

Technology & Boundaries

Parent Workshop

Primary age children
(ages 4-11)



What we will cover today

- 1 Common difficulties with boundaries around technology
- 2 Facts & research around children's tech use
- 3 Strategies (based on 'Incredible Years'):
 - Introduction to 'Incredible Years' – Key principles & approach
 - Laying the 'groundwork': Modelling & Special time
 - Positive reinforcement: Praise & rewards
 - Effective boundary setting: Family rules, clear commands & consequences
- 4 A few words on online safety
- 5 Signposting & support

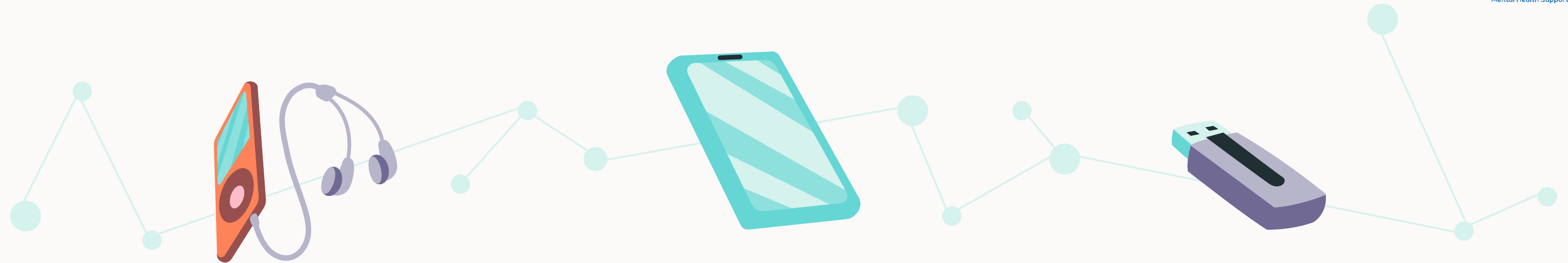
1

Common difficulties with boundaries around technology

- What difficulties have you experienced?
- What difficulties are you aware of?



Common difficulties



Sharing
technology with
siblings/friends

Dependency in
social situations

Reinforcing
boundaries when it
comes to tech use

Tech use
impacting on
routine and family
time

Using technology
to manage
behaviour

Child not following
instructions

2

Facts & research around children's tech use

- Worth considering what is motivating us to put boundaries in place.
- What is our current understanding of tech use and its impact on children?...





Myth busters and research

Internet use can increase learning opportunities, online resilience, and build digital skills

TRUE / FALSE ?

Children's technology use, particularly passive use (e.g. scrolling and watching TV) causes attention problems later in childhood and adulthood. TRUE / FALSE ? **?**

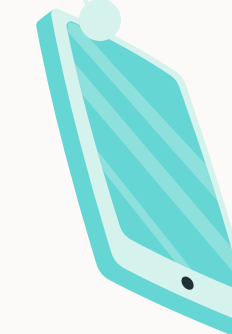
Moderate gaming may actually improve some cognitive functions, such as working memory and spatial awareness.

TRUE / FALSE ?

There is no link between increased technology use and difficulties with sleep. TRUE / **FALSE** ?

The mental health impact of children's technology use likely (at least partly) depends on the level of satisfaction and meaning that comes from that use. **TRUE** / FALSE ?

Moderate internet use / shared media experiences can help young people build rapport with peers. **TRUE** / FALSE ?



Why are boundaries around tech important?

We live in a digital world and today's children have never known a world without technology and the internet.

We know little about its effects, but the internet is here to stay.

Promoting *positive* technology use

There are likely **both** positive and negative impacts of technology use (cognitive, social, emotional, physical, educational), though research is still in its infancy.

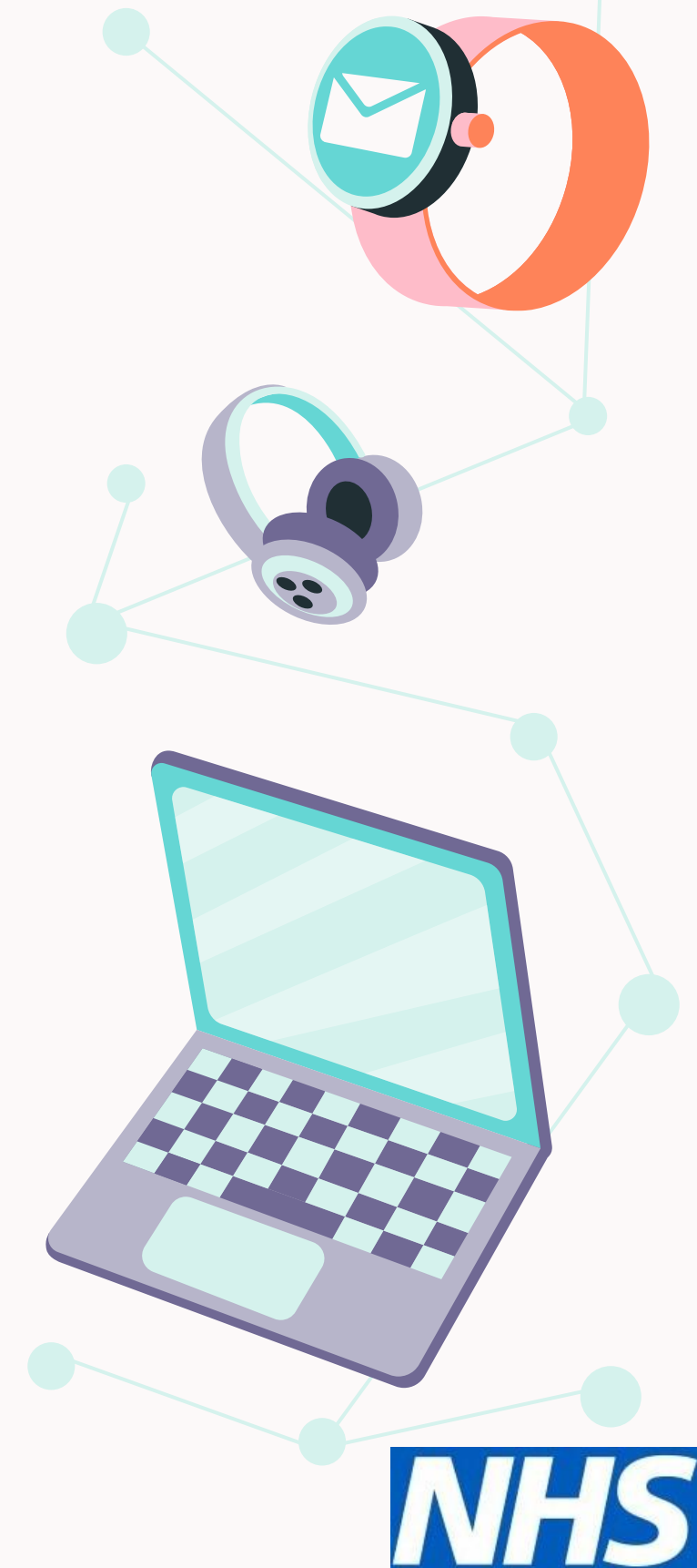
Effective boundaries can help to facilitate more positives and help reduce the *known* negatives – i.e., when tech use starts to interfere with other behaviours essential for health and wellbeing.

Promoting online safety

UNICEF compare children using the internet to crossing the road.

We don't want to stop children crossing the road just because there are dangers.

Our role is teaching them how to do so safely and responsibly.



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Strategies based on 'Incredible Years' approach

- Parent Guided Self-Help for Behavioural Difficulties



The Incredible Years Approach

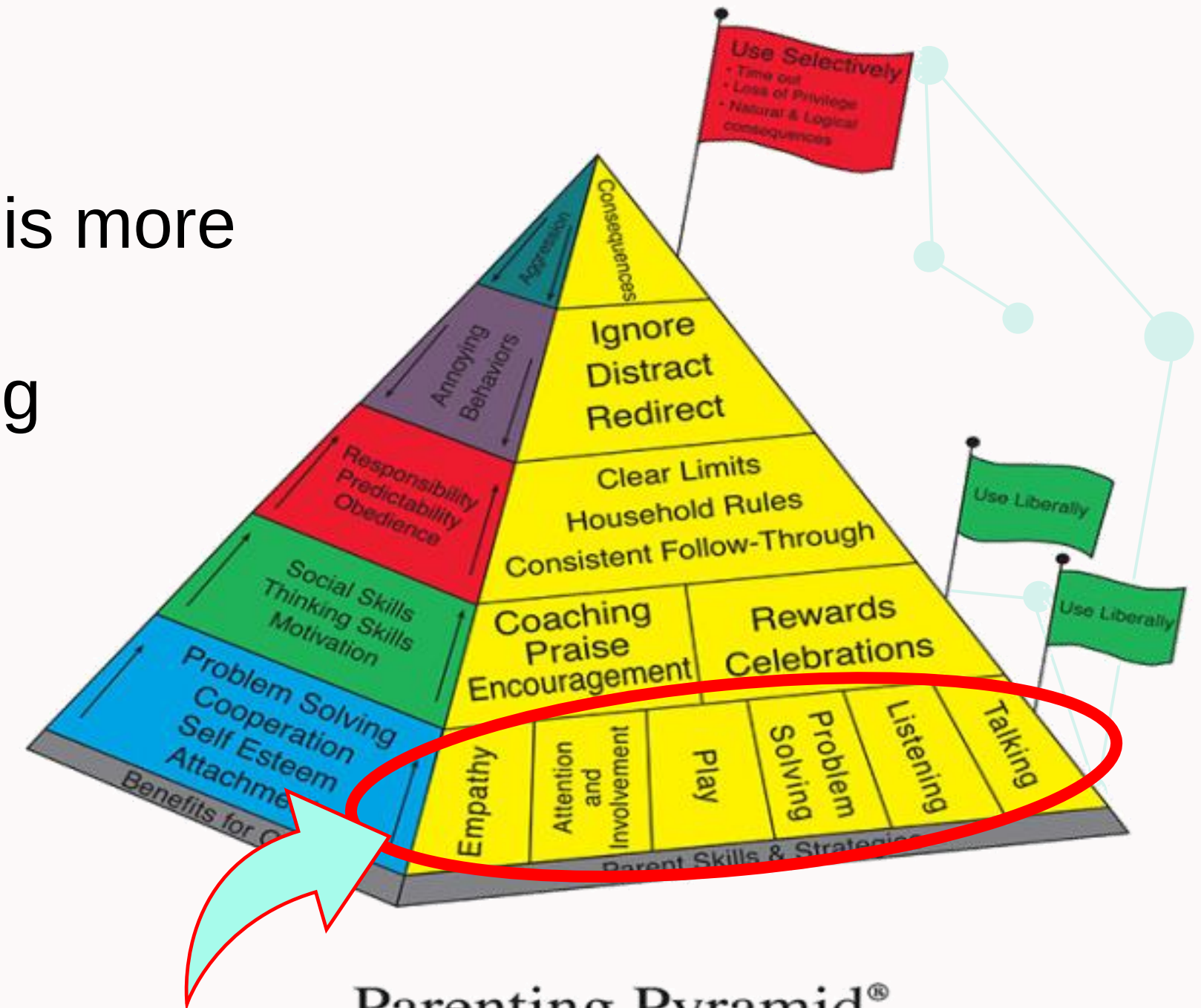
The key principles:

- Behaviour that is reinforced immediately is more likely to reoccur.
- Children's behaviour is oriented to gaining attention from others*

Main strategies:

- Reinforce desired behaviour
- Withhold reinforcement from undesired behaviour

Parenting strategies are most effective when family climate is warm, supportive, positive, and understanding.



Parenting Pyramid®

Initiating change:

Identify 1 or 2 specific behaviours to focus on at one time

Begin with general questions:

- What would you like to be different?
- How would you like things to be?
- How would you know change had happened?

Be progressively more specific:

- How could we break this down into smaller steps?
- What would be the first sign that things had started to change?
- What would you have started doing or be doing more of?
- What would you have stopped doing or be doing less of?
- What will others notice you doing/not doing?

Small
changes
eventually
add up to
huge
results.



ABC Functional Analysis



When where date/ time	ANTECEDENT /TRIGGER (WHAT HAPPENED JUST BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR) e.g. who was there, what was said, asked?	BEHAVIOUR (DESCRIPTION OF WHAT HAPPENED) e.g. what did s/he do, say?	CONSEQUENCE (WHAT HAPPENED AFTER), What did you do? How did s/he respond?)	Describe your feelings
Monday	Asked Jordan to get off his iPad at 730pm to get ready for bed.	Jordan shouts "no" and runs away from me	I give him a consequence for this behaviour. That is, I take his IPad off him for a week. However, when he gets home from me after school he screams and yells for his ipad. As such, I cave in after two days and give him the ipad.	Stressed



What has Jordan learned here?

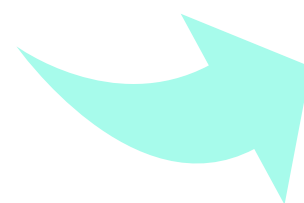
The function of a behaviour is determined by the consequences that follow the behaviour.



The role of positive attention



The Attention Table		
	"OK" CHILD BEHAVIOUR	"NOT OK" CHILD BEHAVIOUR
CARER ATTENTION	PRAISE Positive behaviour increases	Negative behaviour increases
NO CARER ATTENTION	Positive behaviour Decreases	IGNORE Negative behaviour Decreases





Laying the groundwork



1. Modelling behaviour you want to see

Being aware of your own technology use in front of children (e.g., responding to child when looking at mobile phone)

Setting and sticking to family rules and limits (e.g., 'no phones at the table' – this includes parents!).

Do you play/scroll on your phone before you go to sleep... will your child see this and copy?

Model conversations about what is happening online, how you feel and how you respond.

E.g. "I felt very annoyed when made that comment on my social media post, I will take some time to calm down by going for a walk".

Model turn-taking: "It's your turn to choose the TV program tonight because last night we watched my choice"

2. Special time

Child-directed play – promotes positive relationships and attachment with a child.

Can be with or without technology (research has found the quality time with your child may have more of an impact in terms of wellbeing than the type of activity you do together [i.e., on- or off-screen activity]).

TOP TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SPECIAL TIME:

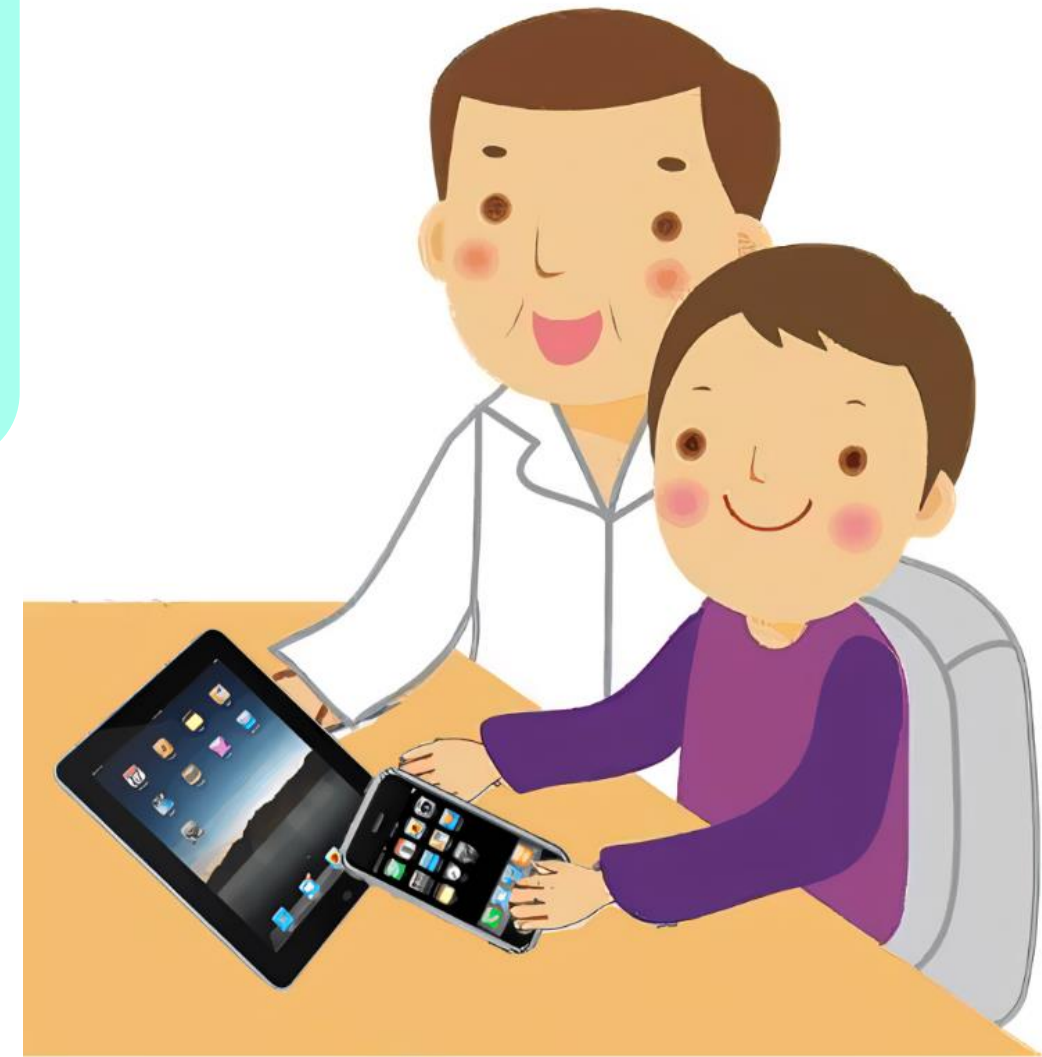
- Follow the child's lead; avoid competing or correcting
- Give undivided attention & be attentive (to positive play behaviours)
- Encourage the child's curiosity & imagination; show interest & enjoyment
- Use descriptive comments instead of asking questions
- Laugh & have fun; ignore minor misbehaviour
- Give a warning before time ends



Discussion:

What might be the benefits of 'special time'?

- With technology?
- Without technology?
- A mix of both?



Positive reinforcement

1. Praise

- What is *praise*?
- What does *praise* mean to you?



Why praise?

- Positive reinforcement of behaviour we want to encourage through positive attention.
- Can help reinforce effort and small-step achievement along the way to larger goals – motivational.
- Contributes to development of positive self-esteem.
- Improves parent-child relationship.

Specific Labelled Praise

- “You did a good job of...”
- “That’s a perfect way of...”
- “I’m very proud of you for...”
- “How thoughtful of you to...”
- “Wow, what a wonderful job you’ve done of...”
- “I’m so happy you...”
- “Thank you for...”

What are 2 behaviours you are going to praise more?

Fantastic!

Good girl!

Well done!

Great job!

We use praise to reinforce behaviour we want to encourage.

What do you notice about the above examples of praise?

Positive reinforcement

1. Praise (continued...)

Examples of behaviours to praise

- Sharing tech
- Complying with requests to put tech away
- Doing homework before watching TV/using tech
- Staying calm when frustrated using tech
- Sharing what they're doing / what is happening online
- Putting phone/tablet away before bedtime

But also...

- Making the bed
- Doing chores
- Putting effort into something
- Solving a problem
- Being thoughtful / polite
- Helping a sibling
- Etc...

Why is it
important to
praise behaviour
not related to
tech too?

How to praise effectively:

- Be specific and sincere!
- Be attentive - catch your child being good & praise immediately!
- Ignore negative responses
- Focus on behaviours and traits that they have power to change
- Praise in front of others to double the impact.
- Don't dilute praise with a command, suggestion, teaching or criticism.
- Don't wait for perfection/completed tasks (praise during tasks!)



Positive reinforcement

2. Rewards

Rewards, incentives and celebrations encourage behaviour we want to see more of (another layer of positive reinforcement)

Motivate children to learn a difficult or new behaviour

Encourage repetition

Can be tangible (an object) or intangible (emotional impact)

A way to recognise successes when working on long-term goals

...A bribe?



Reward programmes / charts

- Reinforce a specific (desired) behaviour
- Be clear about what it is we want to see & how many times to get reward.
- Steps need to be small and achievable
- Should involve the child in choosing rewards
- Provide variety to maintain interest
- Once a reward is earned it CANNOT be taken away.
- Reward charts only work if done correctly!





Positive reinforcement



Common mistakes with reward charts

Reward: If good all week then treat on Sunday

Day of the week	Achieved
Monday	★
Tuesday	
Wednesday	★
Thursday	
Friday	★
Saturday	★

What might make this reward chart less effective?

- Lack of clarity around what exactly is being rewarded may make chart less effective – child needs to know exactly what deserved the reward.
- Parents may reward things differently or variably – little consistency about what counts as ‘good’/‘achievement’ & therefore also difficult to measure.

- Weekly table with stickers used to indicate when behaviour is achieved might serve to highlight failures
- Child may lose motivation as achievement might feel unobtainable (“all week”).

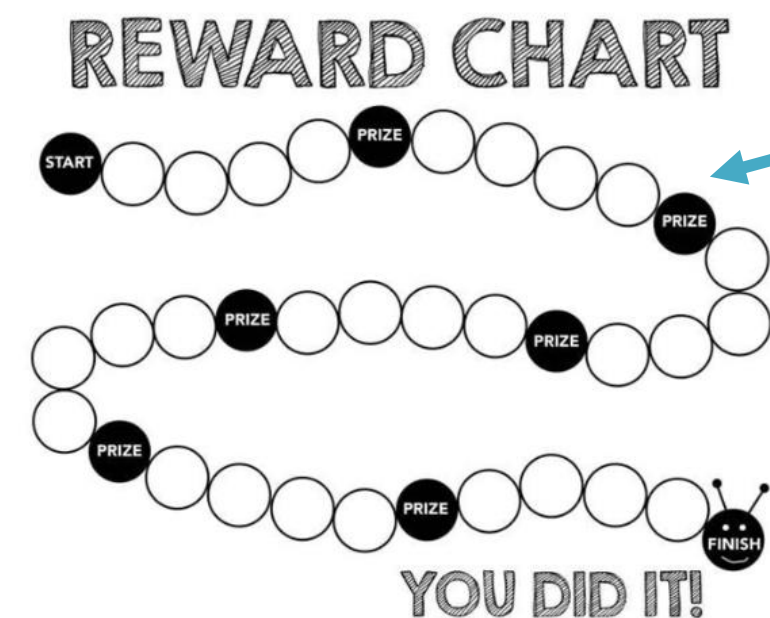
- No explicit mention of what the ‘treat’ is?
- May make the reward aspect less tangible and therefore less motivating.

Alternatives

REWARD CHART

TASK																		REWARD
TASK																		REWARD
TASK																		REWARD
TASK																		REWARD
TASK																		REWARD
TASK																		REWARD
TASK																		REWARD
TASK																		REWARD

Let's color our way to good behavior!



Provided there is clarity around what deserves a sticker and what the prizes are!

Effective boundary setting

Rules & limit-setting

The benefits of rules and limits:

- Teaches the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- Encourages children to make choices about their behaviour.
- Children can learn from their mistakes
- Consistent limits help children feel calm and safe.

But...

All children will test these rules! They will likely argue, scream and protest when an activity is denied to them.

- What do we think children might learn if we don't stay consistent in the face of this?



Effective boundary setting

Instructions

General tips for giving clear commands:

One at a time

Stay simple but *specific* – avoid vague commands (e.g., ‘behave yourself’, ‘stop it’).

Do not give commands constantly, use sparingly (on average, a parent gives 17 commands in 30 minutes, 40 if behavioural problems are present)

Make them realistic and achievable (think developmental capacity)

Do not present command as a question (“do you want to...?” or a suggestion “let’s...”). This may communicate the child has some choice in the matter!

Most effective when parents need child to do something straight away

Be prepared to follow through with praise /reward or consequence if child does/does not comply (don’t keep repeating yourself!)



Effective boundary setting

Process for giving clear commands/instructions:

1. Get the child's attention — be in the same room, establish eye-contact and address by name

2. State the instruction clearly

- One at a time
- *Tone of voice + confidence*
- Positive phrasing of instruction (e.g. change 'don't run' to 'walk slowly')
- Be specific in what you want child to do and use action words
- *Consider 'When... then...' instructions* ("when you have put your ipad away, then we can play a game together")
- *Give choice in how they do command and not whether they do it* (turning the ipad off OR putting it on the shelf)

3. Allow time to comply – child needs time to process your request, count to 5. (Repeat/give warning, if necessary, count to 5 again.)



Effective boundary setting

Example - giving clear commands:

Example:

Approach child, kneel down and look them in the eye: *'Jordan, look at me, I need you to turn off the TV and bring your homework to the dining table now, please'*

Wait 5 seconds:

- If Jordan has complied: Praise (e.g. *'Thank you for turning off the TV and bringing your homework out so quickly, Jordan, that's fantastic. Once you've finished your homework, we can watch a film together tonight'*)
- If Jordan has not begun to comply: Repeat Instruction (e.g. *"Jordan, look at me, turn the TV off now and bring your homework to the dining table"*)

Wait 5 seconds:

- If Jordan complies: Praise (positive attention!!)
- If Jordan has not begun to comply: At this stage, initiate pre-agreed consequence (we will be covering effective consequences very soon!)



Effective boundary setting

Setting Family Rules

- Parental consistency is crucial (both parents/carers need to agree)
- Not too many (choose meaningful rules for family; simply withdraw attention from more minor misbehaviour & return it when minor misbehaviour ends)
- Enforceable - Rewards as well as consequences
- Simple and easy to follow
- Rules must be fair (apply to everyone!)
- Positively stated e.g. 'Talk quietly and politely' instead of 'stop arguing'.

Important
"unbreakable"
rules

Choose your battles wisely because if you fight them all you'll be too tired to win the really important ones.

TheMindsJournal.com



Effective boundary setting

Family rules, & commands/instruction giving:

Reflection and
discussion time



Effective boundary setting

Consequences

Natural e.g.	Logical e.g.
Didn't come off device - Late for dinner - food gets cold.	Fighting over a game - game ends.
Breaks device - unusable.	Not coming off iPad – will lose time later
Played on phone in bed – tired	Go on banned game – game gets blocked

REMEMBER! Reinforcing child behaviours with positive parental attention is always more effective than sanctioning child behaviours with negative consequences.

Guidelines

- Make sure you can live with the consequences
- Discuss in advance
- Appropriate for age
- Immediate
- Straight-forward
- Non-punitive
- Proportionate
- Keep it brief
- Give warnings & choices
- Use if...then warnings where appropriate, e.g. "If you don't come off your device now, then I will confiscate it after dinner"



Effective boundary setting

Consequences: Time out

- Child goes to neutral, (low stimulation), boring and safe place with parent nearby but not in line of sight.
- Focused removal of parental attention (both positive and negative)
- Effective for persistent non-compliance or dangerous and destructive behaviour when used infrequently but consistently
- Can help facilitate emotion regulation in a distressed/angry child

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE TIME-OUT

Practice when child is calm

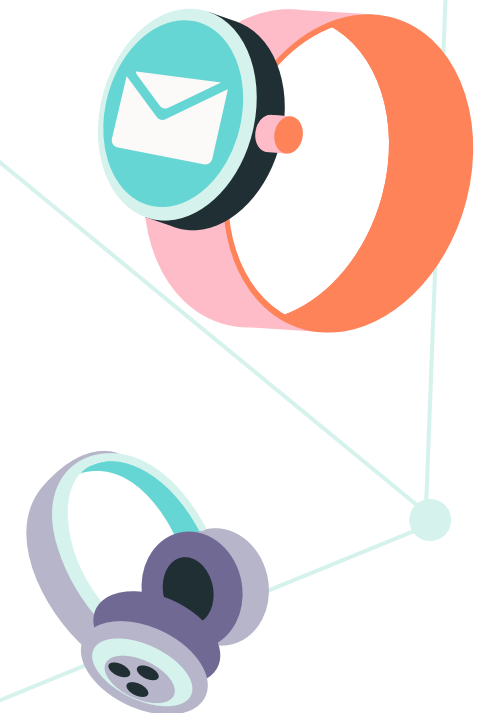
Teach some emotion-regulation techniques beforehand for child to use during time out, e.g. breathing or grounding strategy.

End time out when child is calm. Amount of required calm time depends on child – but keep it brief – 30 seconds to 2 minutes

Once over, you should view this as a 'clean slate'

No communication or attention during Time Out

Important to “catch your child being good” ASAP after a Time Out and give positive attention to appropriate behaviour.



Effective boundary setting

Consequences: Time out – other considerations

Time out location

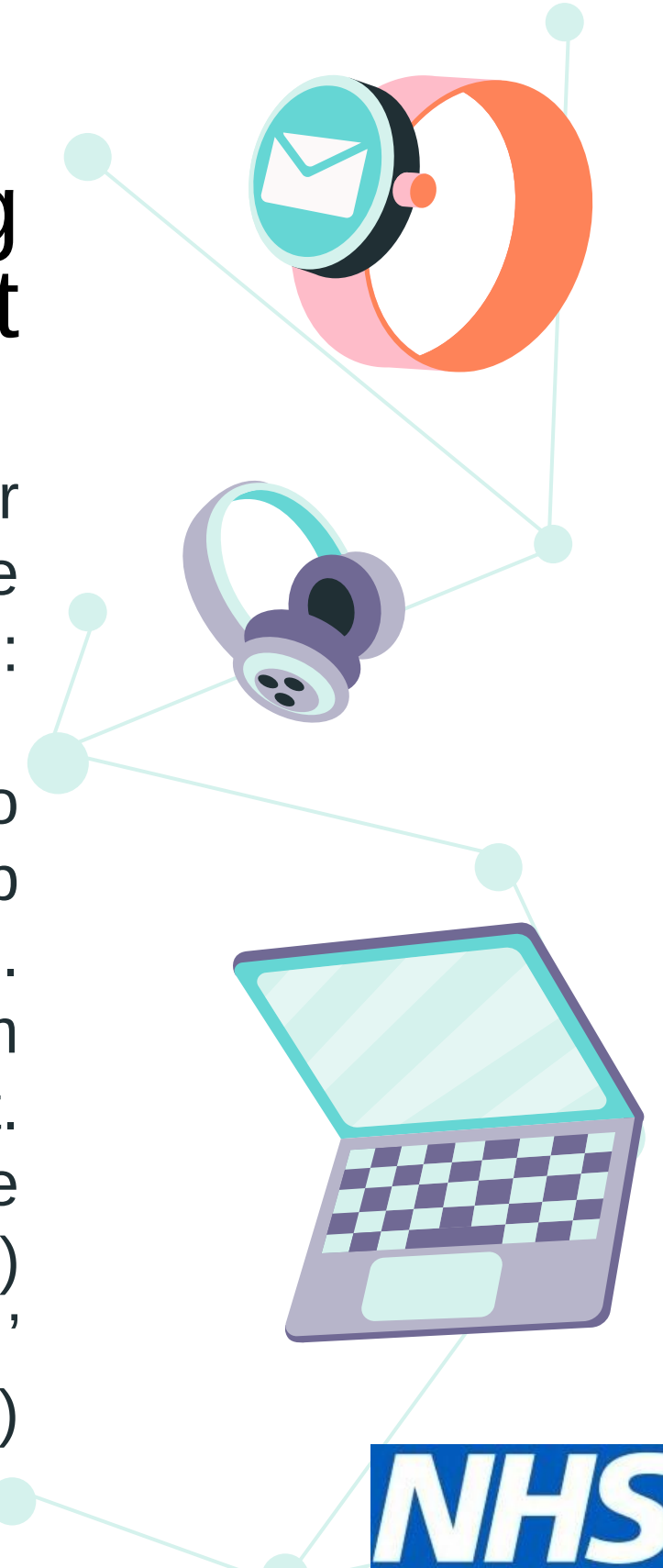
- Preferably a chair in an empty corner (room or hallway) away from all family activities and electronic devices
- Dull and boring but safe space
- Not a bedroom or playroom (associated with rest or fun)
- Must not be called “naughty chair/step” but Time Out / Calm Down Place / Thinking Chair
- Have a backup space



Back-ups to implementing Time Out

If your child refuses to go to Time Out or refuses to stay in Time Out, include the following back-ups:

- For under 5s - give a warning: You can go to Time Out like a big boy, or I will have to help you.
- If child refuses, gently and calmly take them by the arm and walk to Time Out.
- Additional time in Time Out (another minute for each refusal up to 10 minutes total)
- Removal of privileges (using an ‘If...then...’ statement/warning)



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Online Safety

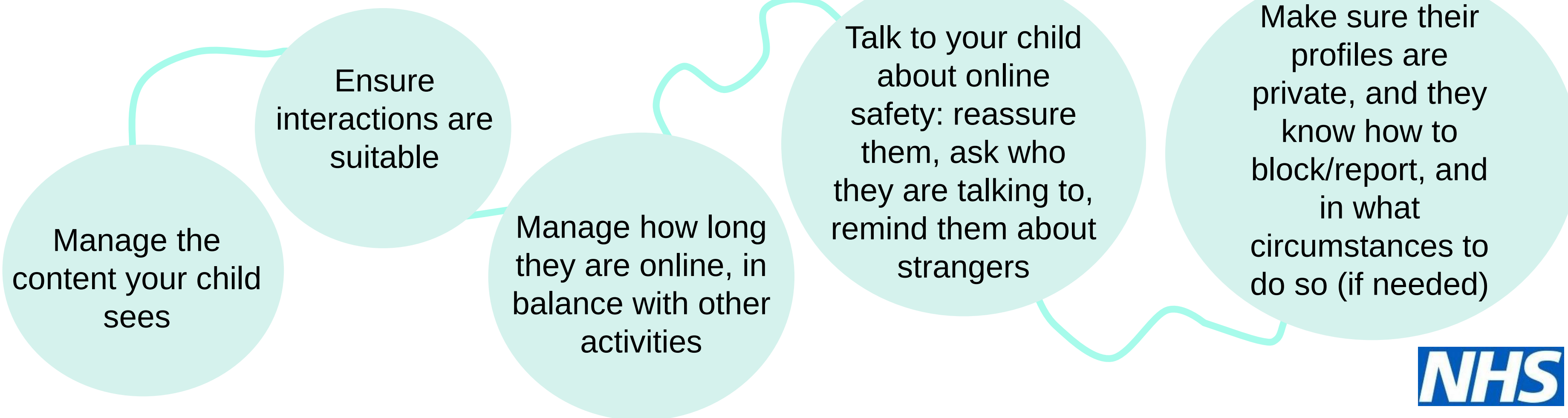
- A very brief mention of this important aspect of children's tech use!



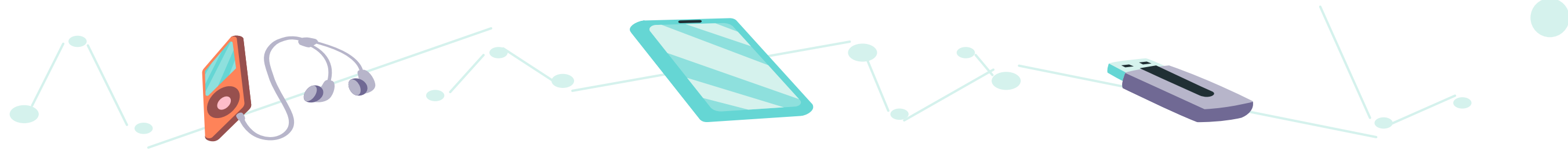
Keeping safe online – parental controls, things to be mindful of



Remember to think about what children might see online, who they might speak to and how they behave. As parents you can:



Signposting & Support



- Keeping children safe online | NSPCC
- Childline on 0800 1111 or visiting the [Childline website](#).
- [Child Safety Online: A practical guide for parents and carers whose children are using social media - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Children and technology: Age-appropriate usage advice | NSPCC](#)
- [Social Media & Mental Health | Guide For Parents | YoungMinds](#)
- [A Complete Guide to Potentially Dangerous Apps for Kids – FamilyEducation](#)
- [Get online safety advice by age, apps and activity | Internet Matters](#)
- [ADD-vance](#)
- [Training - sensory processing service | Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust](#)
- Supporting Links - [New What's On](#)
- The Incredible Years (R): Trouble Shooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3-8 Years (3rd Edition): Amazon.co.uk: Carolyn Webster-Stratton: 9780578434513: Books



Thank you for
listening!

