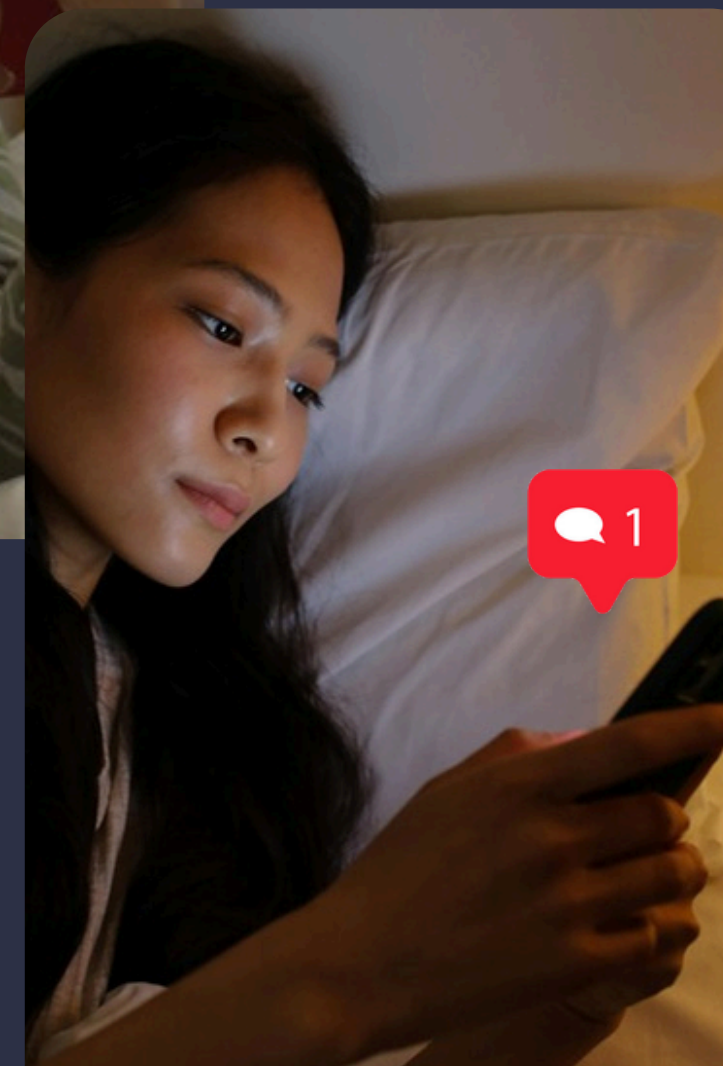
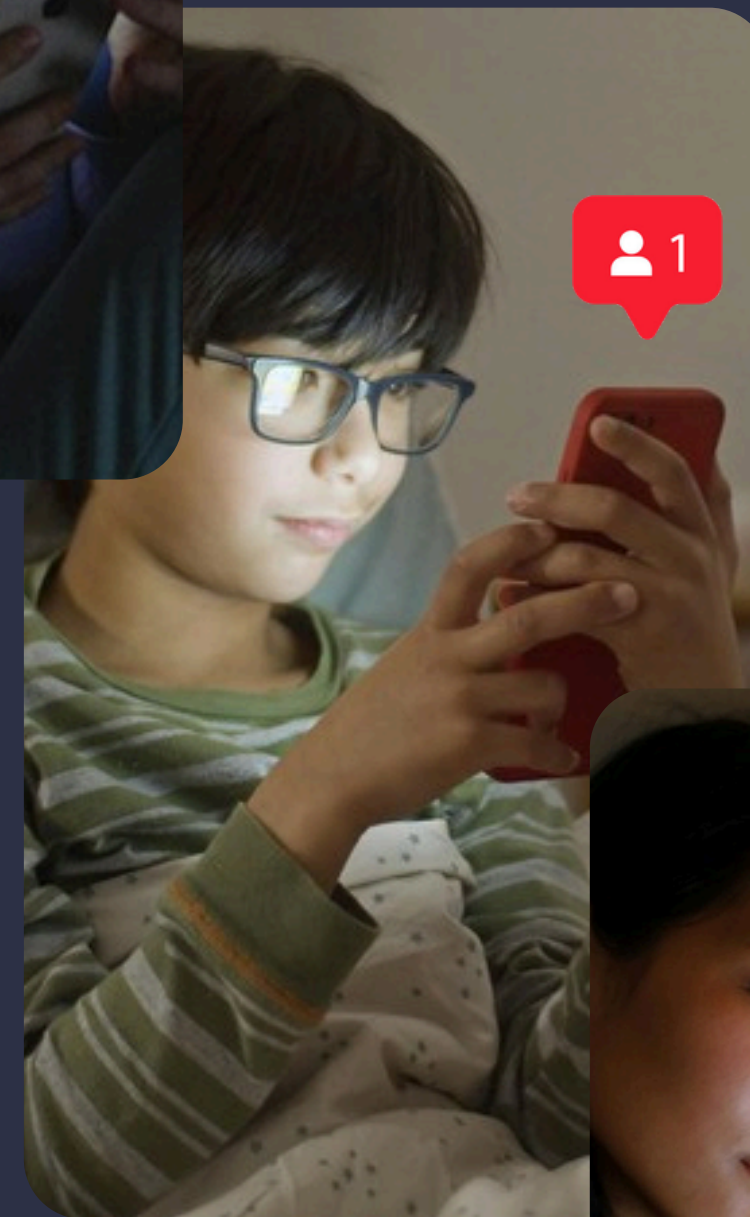
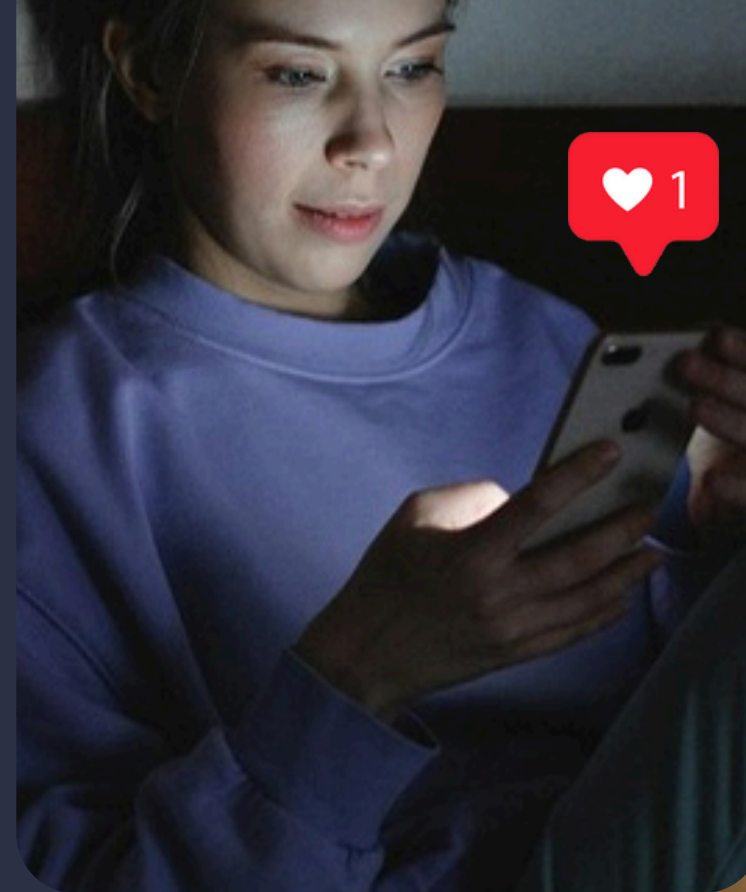
Children's outdoor
playtime has
halved in a
generation

What is their 'play experience'?





Screen based play



SOLUTIONS

What can we do?

How can we play more?

Our undivided attention is the most precious gift we can give another person. Yet increasingly, it's the most difficult gift to offer.

HRH THE PRINCESS OF WALES



start  rite

Who do you think uses digital media most in your home?

It starts with US

“
How healthy
is your
relationship
with your
phone?”

Model good habits

Manage your own screentime

Create screen-free spaces

Managing Family Screen time



Set Time Boundaries

Set Content Boundaries

Set Place Boundaries

Screen time Guidelines



2-5 years
under 1 hr a day

6-10 years
Up to 1-2 hrs per day
No screens 1 hr before bed

11-17 years
2-3 hrs per day
No screens 1 hr before bed

Not all Screen Time is equal



TV

Co-watching age appropriate content on a large TV (cBeebies, CBBC)
Avoid shortform content and YouTube

Family Video Games

Nintendo Wii
Just Dance
Mario Kart

Creative Video Games

Minecraft
(avoid Roblox)
Lego World

A blue-tinted photograph of two young women jumping joyfully in front of a brick building with several windows. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored hoodie and dark pants, while the woman on the right is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. Both are wearing white sneakers and have their arms outstretched. The text "HAVE MORE FUN" is overlaid in large white serif font, with "(THAT INCLUDES US)" in a smaller white serif font below it.

HAVE MORE FUN

(THAT INCLUDES US)

Top Tips



01.

Identify your fears

02.

Recognize barriers

03.

Invest smartly

04.

Be prepared



LET THEM BE BORED

Top Tips



01. Facilitate free play: balance free, semi-structured, and structured play
02. Be a play facilitator — follow your child's lead, don't initiate, stay curious
03. Invite children over, encourage reciprocal play dates, group play
04. Encourage outdoor play



Our young people are the creators of our future

THE POWER OF PLAY REPORT, 2025



Together, Let's Rediscover Childhood

Want to do more?



01. Talk to your child and other parents.

02. Join your local Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group.

smartphonefreechildhood.org/find-your-community

03. Sign the Parent Pact



<<<<<<<<<<<<

Scan to sign

Extra Resources

www.papayataalks.com/after

Link to slides, feedback form, chance to donate and smartphone alternatives.



Extra resources

The Anxious Generation
by Jonathan Haidt

The Healthy Selfie
by Dr Susie Davies

papayataalks.com

smartphonefreechildhood.org

teched-off.com

healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org



Encourage your school to register for
the Smartphone Free Schools rating.

smartphonefreerating.org

PAPAYA

The Healthy Selfie



£9.99



You can buy a copy of The Healthy Selfie at www.thehealthyselfie.co.uk via the QR code or on Amazon

Reflect

What one change in
your family are you
going to make?