

THE HIDDEN SUPERPOWER OF BOREDOM

As parents, many of us feel the tug to step in the moment our child says, "I'm bored." We try to solve it straight away, suggesting an activity, handing over a device, or keeping their schedules so full that boredom never gets a look in.

It comes from a good place. We want them happy, occupied, and stimulated. But here's the risk: when every gap in their day is filled, and especially when it's always filled with digital technology, we're training them to avoid boredom entirely. Over time, they learn the same reflex we've developed as adults; when waiting in a queue or sitting in a quiet moment, reaching for our phone and scrolling.

Boredom isn't something to be instantly eliminated. It's a valuable and necessary part of growing up, and indeed life. In fact, boredom can be the gateway to curiosity, exploration, and creativity. It's the space in which children discover new interests, experiment with ideas, and learn to entertain themselves. It's where they begin to understand who they are without constant external input.

When technology is always there to fill the gap, other things get squeezed out. The chance to pick up a book, start a game, make something, go outside, watch the clouds, talk to someone, or simply think, disappears. Those quiet, unstructured moments are often

where the most memorable ideas and discoveries happen. Boredom builds resilience. It teaches children how to sit with discomfort, to self-direct, and to find meaning in unexpected places. Without it, we risk raising young people who are less able to navigate downtime, less likely to initiate activities on their own, and more dependent on constant digital stimulation.

So next time your child says, "I'm bored," resist the urge to instantly solve it, and especially the urge to hand them a screen or let them jump on their device. See it instead as an opportunity. A chance for them to wonder, to wander, and to work out for themselves what

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comes next. Because when we give boredom a place in our children's lives, we're not neglecting them, we're giving them the space to grow.

Mark Yeowell



MIND THE GAP

**ENSURING BLOCKS OF TIME WITHOUT ANY DIGITAL DEVICES
CREATES GAPS JUST WAITING TO BE FILLED**

A GAP WILL BE FILLED BUT WITH WHAT?

CREATIVITY? THINKING? CONVERSATION? PLAY? EXPLORATION?

WITHOUT DEVICES IN BEDROOMS - READING AND SLEEP CAN FILL THE GAP
WITHOUT DEVICES AT THE DINNER TABLE - CONVERSATION CAN FILL THE GAP
WITHOUT DEVICES ON JOURNEYS - WATCHING THE WORLD GO BY AND THINKING CAN FILL THE GAP
WITHOUT DEVICES IN CLASSROOMS - OTHER FORMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CAN FILL THE GAP
WITHOUT DEVICES IN PLAYGROUNDS - PLAY CAN FILL THE GAP

**CREATE SOME GAPS FOR YOUR CHILD
AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS**

 **DIGITAL
TWEENS**

USING DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S ONLINE SAFETY



The online world offers an array of opportunities and potential benefits for children and young people but alongside these come some big risks and the potential for harm.

As parents, it's completely natural to want to protect our children from these risks which come with being online. From inappropriate content to contact with strangers, the internet can be a tricky space for young minds to navigate.

Thankfully, there are a growing number of digital tools designed to help us create safer online environments for our children, but these tools are only one part of the solution.

Children today are often referred to as digital natives, in many cases having learned to swipe and scroll before they could read and write. While this familiarity can be a strength, it also means they can quickly find themselves in online spaces you'd rather they avoid. As parents, we have the challenge of supporting their learning and fun while reducing the chances of harm.

Digital safety tools can be built into devices, provided through software, or purchased as separate products. They can help you:

- **Filter** content so your child can only access age-appropriate material.
- Set screen time **limits** and lock devices during certain hours.
- **Monitor** activity to keep an eye on websites visited or apps used.
- **Track** location to know where your child is when they are using a connected device.

Here are some examples parents often consider:

- **Device-based tools** – Apple's Screen Time and Google's Family Link allow you to set app limits, approve downloads, and filter searches.

- **Parental controls embedded in software and apps** – Many popular apps and streaming services, like YouTube Kids, Netflix, and Roblox, offer their own safety settings that limit content, manage chat, and control in-app purchases.
- **Router-based controls** – Many routers now offer settings which can filter content and manage all devices connected to your home network. It's worth looking at different options.
- **Third-party monitoring software** – Programs such as Qustodio, Net Nanny, or Bark provide controls, detailed activity reports and alerts for potentially risky online interactions.

A Tool, Not a Substitute for Digital Parenting

While these tools can give you extra peace of mind, it's important to remember that they are not foolproof. No matter how sophisticated, digital safeguards can be bypassed by determined children (and some are remarkably resourceful at finding workarounds). Relying solely on technology to protect your child online is a recipe for disappointment or worse.

True digital safety comes from a combination of:

- Clear boundaries and rules you set together with your child.
- Active involvement with what they're doing online, the games they play, and the people they interact with.
- Ongoing conversations about what's safe, respectful, and responsible behaviour online.

The Bottom Line

Digital tools can help reduce risk and make it easier to manage your child's online world, but they work best as part of a bigger picture that includes your attention, guidance, and trust. The most powerful safety tool your child has is you being present, engaged, and involved in their digital life.

*Note Digital Tweens does not recommend any particular safety products, and the above mentioned products are just examples, not endorsements or recommendations.



HELP I'M A DIGITAL PARENT!



FANTASTIC RESOURCES

Raising Children Network

A UK charity with:

- practical guides,
- conversation starters
- downloadable resources

Practical support and advice to help parents understand and manage their child's online world from gaming to social apps.

www.childnet.com

Connect Safely

A US website providing concise, easy-to-read downloadable guides for parents covering:

- popular apps
- online safety basics
- cyberbullying
- screen time
- podcasts

Guides provide plain-language explanations of risks and opportunities.

www.connectsafely.org

TRICKY ISSUES

Battling the 'But I'm Bored' Habit

When screens are the default boredom cure, kids lose the ability to self-entertain. Normalise boredom as a gateway to creativity and leave space for it by limiting passive screen use. Encourage activities that spark curiosity, like making, exploring, or just daydreaming.

Teaching Digital Responsibility Without Lecturing

Tweens tune out when they feel lectured. Instead of constant warnings, use real-life stories and "what would you do?" scenarios to get them thinking critically. Make them active participants in setting rules so they feel a sense of control and responsibility.



Teach Digital Resilience and Skills, Not Just Safety Awareness

It's not enough to just tell your children about what's dangerous online, you need to equip them with the skills to handle challenges when they arise. Teach them how to recognise misinformation, deal with online negativity, and know when to walk away from toxic chats.

Role-play tricky situations (e.g., What would you do if someone sent you a mean comment? or What if a friend pressured you to send a risky photo?). By building resilience instead of just rules, your child will be more prepared to make smart decisions independently.

THE DIGITAL TWEENS BLOG

The Digital Tweens Blog is FREE and is published on **Thursdays**.

Each edition focuses on a different topic and is packed with information and practical ideas to support busy parents trying to help their child to thrive in the digital world.

You can find the blog on our website

www.digitaltweens.com.au

OR

Sign up by clicking the link below and we'll send the blog straight to your email.



DIGITAL PARENTING

YOU'RE THE DRIVER - NOT YOUR CHILD!

- DELAY** - WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIDENT YOUR CHILD IS READY FOR A DEVICE, THEY ACTUALLY NEED IT, AND YOU CAN ACTIVELY SUPPORT AND GUIDE THEM.
- RESTRICT** - SET AND MAINTAIN CLEAR BOUNDARIES. AS YOUR CHILD CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATES RESPONSIBILITY AND CAPABILITY, GRADUALLY RELAX THEM.
- INVOLVED** - STAY ENGAGED AND SHOW GENUINE CURIOSITY ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S DIGITAL WORLD. ASK QUESTIONS AND USE TECHNOLOGY TOGETHER TO REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY'RE DOING ONLINE.
- VISIBILITY** - KEEP DEVICES IN SHARED SPACES (NOT BEDROOMS) AND ENSURE ONLINE ACTIVITY IS OPEN AND TRANSPARENT, ALLOWING YOU TO MONITOR, GUIDE, AND SUPPORT THEM.
- EDUCATE** - EXPLICITLY TEACH YOUR CHILD DIGITAL LITERACY AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP SKILLS, ALONG WITH STRATEGIES TO MANAGE TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON THEIR WELLBEING.
- ROLE MODEL** - DEMONSTRATE THE DIGITAL BEHAVIOURS YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO ADOPT. THEY'RE WATCHING AND LEARNING MORE FROM WHAT YOU DO THAN WHAT YOU SAY!



AS CHILDREN MOVE INTO THEIR TEENAGE YEARS, IT'S NATURAL FOR FRIENDS TO BECOME AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR WORLD, AND FOR YOUR DIRECT INFLUENCE TO GRADUALLY DECLINE. IN TODAY'S CONNECTED WORLD, HOWEVER, THOSE INFLUENCES MIGHT NOT JUST BE FRIENDS, THEY COULD BE CELEBRITIES, ONLINE INFLUENCERS, GAMERS, ANONYMOUS VOICES, OR EVEN AI. THESE VOICES MAY BE POSITIVE, BUT EQUALLY, THEY MAY NOT. BY STAYING ACTIVELY INTERESTED IN YOUR CHILD'S DIGITAL WORLD AND GUIDING THEIR TECHNOLOGY USE, ESPECIALLY IN THE PRE-TEEN YEARS, YOU CAN CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARED EXPERIENCES, MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS, AND MOMENTS THAT KEEP YOUR VOICE, AND YOUR VALUES, STRONG IN THEIR LIVES. DON'T HAND OVER YOUR ROLE AS YOUR CHILD'S INFLUENCER TO AN ONLINE VOICE.

WHO'S YOUR CHILD'S INFLUENCER?



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