

**Tips and Scripts**  
**Conversations with Your Child About Delaying Smartphones**  
**Dr. Tracy Brenner**

- If you have already indicated that a smartphone was coming sooner:
  - **Try:** “I know that we had said we thought x grade would be the time we would give you a smartphone. We are learning more and more each day about how smartphones are truly harmful to kids' health and well-being. Our number 1 job as parents is to keep you safe. Just like I wouldn't let you ride in a car without a seatbelt, I wouldn't be doing my job as a parent to hand over a device that I know to be harmful.”
  - **Add empathy and validation:** “I'm sure that you are disappointed (angry, etc). I totally get that and you are absolutely allowed to be mad at us.” **Plus a clear boundary:** “But just like we wouldn't change our decision making if you were angry at us for not letting you eat ice cream for breakfast, we are not going to change our decision about this because you are upset.”
- If your child protests because their siblings got phones earlier than the end of 8th grade:
  - **Try:** “I know your older brother was given a phone at the end of 5th grade. The cool thing about research and science is we are always learning new things. We just didn't know as much about the negative impact of smartphones on kids then as we do now. So while this may feel unfair, and trust me, I get it, if I had the information then that I have now, I would have made the same decision. **(Insert empathy and validation lines!)**
- If your child asks, “well what's so bad and dangerous anyway.”
  - Do the research and give the information! Here's Jonathan Haidt's stats: <https://www.theanxiousgeneration.com/resources/the-evidence>
  - **Try** something like: “Cell phone use has been linked to problems with sleep, attention, academic performance, less time spent with friends but also can change how you feel, it can make kids and teens feel more sad, lonely and worried.”
- **When your child says,** “you're the worst parent ever, everyone else is getting one.”
  - **Try:** “I understand that you feel like I'm the worst and you're really mad at me. This is something you've wanted for a while and I'm saying 'no.' That doesn't feel good. I get that you're worried you'll be the only one without a phone. It's scary to feel left out. The good news is that many parents at our school are united in this and supporting each other because we all agree our kids' health and well-being comes first. So no, you're not the only one without a phone. At least not in our community. (and if they have camp friends, outside of school friends etc) say, and let's think of other ways, that don't include a smartphone to keep you connected to your friends outside of school”