

Digital Dangers, Real Solutions: Parenting Together in Portugal

By Dr Silja Litvin

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Brought to you by Wait till Later a parent led initiative.

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PRESENTATION



Introduction

The "Wait Until Later" initiative, led by the Wait Until Later Team seeks to inform parents about the potential risks of early smartphone exposure. The initiative provides scientific insights into how smartphones impact children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. This paper expands on the key points presented in the accompanying slides, offering an in-depth understanding of the movement's rationale.

The Speakers

Our Speakers

Moderated by Naffie Israni



Matilde Braamcamp Sobral

Founder of Mirabilis Portugal



Bruno Bergher

Ex-Google and YouTube



Galina Klepikova

Cyber Security Engineer



Dr. Silja Litvin

Clinical Psychologist

Matilde Braamcamp Sobral

Mirabilis Portugal. A local NGO dedicated to empowering families through evidence-based information about screen time and its impact on mental health and child development.

Bruno Bergher

Former Google and YouTube employee has seen from the inside how data-driven optimization and the pursuit of engagement lead to turning digital products into addictive experiences with negative consequences for humans of all ages.

Galina Klepikova

Cyber Security Engineer who will explore the most pressing online risks facing children today and offer strategic insights to help families and educators foster safer, more resilient digital environments.

Dr. Silja Litvin

Clinical Psychologist (LMU Munich, UCL London), researcher and founder of eQuoo, sharing real-time teen mental health data and actionable strategies. She'll focus on how building strong parent communities and implementing simple tech tools can protect and support our children.

Naffie Israni, Panel Moderator

A parent who has personally navigated the switch from smartphone to dumbphone parenting—and watched her children become happier and healthier as a result.

Why I Joined the Movement

- Real-time data shows undeniable cause-relation
- Parents need Psychoeducation: New Data emerging every day
- Kids can't do it on their own

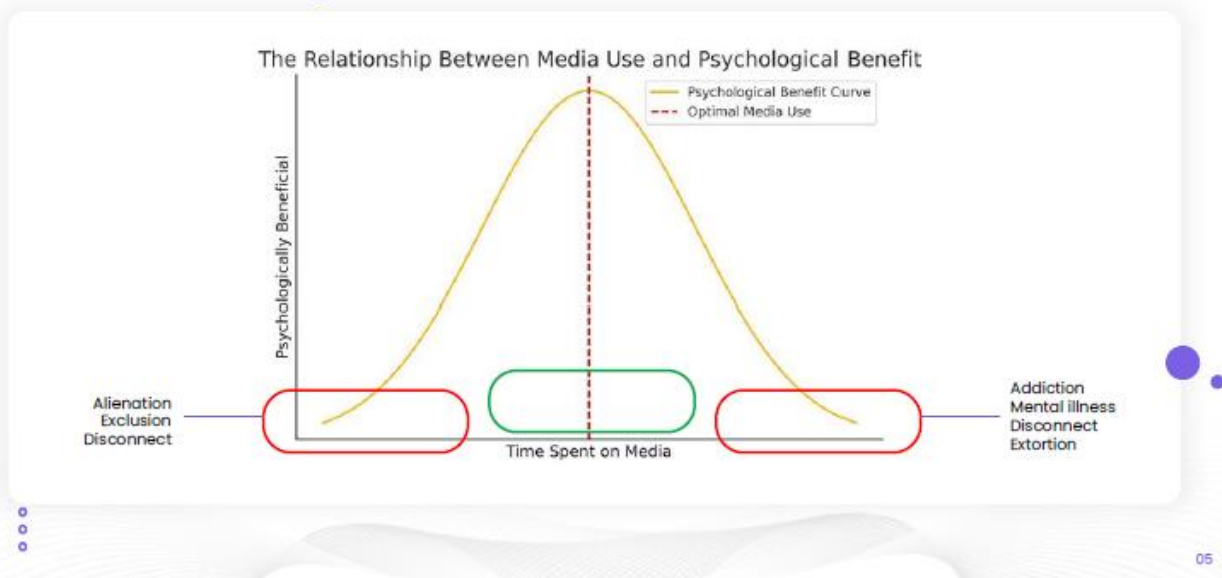
Male Participants			Av. Score	Female Participants			Av. Score
PHQA_3	Sleep Problems	1.33	1.33	PHQA_5	Tired/Little energy	1.38	1.38
PHQA_5	Tired/Little energy	1.33	1.33	PHQA_3	Sleep Problems	1.19	1.19
PHQA_7	Trouble Concentrating	1.23	1.23	PHQA_7	Trouble Concentrating	1.47	1.47
GAD7_5	Irritable	1.26	1.26	GAD7_3	Worrying too much	1.26	1.26
GAD7_3	Worrying too much	1.26	1.26	GAD7_5	Irritable	1.26	1.26
PHQA_6	Feeling bad about self	1.21	1.21	GAD7_1	Feel nervous	1.21	1.21
GAD7_1	Feel nervous	0.89	0.89	PHQA_6	Feeling bad about self	1.21	1.21
PHQA_2	Little interest in things	0.95	0.95	GAD7_2	Can't stop worrying	1.47	1.47
PHQA_1	Feeling down	0.88	0.88	PHQA_4	Appetite problems	1.42	1.42
GAD7_4	Trouble relaxing	0.87	0.87	PHQA_1	Feeling down	1.28	1.28
GAD7_2	Can't stop worrying	0.88	0.88	GAD7_4	Trouble relaxing	1.33	1.33
GAD7_7	Afraid of something awful	0.88	0.88	PHQA_2	Little interest in things	1.22	1.22
GAD7_5	Restless	0.78	0.78	GAD7_7	Afraid of something awful	1.28	1.28
PHQA_4	Appetite problems	0.77	0.77	GAD7_5	Restless	1.07	1.07
PHQA_5	Missing too much/lost	0.78	0.78	PHQA_5	Missing too much/lost	0.98	0.98

Why I Joined the Movement

In my role as a psychologist at PycApps, the company I founded, which designs evidence-based digital mental health prevention and early intervention tools, I have access to real-time mental health data from thousands of young people.

This data consistently shows a strong link between early smartphone exposure and negative outcomes in children. These effects range from diminished attention spans and reduced academic performance to increased risks of mental health issues. Children lack the ability to regulate their digital consumption effectively, making it crucial for parents to guide them in this process. Without parental psychoeducation, young users are exposed to digital environments that can shape their behavior in ways that may be difficult to reverse.

Is All Media Usage Bad?

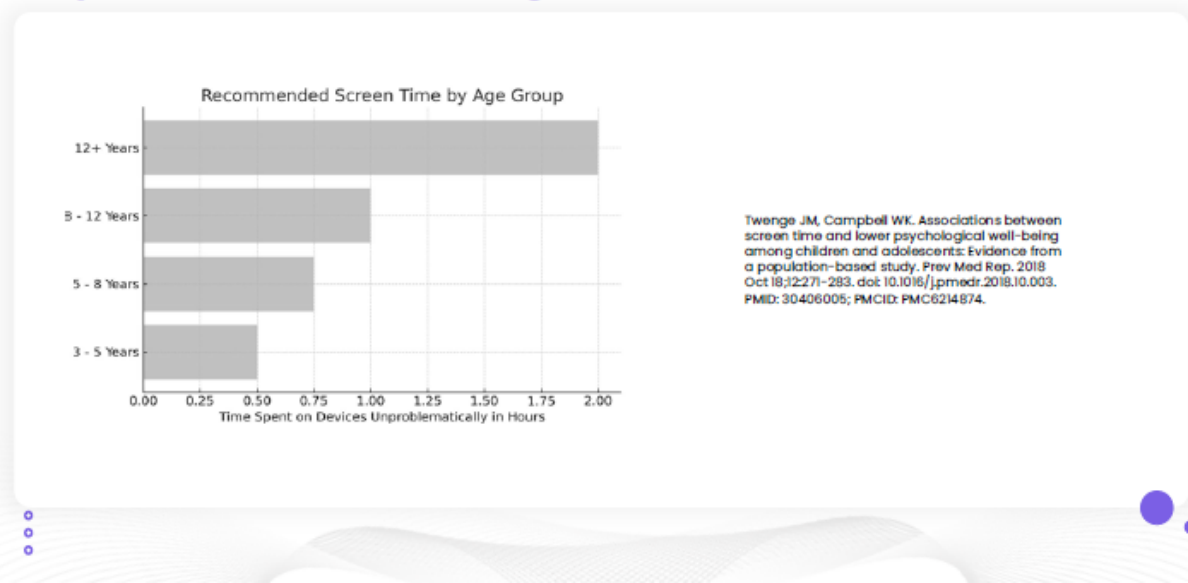


Evaluating Screen Time: Is All Media Bad?

While not all digital engagement is harmful, excessive screen use can lead to social alienation, increased mental health risks, addiction, and emotional disconnection. Children who spend too much time on screens may feel excluded from real-world interactions, struggle with forming meaningful relationships, and become vulnerable to online exploitation. However, when used in a structured and limited manner, media can offer educational value and entertainment without negatively impacting well-being.



Unproblematic Device Usage



Quality Over Quantity: The Risk of Overuse

Studies show that children who use screens for more than seven hours a day are twice as likely to develop anxiety or depression compared to those who use screens for only one hour. Even moderate use, around four hours per day, has been linked to a decline in overall well-being. Additionally, exposure to inappropriate or harmful content can happen in mere minutes, which is why delaying smartphone access can prevent children from experiencing negative long-term psychological effects. There is NO benefit in allowing any child access to media more than 2 hours a day.

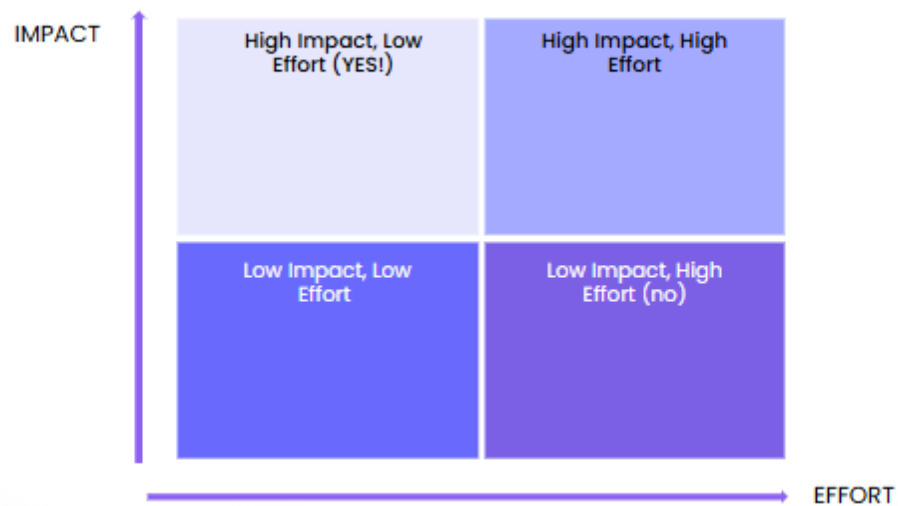
Benefits of Delaying Smartphone Access

For Parents

Delaying smartphone access reduces the need for constant monitoring and negotiations over screen time. Parents who enforce digital boundaries early on experience fewer conflicts with their children and can create a home environment that prioritizes face-to-face interactions. Additionally, being part of a community of like-minded parents can provide valuable support and shared strategies for handling digital challenges.

For Children

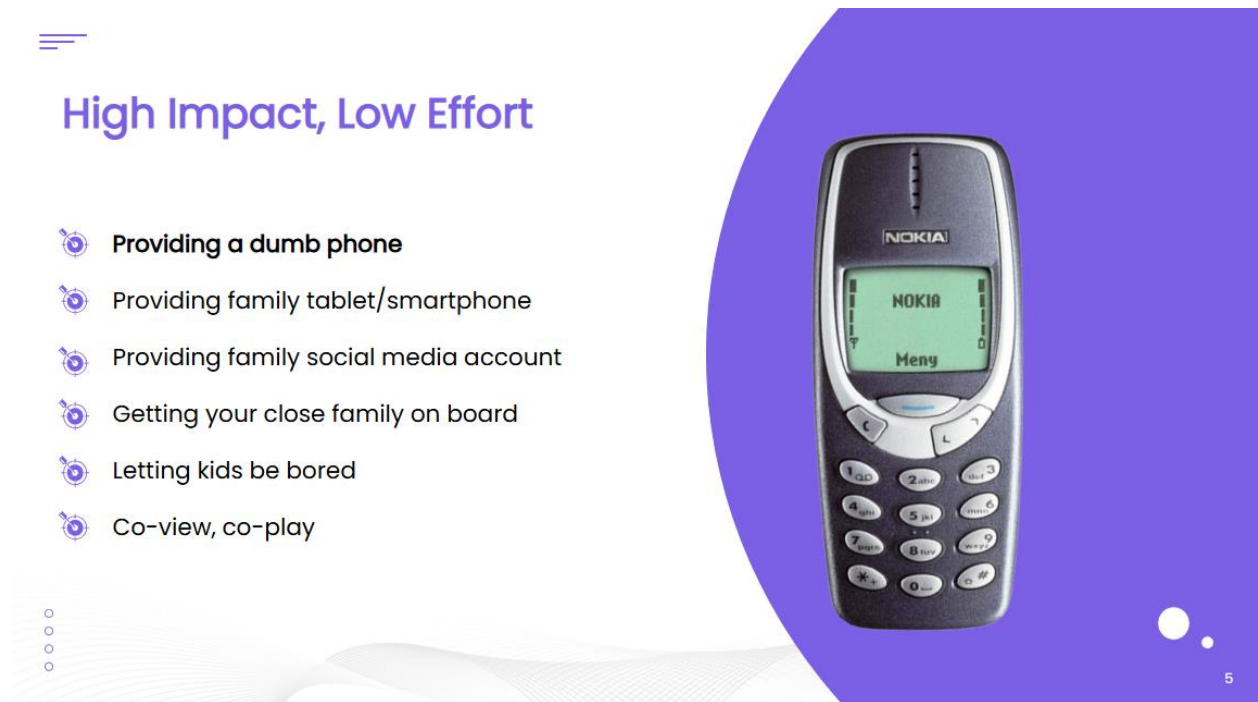
Children who delay smartphone use tend to experience improved mental well-being, stronger real-world social skills, and better academic performance. Without the distraction of social media and online gaming, they can develop meaningful relationships and engage more fully in their education. Reduced screen exposure also leads to a lower likelihood of cyberbullying and FOMO (fear of missing out), helping children feel more secure in their offline lives.



To help parents navigate the many tools and strategies available to support their children in the digital age, we've organized them using this Impact-Effort Matrix. The goal is to prioritize options that are high impact with low effort, these are our clear "YES" choices and the best starting points for busy families. Tools in the high impact, high effort category are still valuable but may require more time or consistency to implement. On the other hand, we suggest caution with tools that fall into the low impact zones, especially those that require a lot of effort but offer little return, as seen in the low impact, high effort (no) quadrant. This system helps parents focus on what truly makes a difference without becoming overwhelmed or wasting energy on ineffective strategies.

Please keep in mind that these can vary, depending on family, culture, school and many other influences.

High Impact, Low Effort



The slide features a purple background on the right side where a Nokia 3310 dumb phone is displayed. The phone's screen shows 'NOKIA' and 'Meng'. To the left of the phone, there is a list of six strategies, each preceded by a blue circular icon with a white play symbol. The strategies are: 'Providing a dumb phone', 'Providing family tablet/smartphone', 'Providing family social media account', 'Getting your close family on board', 'Letting kids be bored', and 'Co-view, co-play'. The slide also includes a hamburger menu icon in the top left, a decorative wavy line at the bottom left, and a small number '5' in the bottom right corner.

High Impact, Low Effort

- Providing a dumb phone
- Providing family tablet/smartphone
- Providing family social media account
- Getting your close family on board
- Letting kids be bored
- Co-view, co-play

This slide highlights tools and strategies that fall into the high impact, low effort quadrant: simple steps that can make a significant difference in managing kids' digital exposure without adding stress to already busy family lives. For example, providing a **dumb phone** instead of a smartphone gives kids the freedom to communicate without the distractions and risks of internet access. Similarly, using a family device or account keeps things transparent and manageable. Other low-effort wins include getting your immediate family aligned on boundaries, encouraging boredom as a gateway to creativity, and co-viewing or co-playing to stay connected with what your child is consuming. These are accessible, practical options that deliver meaningful results.

Example: Basic Phones (Talk & Text Only)

Basic phones, such as the Nokia 3310, Light Phone, or Gabb Phone, provide a communication option without the distractions of the internet and social media. These phones allow children to make calls and send texts while avoiding the risks associated with smartphone use, such as addiction and digital overexposure. They also have longer battery life and are more affordable than smartphones.



High Impact, High Effort

- 🕒 **Confiscate phones at 7pm**
- 🕒 Talk to your kids, watch documentaries with them, exchange
- 🕒 Build communities of 6-8 families with the same goal that your kids can play with
- 🕒 Model smartphone use
- 🕒 Let kids take on responsibility and agency
- 🕒 Parental controls
- 🕒 Teach Critical thinking (write a risk reward paper)



6

High Impact, High Effort

This category includes powerful strategies that can make a lasting impact, but they do require more time, consistency, or emotional energy. **For example, confiscating phones at 7pm sets a clear boundary and protects sleep and downtime**, but it may lead to resistance and requires firm follow-through. Other approaches, like having open conversations, modeling healthy habits, or teaching critical thinking, help children develop awareness and self-regulation but can't be done in one sitting: they need to be ongoing and intentional. Building small parent communities, setting parental controls, and encouraging responsibility and agency also demand planning and sustained engagement. These are investments, not quick fixes, but their return is high when it comes to shaping digital resilience and family culture.

Low Impact, Low Effort

- Create Tech-free zones
- Brief your extended family (and friends)
- Provide a family telephone number or landline



Low Impact, Low Effort

These actions are easy to implement and can contribute to a healthier digital environment, but they typically don't create major change on their own. Think of them as supportive steps rather than core strategies. For example, creating tech-free zones in the house, like at the dinner table or in bedrooms, helps set clear boundaries, even if kids still have access elsewhere. Briefing extended family and friends ensures consistency around digital rules when your child is visiting others. And offering a family phone number or landline reduces pressure on kids to have their own smartphones. These are simple tools that reinforce your overall approach, but they work best when combined with more impactful efforts.

Low Impact, High Effort



- Move into a cave
- Completely restrict access to any types of media
- Completely curate your child's friends' group

Low Impact, High Effort

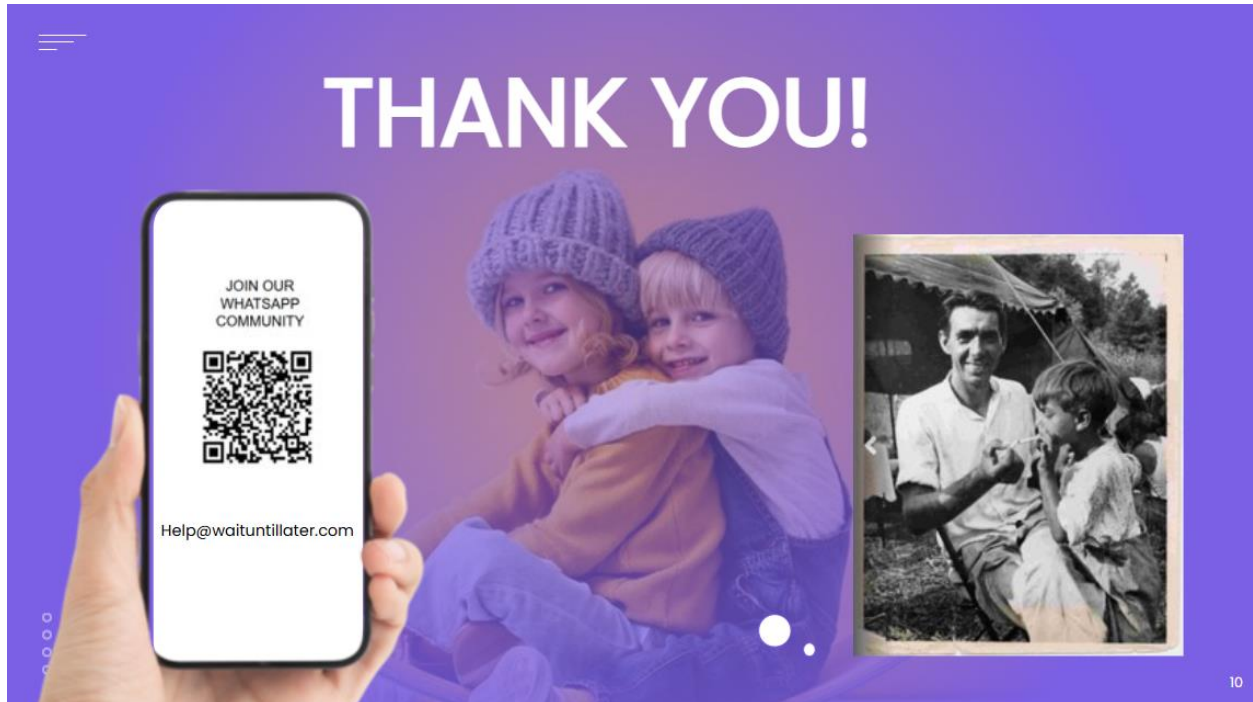
This quadrant is where we find strategies that are incredibly demanding—but deliver very little payoff in the long run. These are often driven by fear or perfectionism, like trying to eliminate all media, control your child’s entire social circle. While these approaches might offer short-term control, they’re typically unsustainable and risk creating tension or rebellion without truly teaching digital resilience. The takeaway here is that effort alone doesn’t equal impact—what matters is choosing intentional, balanced strategies that build long-term skills and trust.

Next Steps

A collective effort is required from parents, educators, and mental health professionals to create a cultural shift in how children interact with technology. By delaying smartphone access, children can develop stronger cognitive skills, healthier relationships, and a more balanced approach to digital consumption. This movement seeks to establish new norms

that prioritize child development over digital dependency, ensuring that young individuals are set up for success in all aspects of life.

For more information or to join the movement, contact help@waituntillater.com.



Silja

Please take a moment to participate in our parent survey - it will help us better understand how to support fellow parents navigating the digital world.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfynqcme9frk1mQSuB0V1bGDjk5zcVsUILSMtu-QmTQlzn3w/viewform?usp=sharing>