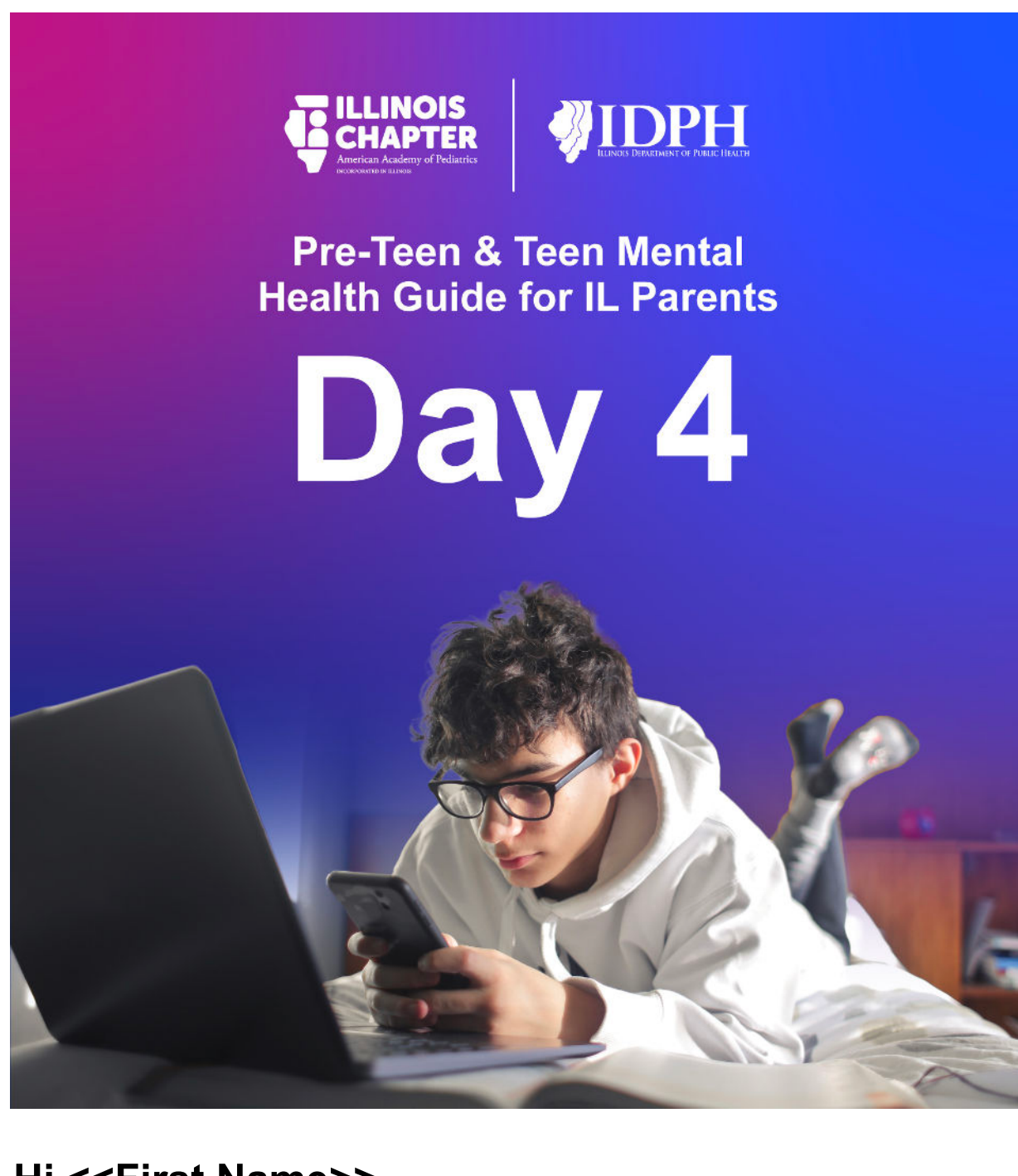


[View this email in your browser](#)



Hi <<First Name>>,

Let's talk about the elephant in the room: that glowing rectangle your teen seems almost glued to.

Before we dig in, it's important to know there isn't an exact amount of screen time that is recommended for teens and that not all time in front of a screen is the same.

Sometimes, screens are tools for homework or creative projects, not just entertainment. The goal isn't to eliminate screens, it's to help your teen develop a healthy relationship with whatever's happening on those devices.

Let's start with social media. **Here's something that might surprise you: social media isn't all bad.**

The Good

Social media allows teens to:

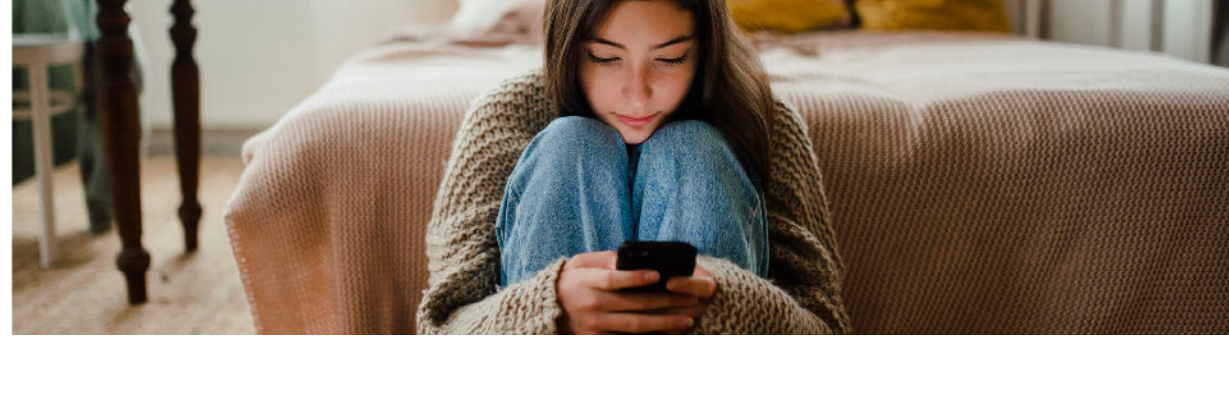
- Stay in touch with friends, even when they can't be together
- Find groups of people who share the same interests
- Have creative outlets through content creation
- Discover new interests, share ideas, and practice communication skills
- Consider different opinions and access information from a variety of sources
- Explore their identity



The Not So Good

Social media can:

- Make teens play the comparison game: "Why don't I look like that?" "Why wasn't I invited?" Their developing brain takes these questions and can make teens feel bad about themselves or their looks, especially with "perfect" pictures online
- Cause FOMO, or fear of missing out, which isn't just annoying — it triggers real anxiety when everyone seems to be living their best life
- Lead to bullying, mean comments, or seeing things that aren't age-appropriate
- Show teens false information or try to trick or harm them
- Be addictive
- Show pornographic images or language
- Be a place where private photos, videos or information is shared without someone's consent



Red Flags That Social Media or Screens Have Become a Problem

- Sneaking devices — you thought they were asleep, but they're on TikTok at 3 AM
- Grades dropping — their screen time is up while their GPA is down
- Losing real-world friends — they're canceling plans to stay online instead
- Mood swings — their emotional state hinges on likes, comments, or online drama
- Body image issues — their self-esteem plummets after scrolling specific apps

A Game Plan for Screens

Try to understand how your teen is using their computer or phone and discuss the positive and negative effects of it with them.

Ask: "What's everyone talking about today?" or say "Show me that funny video you mentioned."

Setting Boundaries Without Battles

Think and talk about a family media plan [like this one from the AAP's HealthyChildren.org](#). Create tech-free zones like the dinner table or bedrooms after 10 PM, that apply to EVERYONE — yes, including you.

Make it collaborative:

"I read that blue light makes it harder to sleep. What if we all charged phones outside bedrooms?"

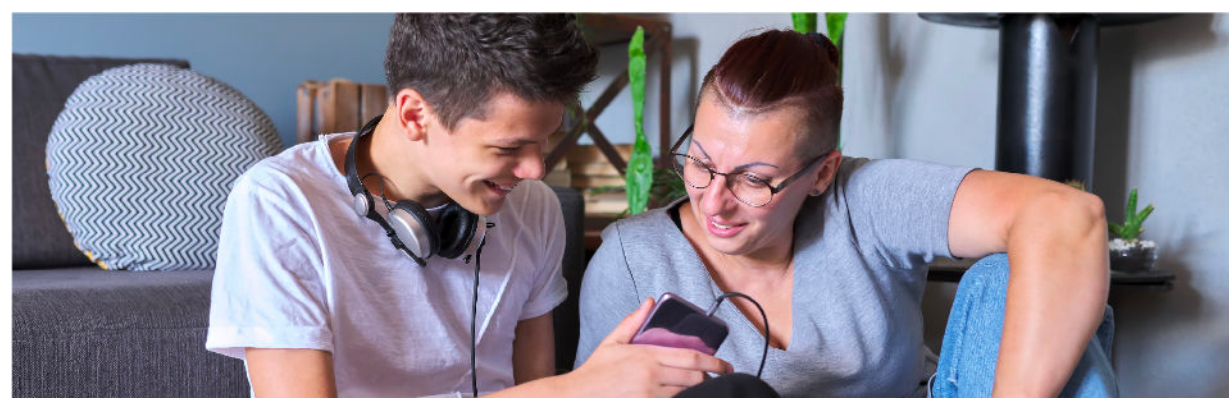
"Let's pick one hour a day where the whole family puts devices away. When works for you?"

"What do you think is a reasonable amount of screen time on school nights?"

"How about for every hour you are going to play a video game, you get up and do 25 jumping jacks? Can you agree to that?"

Try This Today

Tonight, ask your teen to show you their favorite account, creator, or app with no judgment — just genuine curiosity. "I'd love to see what you enjoy about this." You might be surprised by what you learn.



When to Actually Worry

Seek help if screens are causing:

- Complete withdrawal from real-life social connections
- Severe sleep deprivation (consistently getting less than 5-6 hours nightly)
- Self-harm behaviors inspired by online content
- Disordered eating patterns triggered by social media
- Ongoing cyberbullying your teen can't escape
- Exposure to inappropriate content they can't process

You can also show them good phone/screen habits.

Remember: Media habits are different for every household — you're not trying to win a battle against technology. You're helping your teen learn to live with it.

Helpful Resources:

- [The Good and Bad of Social Media for Teens' Mental Health](#)
- [Social Media and Your Child's Mental Health: What the Research Says](#)
- [5 C's of Social Media](#)
- [Family Media Plan](#)
- [Common Sense Media](#)

Tomorrow, we'll talk about relationships.

Hanging in there with you,

The ICAAP Team

P.S. [Here is a list of trusted people to follow](#) on social media when it comes to children's health!

Get Connected!



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