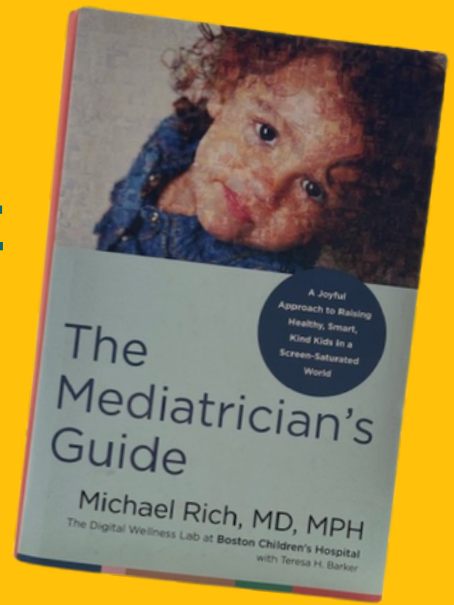


# THE MEDIATRICIAN'S GUIDE

DR. MICHAEL RICH

As screens, smartphones, and digital media increasingly become an integral part of children's lives, many parents are finding themselves concerned and wondering how to best guide their kids and parent them in this new world. Paediatrician and digital media expert Dr. Michael Rich addresses this in his 2024 book, *The Mediatrician's Guide*, offering practical advice on helping children and young people develop healthy, balanced relationships with technology. Rich's honest, warm, conversational tone encourages parents to approach digital media with a mix of caution and curiosity, empowering families to make thoughtful decisions without fear or guilt.



Dr. Rich brings impressive credentials to this subject: as an experienced paediatrician, associate professor of paediatrics at Harvard Medical School, and adolescent medicine specialist at Boston Children's Hospital; he has a unique perspective on the intersection of health and media. Rich is also the founder and director of the Digital Wellness Lab, which focuses on understanding and improving the impact of digital media on young people's lives. His guidance in *The Mediatrician's Guide* draws on years of clinical experience and evidence-based research, as well as his own experience as a parent, making it a reliable and accessible resource for families.

## Key Insights and Practical Tips

One of the book's standout features is its balanced perspective. Rich recognizes the benefits of digital media, including its potential for learning, creativity and connection, alongside the potential risks, such as excessive screen time, exposure to harmful content, and the impact on mental health. This balance is refreshing, as it empowers parents to navigate the digital world thoughtfully without feeling pressured to ban screens and digital technology altogether.

Each chapter explores a different aspect of digital parenting, from setting screen time boundaries to helping kids manage social media and online friendships. Rich uses real-life examples and clear, evidence-based explanations, which make the guidance practical and relatable.

Rich tackles some of the biggest questions parents have today: How much screen time is too much? When should kids get their first smartphone? What can we do to keep them safe online? Instead of hard-and-fast rules, he offers frameworks and tools that help parents make decisions based on their child's unique needs. This flexibility is ideal for parents who may be juggling multiple children at different stages of digital readiness.

In particular, The Mediatrician's Guide emphasizes the importance of building open communication between parents and children about media use. Rich encourages parents to model healthy habits, engage in media with their kids when possible, and keep the conversation going, helping children build digital literacy and emotional resilience. These recommendations align with current research showing that mentorship, rather than simply strict control, fosters better digital habits.

He presents his 5M's framework for digital parenting: Modelling, Mentoring, Monitoring, Making Memories and Mastering. He provides detailed, useful guidance for parenting towards digital wellness specifically addressing the needs of different ages and stages including Birth to Kindergarten, School Age, Tweens, Teens and Young Adults. Rich also delves into the topic of digital addiction and its link to mental health, particularly in relation to social media and gaming. His constructive approach offers actionable steps to balance these activities and emphasise offline connections, making the process approachable and compassionate for parents.

### **Why Parents Should Read This Book**

The Mediatrician's Guide is an invaluable resource for parents of young children, tweens and teens, especially those feeling overwhelmed by the rapid pace of digital change. Rich's tone is compassionate and supportive, addressing the challenges of digital parenting without judgment or blame. This book doesn't prescribe; instead, it empowers, guiding parents in a way that feels achievable and relevant. Whether you're navigating your child's first smartphone, considering the impact of social media, or simply looking for ways to make screen time more purposeful, The Mediatrician's Guide is a comprehensive, reassuring companion.



**We are all in this ongoing work together. Let us solve the future together and remember to enjoy our children and our moments with them to the fullest.**

**Dr Michael Rich**