

TIPS & SCRIPTS FOR PARENTS

BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN
SAYING 'NO' TO SMARTPHONES
UNTIL AGED 14

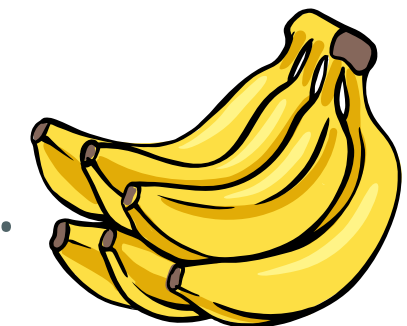


You may have seen or heard the campaign that's gone viral (in a good way!!) by Daisy Greenwell who shared a heartfelt post on Instagram, outlining her worries about the expectation that children in year 5 and 6 at Primary School will be given smartphones, mostly because everyone else has one.

Daisy & Joe's eldest daughter is 8 so it's a subject close to their hearts.

Daisy set up a WhatsApp group 'Parents United for a Smartphone Free Childhood' with her friend Clare Reynolds to discuss the topic, hoping a few other friends might join.

Then things went....



!!

97% of 12-year-olds in Britain
have a smart phone !! 

Sue Atkins
The Parenting Expert



JOE, HER HUSBAND, WROTE ON LINKEDIN:

- Within 24 hours over a thousand concerned parents had joined, reaching WhatsApp's limit
- A day later over 50 regional groups had popped up the length and breadth of Britain
- Daisy and other members were interviewed live on The Today Programme, Five Live and local radio
- The movement has been featured and discussed across the national media
- Celebs have been in touch asking how they can help
- We've heard whispers that it's been discussed in Parliament
- And Daisy was even mentioned on Thought for The Day on Saturday – one down from Desert Island Discs



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

Click on the link to explore the **Smartphone Free Childhood** campaign

It's a HUGE topic of concern & I was recently doing some talks in Walton & in Wakefield about keeping kids safe online for Safer Internet Day & I was also talking about their use of technology & smartphones as well as hosting a webinar for parents on the subject that was oversubscribed so we know it's a big problem for parents! I was also invited onto LBC Radio to discuss banning kids under 14 from having smartphones with presenter Ben Kentish.



Delay #TeensOnScreens
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The benefits of delaying smart phone use

While it's not necessarily about "banning" smartphones, delaying their use until age 14 can have many, many benefits for children's development and well-being:

Physical Health:

Delaying smartphone use can encourage children to engage in more physical activities and outdoor play, reducing sedentary behaviour and promoting overall physical health.

Mental Health:

Excessive smartphone use, especially at a young age, has been linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Delaying access can help mitigate these risks and promote better mental well-being.

Social Skills:

Without constant access to smartphones, children have more opportunities to develop face-to-face communication skills, empathy, and social connections with peers and family members.

#SmartphoneFreeChildhood

For tips & scripts
of what to say to your kids go to
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The benefits of Delaying smart phone use

Academic Performance:

Excessive screen time, including smartphone use, has been associated with poorer academic performance. Delaying smartphones can help children focus better on their studies and develop healthier study habits.

Safety:

Young children may not fully understand the risks associated with online interactions, such as cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and online predators. Delaying smartphone use allows parents more time to educate their children about online safety before granting them access to potentially risky platforms.

Development of Self-Regulation:

Delaying smartphone use encourages children to develop self-regulation skills, such as managing impulses and controlling screen time, which are important for their long-term success and well-being.

Family Connection:

Without the distraction of smartphones, families have more opportunities to bond and spend quality time together, whether it's through shared activities, conversations, or meals without screens.




THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING

When we all started using smartphones, we had little understanding of the impact they have on children and teenagers. Now we do.

We need to act, now.

- SMARTPHONES ARE HIGHLY ADDICTIVE
- SMARTPHONE USE CORRELATES TO MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS
- SMARTPHONES EXPOSE CHILDREN TO HARMFUL CONTENT
- SMARTPHONES REDUCE ATTENTION-SPANS
- SMARTPHONES ROB CHILDREN OF THEIR CHILDHOOD





Tech companies spend millions on making apps and devices intentionally addictive, affecting young brains in a way that is similar to gambling. One study found one-in-five teens looked at YouTube “almost constantly”.

2022 Study into teens and social media

They’ve been directly linked to poor mental health and low self-esteem, especially in girls. And social media use in teens correlates directly to rates of anxiety and depression.

Depression and social media use in teens

The internet is a gateway to pornography, bullying, grooming and all sorts of harmful content. Social has been proven to increase self-harm and suicidal tendencies amongst adolescents. **2020 study on smartphones and mental health.**

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They’re changing the way children’s brains develop, and fundamentally affecting their ability to concentrate.

2021 Study by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

Even harmless content isn’t harmless. Time spent on a device is time not spent with other children; playing, exploring, interacting and developing vital social skills. **Must-watch Jonathan Haidt Talk**

While there are certainly benefits to smartphones, delaying their use until age 14 allows children to mature emotionally, socially, and cognitively before facing the potential challenges and distractions that come with smartphone ownership.

My approach is.... Delay #TeensOnScreens!



But lots of parents I talk to don't feel confident in talking about it or feel brave enough to say 'no' until their kids are older.

Building confidence in saying no to smartphones until age 14 involves a combination of understanding, communication, and consistency.

Because I want YOU to feel primed, prepped & confident in changing the course of your child's mental health & wellbeing, their social skills, their eyesight, their online safety, their feelings of anxiety, isolation & loneliness, their exposure to cyberbullying & porn, their disposition to addiction, their exposure to predators & even the damage to their neck & spine muscles.

Here are some strategies for you as parents to build your confidence in your decision:

💪 Educate Yourself:

Learn about the potential risks and benefits of smartphone use for children. Understanding the research and current recommendations can give you confidence in your decision.

💪 Clarify Your Values:

Reflect on your family values and priorities. Consider how smartphone use aligns with these values and use them as a guiding principle in your decision-making process.

💪 Communicate Openly:

Have open and honest conversations with your child about your decision. Explain your reasons clearly and listen to their perspective. This helps establish trust and understanding between you and your child.

💪 Set Boundaries:

Establish clear boundaries around technology use in your household. This could include designated screen-free times or areas, such as during meals or in bedrooms.





💪 Offer Alternatives:

Provide alternative activities and forms of entertainment that don't involve smartphones. Encourage hobbies, outdoor play, reading, and spending quality time together as a family.

💪 Lead by Example:

Model healthy screen time habits yourself. Show your child that you can balance technology use with other activities and responsibilities.

💪 Stay Informed:

Stay up-to-date on the latest trends and developments in technology and parenting. This allows you to adapt your approach as needed and feel confident in your decisions.

💪 Seek Support:

Connect with other parents who share similar values and concerns about smartphone use. Sharing experiences and strategies can provide reassurance and encouragement.

By taking these steps, you can feel more confident in your decision to delay smartphone usage until age 14 and effectively communicate this decision to your children.



And Here's
What
To Say.....

Tips and Scripts



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Tips and Scripts

Hey [Child's Name], I want to talk to you about smartphones. We've decided as a family that we're going to wait until you're 14 before you get one. We believe it's important to protect your well-being and help you develop healthy habits. We understand that it might be disappointing, but we're here to support you and offer alternative ways to stay connected and entertained. We can discuss this further if you have any questions or concerns."



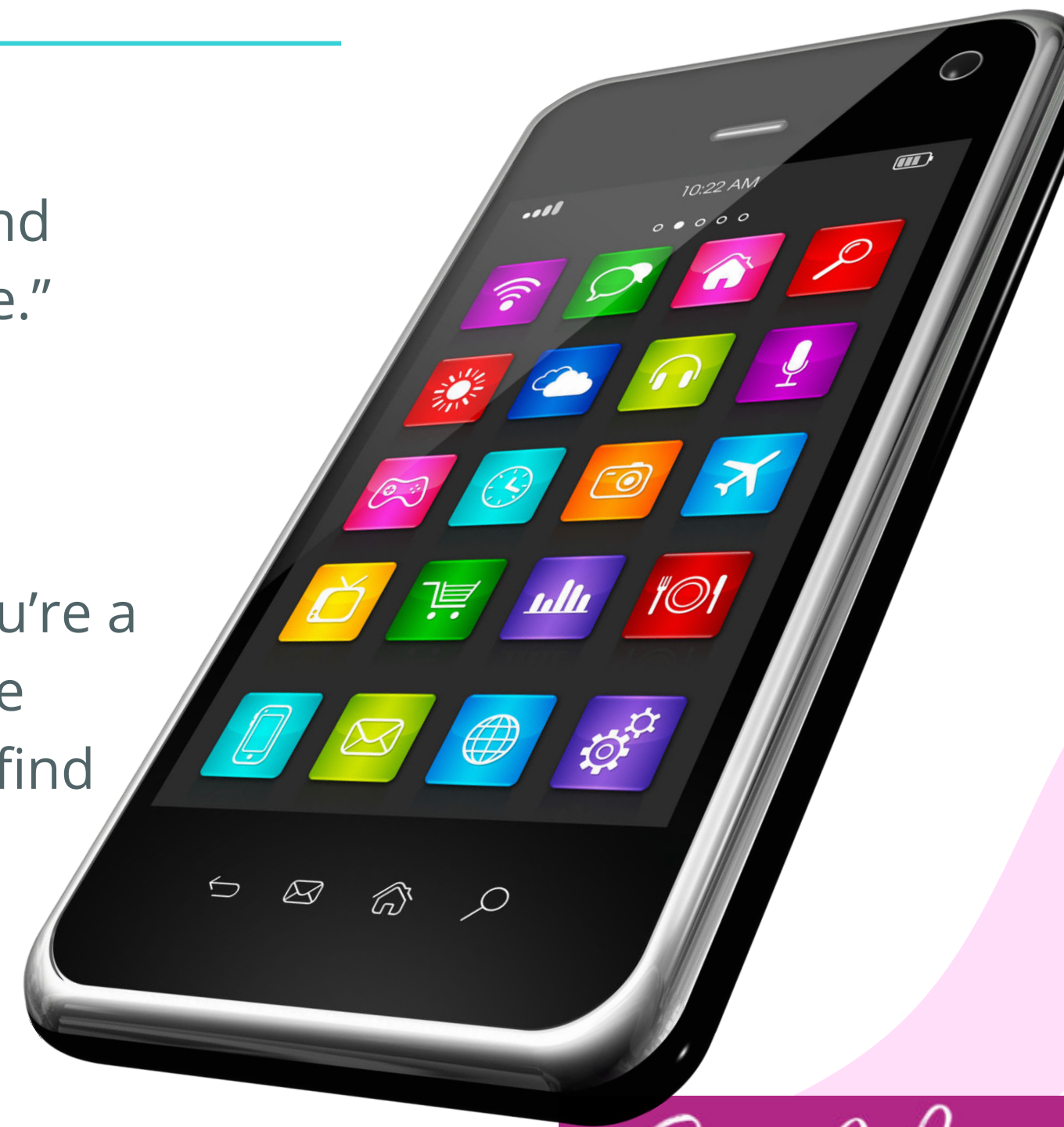
Direct Approach

Parent: “Hey [Child’s Name], I wanted to have a chat with you about smartphones. Your mum /dad and I have been thinking a lot about it, and we’ve decided that we’re going to wait until you’re 14 before you get one.”

Child: “But all my friends have one!”

Parent: “I understand that, but we believe it’s important to wait until you’re a bit older. Smartphones can be great tools, but they also come with some risks, and we want to make sure you’re ready to handle them. We’ll still find other ways for you to stay connected and entertained. How do you feel about that?”

Use this opportunity to **‘Talk and Teach’** your child.
Connect, chat, engage but **don’t** lecture, nag or shout!



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Educational Approach

Parent: “Hi [Child’s Name], can we talk about smartphones for a moment? Your mum/dad and I have been researching a lot about the effects of smartphones on kids your age, and we’ve learned some interesting things.”

Child: “Like what?”

Parent: “Well, we’ve learned that using smartphones too much can sometimes make it harder to focus on other things, like homework or spending time with family. Plus, there are things online that aren’t suitable for kids your age. So, we’ve decided it’s best to wait until you’re 14 before getting one. We want to make sure you’re ready for the responsibility. What do you think?”



Lead by Example Approach:

Parent: “Hey [Child’s Name], I know you’ve been asking about getting a smartphone lately. Your mum/dad and I have talked about it, and we’ve decided that it’s best for you to wait until you’re 14 before getting one.”

Child: “But why?”

Parent: “We believe it’s important for you to have time away from screens and to focus on other things, like spending time with family, doing activities you enjoy, and getting enough sleep. Plus, we want to make sure you develop healthy habits around technology. We’re also making an effort to limit our own screen time to set a good example for you. How do you feel about that?”



#SmartphoneFreeChildhood



It's time to Don your Superhero Cape!

When kids kick up a fuss about not getting a smartphone until age 14, it's important for you to respond calmly and empathetically while maintaining your stance.

Here's how you as parents can respond effectively:

Acknowledge their Feelings:

Start by acknowledging your child's feelings and letting them know that you understand why they might be upset or disappointed. This shows empathy and validates their emotions.

Reiterate Reasons:

Remind your child of the reasons behind your decision to delay smartphone usage until age 14. Explain that it's not about punishing them, but rather about what you believe is best for their well-being and development.

Listen and Validate:

Give your child an opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns. Listen actively without interrupting and validate their feelings. Let them know that their perspective is important to you.

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Offer Alternative
Solutions....

Instead of focusing solely on what they can't have, redirect the conversation to what they can do instead. Offer alternative activities, hobbies, and ways to stay connected with friends that don't involve smartphones.



Talk about and offer a smartphone alternative.

I understand that some children may need to be able to communicate with family and friends. Thankfully, there are a lot of alternatives to smartphones that don't carry the same risks.

When you are considering what communication device is best for your child, it is important first to ask what is the purpose of the device?

In other words, **why** does my child need a phone?

If calling and texting is all that is needed, I encourage parents to consider a basic phone or a smartwatch before a smartphone.

The majority of problems associated with smartphones are because of the access to an internet browser and to the app store.

Please consider these basic communication devices before getting your child a smartphone.



Click on the link to **SMARTPHONE ALTERNATIVES**

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Set Boundaries:

Firmly but gently reiterate the boundaries you've set regarding smartphone use. Let your child know that while you understand their frustration, the decision is final.

Stay Calm and Consistent:

Avoid getting drawn into arguments or power struggles. Stay calm and composed while reiterating your decision consistently. Consistency helps reinforce boundaries and expectations.

Encourage Problem-Solving:

Encourage your child to brainstorm solutions or compromises together. This can help them feel more involved in the decision-making process and empowered to find alternative ways to meet their needs.

Offer Support:

Let your child know that you're there to support them and help them navigate their emotions. Offer reassurance and encouragement as they adjust to the decision.

By responding with empathy, understanding, and clear communication, you can help diffuse tension and navigate conflicts effectively when kids kick up a fuss about not getting a smartphone until age 14.

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We can't change
what we don't
talk about

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How to Validate and Acknowledge their feelings – Things to Say:

You could say:

“I understand that you’re feeling disappointed/frustrated/upset/angry about not getting a smartphone right now. It’s normal to want things that your friends have, and I can see why you might be feeling this way.”

“I hear you, and I understand that you really want a smartphone like your friends.”

“It sounds like you’re feeling left out because you don’t have a smartphone yet.”

“I can see that you’re upset/ angry about this decision, and it’s okay to feel that way.”

“I know it’s tough when you have to wait for something you really want. Your feelings are important, and I’m here to listen.”

“It’s okay to feel disappointed/angry/frustrated. Waiting can be hard, especially when it’s something you’ve been looking forward to.”

“I’m sorry that this decision is making you feel upset. I want you to know that your feelings matter to me.”

“I understand that it might not seem fair right now. Let’s talk about how you’re feeling and see if we can find other ways to make you feel better.”

Setting An Example

Children are watching, listening, learning and observing us ALL the time – whether we notice or not so be a positive role model!

📱 Setting an example starts at home!!



📱 Put down your phone and engage with your kids.

Show them the value of being present and making meaningful memories offline 📸

📱 Set boundaries:

Establish specific times when you will disconnect from your phone, such as during meals, before bed, or on weekends.

📱 Designate tech-free zones:

Create spaces in your home where phones are not allowed, such as the bedroom or dining area, to promote relaxation and connection with others.

📱 Find alternative activities:

Replace phone usage with activities that promote relaxation and mindfulness, such as reading, going for a walk, meditating, or practicing a hobby.

📱 Use apps to limit screen time:

Utilise apps that track and limit your screen time, allowing you to set daily usage goals and receive reminders when you exceed them.

📱 Prioritise real-life connections:

Spend quality time with friends and family without the distraction of phones, fostering deeper connections and meaningful conversations.



Practice digital detox days:

Dedicate one day a week or month to completely unplugging from your phone and other electronic devices, allowing yourself to recharge mentally and emotionally.

Establish a bedtime routine:

Create a wind-down routine before bed that does not involve screens, such as reading a book or writing in a journal, to improve sleep quality.

Mindful usage:

Be conscious of when and why you reach for your phone, and consider whether it is truly necessary or if it is just out of habit.

Engage in outdoor activities:

Spend time outdoors engaging in activities like hiking, biking, walking the dog or gardening, which offer a refreshing break from screen time and promote overall well-being.

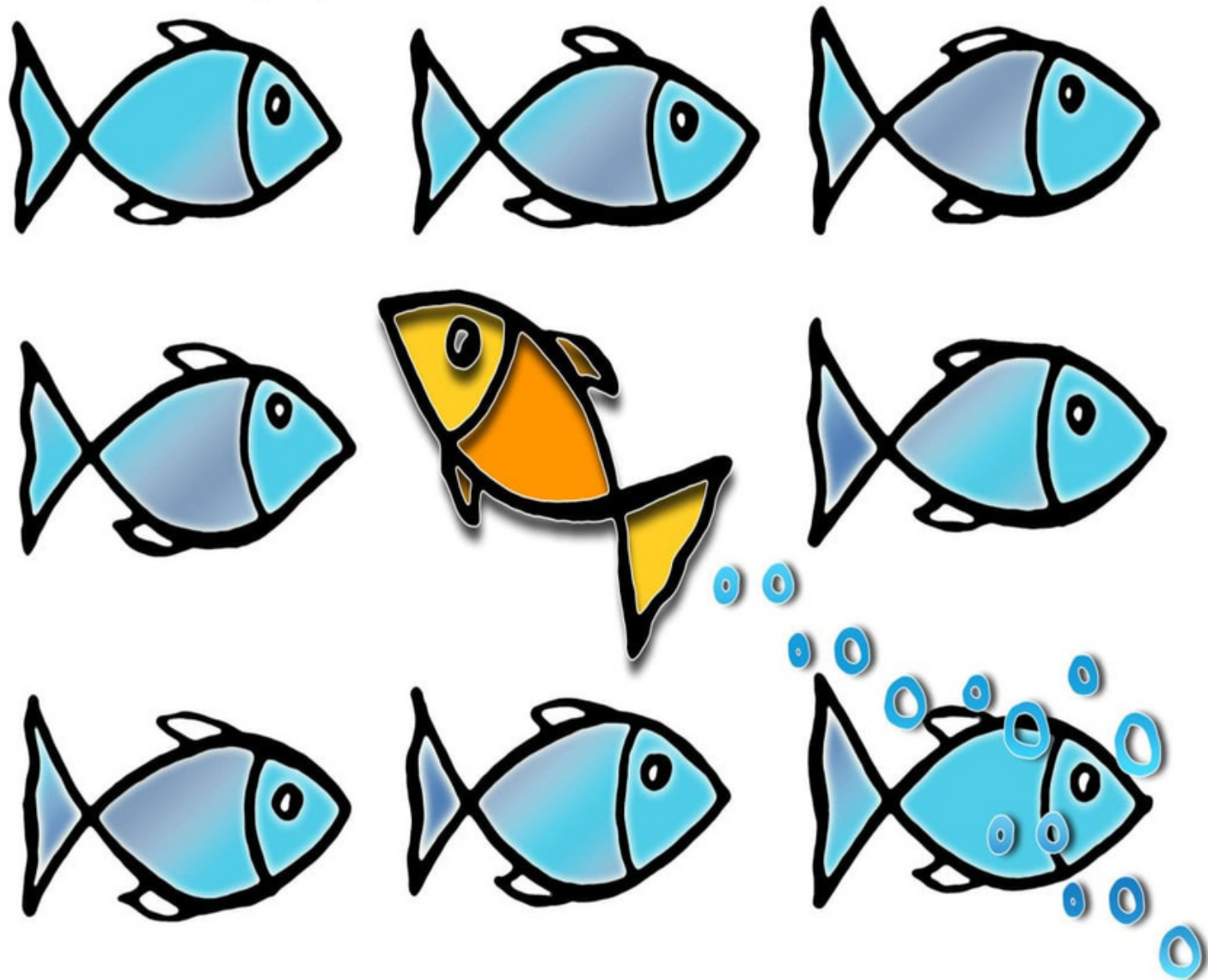
Seek support:

Share your goals of reducing phone usage with friends or family members and encourage each other to unplug and prioritise self-care.



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Delay
#TeensOnScreens



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Confidence

is Contagious:

Kids and teens just want to fit in – be part of the herd – wear the same clothes, have the same hairstyle, have the same smartphone so ‘talk and teach them’ that confidence is contagious because confidence isn’t found in conformity.

Helping teens resist the pressure to fit in does require a supportive and empowering approach that promotes self-confidence, authenticity, and resilience.

Acknowledge and praise your child for demonstrating independence, critical thinking, and resilience in the face of peer pressure. It’s not easy – but it is important!

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Talk and Teach them:

“Your Worth Isn’t Defined by a Device”:

Remind your child that their value and worth aren’t determined by whether or not they have the latest smartphone. Emphasise their unique qualities and strengths beyond material possessions.

“Set Your Own Standards”:

Encourage your child to set their own standards and priorities rather than following the crowd. Help them understand that it’s okay to make decisions based on what’s best for them, even if it’s different from what their peers are doing.

“Focus on Real Connections”:

Stress the importance of building genuine relationships and connections beyond social media. Encourage face-to-face interactions, spending time with friends and family, and participating in activities that foster meaningful connections.



Let's delay #TeensOnScreens!

Let's all reaffirm our commitment to providing our children with the gift of an unplugged, enriching childhood.

Together, we can create a world where kids thrive offline, exploring the wonders of the real world, fostering deep connections, and nurturing their creativity. Let's continue to champion this important cause, encouraging one another and sharing our successes along the way. Thank you for being part of this movement.

Together, we can make a difference!

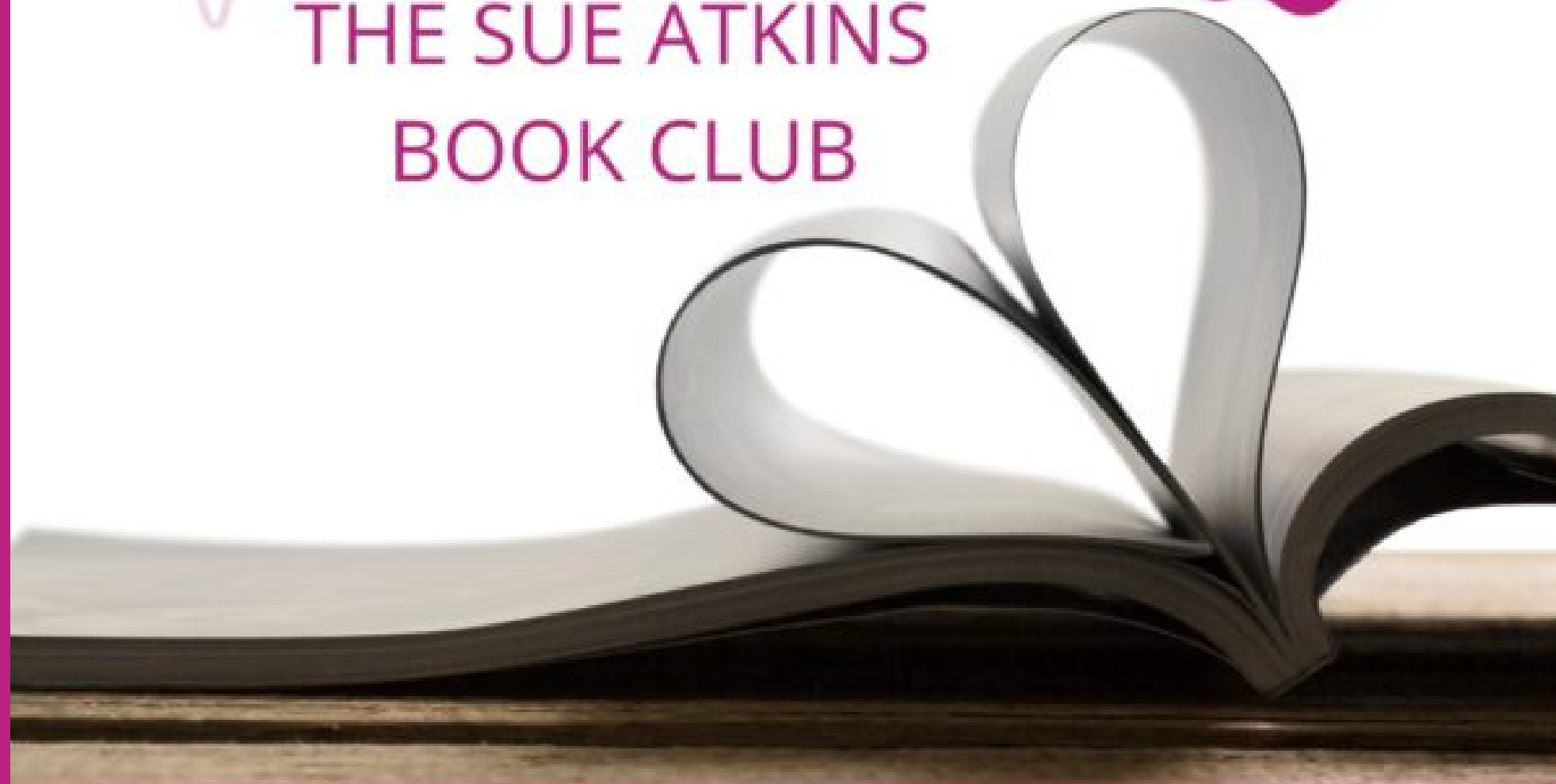
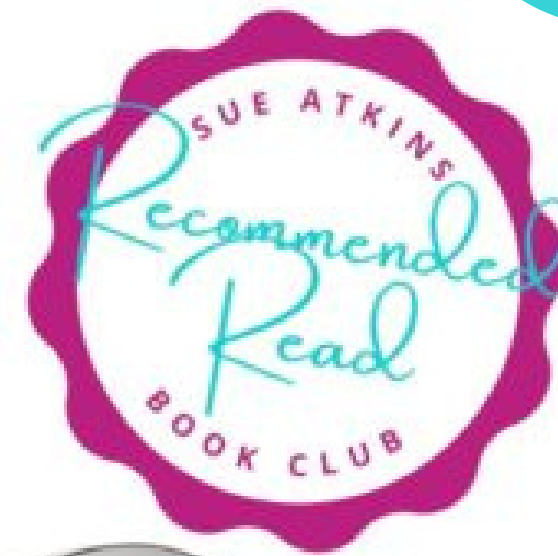
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Welcome to
THE SUE ATKINS
BOOK CLUB



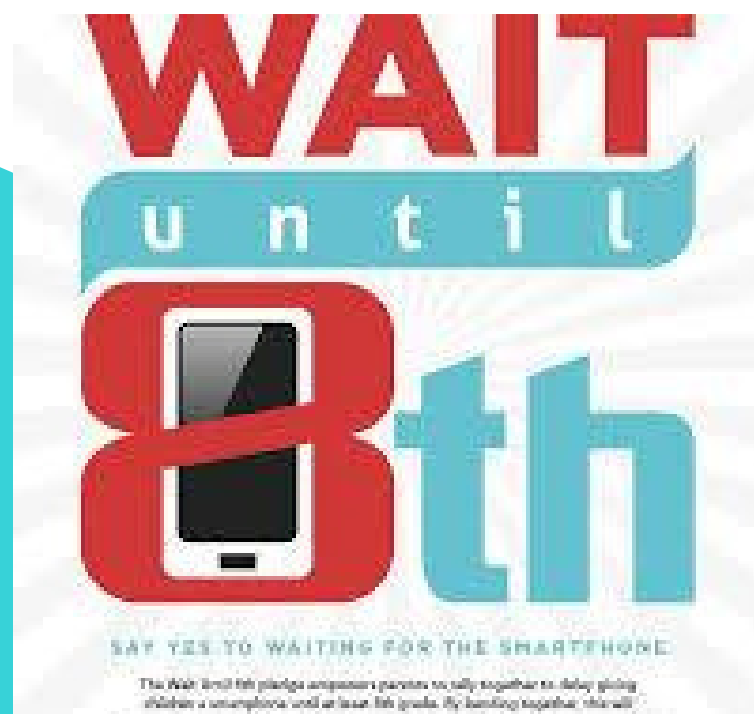
Connecting Authors: Supporting Parents

Here is my selection in
#TheSueAtkinsBookClub around:

Children's Books Aimed At Addressing The Dangers & Challenges of Smartphones



There are some fantastic resources to support you on **WaitUntil8th** – a US campaign with lots of advice, suggestions, blogs & ideas to delay giving your child a smartphone until 8th Grade (14)



Follow and Connect with
Smartphone Free Childhood

**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**

Talk about and offer a
smartphone alternative.

Sign The Pledge



Sue Atkins
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I'm Sue Atkins

I will teach you my no-nonsense, simple techniques & give you hundreds of my expert parenting articles, videos & podcasts so you can get back to the business of having fun with your family!



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As seen or
heard in/on

Please share and pass on
this resource to parents, teachers,
colleagues & friends

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