



**Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript**



[Video Link](#)

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Introductions

Rachel Tzinberg, CATCH President ([00:00:05](#)):

Good afternoon everyone. I am Rachel Tzinberg. I am the president of CATCH and so happy that you guys could all join us today so that we can learn together how to teach our kids how to create a healthy relationship with technology and how to have good habits around technology that probably we all can learn from adults too. I know that for some of us it seems impossible that our kids could have a healthy relationship with technology, but our guest, Kevin Lanham, has a lot of experience and has great ideas to share with us. Kevin is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and is a supervising staff therapist and the Chief Operating Officer at Skylight Counseling Center in Evanston. Kevin received his bachelor's in psychology from the University of Chicago and masters in counseling psychology from the Family Institute at Northwestern University. He has spent the past 10 years combining his own experience as a gamer with his clinical training to reduce conflict at home, develop understanding, and increase positive communication in families regarding technology. And with that, I will turn it over to you, Kevin.

Presentation

Kevin Laham, LCPC, Skylight Counseling Center ([00:01:57](#)):

Well, thank you so much Rachel, for having me here today. I'm very excited to present on this topic. I've been working with families on the North Shore for the past 10 years or so on being able to communicate and manage technology use at home. It's something that's gotten harder and harder as the technology keeps changing. So when parents come to me, usually they ask me these kinds of questions like, How long should my child be gaming?



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



Kevin Laham ([00:02:55](#)):

What tech activities should my child stay away from? And also, what kind of limits should I put on my child's tech use? And these are great questions. And yet the more that I talk to parents, I realize that they already have answers to these questions, and I sort of am wondering why they're asking me, because I'll sort of do the therapist thing and then throw it back and say, Well, what do you think? And often they have really good insights. Usually parents do a lot of work before seeing me. They go to events like this, they Google it. They go to seminars. And the thing is that even though they get the information, it's really hard to actually translate it into changes at home.

Kevin Laham ([00:03:53](#)):

So today, instead, I'm going to be taking a little bit of a different approach with this topic because I don't think that it's just an information issue. I think that parents and children need experience, actual practice of managing their relationship with technology. When you talk to people, when it comes to either exercise, dieting, things like that, a lot of times people actually know the things that they should do or things that would be healthy, but it's hard to put it into practice. **And I think that's a really big thing when it comes to tech as well. So instead I wish parents asked me how do I help my child train their attention? How do I help my child regulate their emotions? And then also as a parent, how do I train my own attention and manage my own feelings?**

Kevin Laham ([00:04:55](#)):

Because I think these are the things that actually play a much bigger role in whether a child can actually follow through on some of these limits that we might put at home. And also for parents to be able to follow up with that too. And I think that when we start thinking from this perspective the relationship with the child can change too, because it becomes less just about defiance and obedience. My child doesn't listen to me. How do we help them be able to do executive functioning skills? Because that's what's needed to be able to turn off tech to grow their ability to sustain their attention. And so it's not just about having these limits, but it's about putting them into practice. So first we want to understand these kinds of transitions.



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



Tech Transitions Compared to Parking a Car

Kevin Laham ([00:06:01](#)):

There's some things to know when we're talking about transitioning off of technology, I like to think about it like if you're in a car with somebody and they ask you to park the car. Now if I'm driving and one of you asked me to park the car, that seems like a pretty simple task. You know, I might slow down, find a spot and stop. But I don't know if any of you parents now actually have teens that are just learning to drive or have recently driven. And when you're with somebody who's brand new to driving and you're on the road and you ask them to park the car, it's like you ask them to perform this huge obstacle. They have to think. They sort of freeze. They may panic. They don't really know where to look. And instead, as the parent that's helping them park, you might have to start saying, Slow down. Put your foot on the brake. Turn your signal on. Look for spots that are open, Check your mirror. All these steps that for us in our adult minds become just one thing, park the car. For a teen who's just doing it for the first time, it's like 30 steps. And any kind of distraction can throw them off. Oh wait, I was supposed to signal before I did this, not the other way around. So even for simple tasks like coming to dinner or starting your homework actually may involve many steps from the child's perspective. And it requires them to maintain their attention throughout that whole process, to stay zeroed in on what they were told to do. And also, not all of these transitions are created equal. Sometimes it might be pretty simple to go from one step to the next, but sometimes it might be hard. There might be difficult things that they need to do while they're turning on or turning off some kind of technology. And also these transitions often cause frustration and anxiety. Maybe they're really anxious about the thing that they are about to do. Maybe the reason they've been on their phone for the past two hours is because they've been actively avoiding that next thing. And, the parent asking them to do something just brings that anxiety right to the surface. And then technology can make the transitions more difficult.



Ranking Transition Difficulty

So first, there's a little exercise for you all to do. I want you to keep your child in mind. And I want you to rank some of these transitions from least difficult to most difficult. Hopefully, maybe you've seen some of these, like stopping an online video game with friends to come to dinner. Stopping a YouTube video to start homework. Maybe there's stopping social media use to play a board game with the family.

They're all sort of different. And unsurprisingly, there's no right answer to how you rank these. If we were all in the same room, I might ask you to take your piece of paper and share it with your neighbor and see, hey, what do you think is easiest for your child? What's hardest for your child? I'm guessing we're going to have a lot of different rankings of which is more difficult, which is less difficult. And maybe you have more than one child, and maybe for your oldest child you have one set of rankings. And for your younger child, it's a totally different set. And the challenges can come into different places. I like this exercise because I want to help you as parents change your thinking around these transitions from just black and white thinking. How do I help the kid turn it off to how hard is this transition for the kid? What's difficult about this? What's the challenge rating, so to speak? Like, on a scale of one to 10, is this a number three transition or 10 transition? And what makes something more difficult for your child in particular? Because one thing that I found from my work is that there's so many different things that happen behind the screen that's going to impact how your child will react.

Understanding Transitions

With your child in mind rank these transitions from least difficult to most difficult:

- Stopping online video game with friends to come to dinner
- Stopping YouTube videos to start homework
- Stopping homework to come to dinner
- Stopping Instagram browsing to play with a friend in person
- Stopping multiplayer video game to watch YouTube
- Stopping social media use to play a board game
- Stopping a walk to start doing homework

So first, there's a little exercise for you all to do.



How Technology Itself Makes Transitions Hard (Easy In Strategy)

Kevin Laham ([00:10:22](#)):

So there's some things where newer tech is making these transitions more difficult. So one thing is that tech often causes a hyper focused state. The next is that technology can create distractions. The best example for this is with Netflix. Netflix does this really interesting thing where you can't just read the description of the show that you want to watch once you hover over it, the show starts playing. And all these shows start with something really engaging really, really quick and it zooms your attention in just one place. I call that an 'easy in' strategy. **So a lot of tech is 'easy in.' I don't even have to press a button and I'm already watching the show. I am in the show. And it can sometimes put you in a more hyper-focused state.**

Kevin Laham ([00:12:41](#)):

When I work with kids with ADHD it's not only that someone with ADHD can be more distractible, meaning it's hard for them to just pay attention, like in class. Also, they get into these hyper-focused states often with video games where they can totally be completely focused and can't actually shift their focus. It's really hard to change their focus for hours at a time. And both things cause problems in different ways, whether we're in this hyper-focused state that we don't intend, or when we're in this distractible state where we can't put our focus on just one thing. And tech often creates these kinds of situations. The other thing is that it's difficult when it comes to different kinds of technology. So with Netflix at the end of your show, the next show is going to start right away. And maybe if you watch for four hours, then you'll get the warning that says, "Do you still want to keep watching this?" But one thing that Netflix doesn't do is before you start a show say, "Have you done the dishes yet?" "Kevin, do you consent to watching this show?" "This show is going to take an hour and 17 minutes. Are you sure you want to start now?" It doesn't reassure me and say, "If you pause this to go and make the slides for this presentation that you have coming up, the show will be back when you come back." Like, it doesn't make it difficult to 'easy out.' So we as parents have to try to create those conditions for our kids. Similarly, tech makes our mind just more active, especially for kids. So a lot of the different practices will



Lunch and Learn Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen Time Transcript



be about how we actually have a settling time after using tech rather than trying to just make a quick transition. Especially if you want them to go from an active mind state to a much less active mind state.

Kevin Laham ([00:14:45](#)):

Some of these game systems are very sticky. Literally for some online games before you can leave, there is a timeout that you have to take. You have to wait there and be bored for 30 seconds before the game can properly shut down. They don't have that when you want to start a match where a kid has to sit still for 30 seconds and just be with themselves. But they do have to do it at the end if they want to sign out by what the game thinks as early, and of course, FOMO, that's missing out. It's a lot of these gaming and, and tech systems, there's a social component and that's something that plays a big role. Other factors like emotions and other kinds of psychological concerns. And a big one is age. The big part of our brain that's responsible for managing this is our prefrontal cortex, which is the last part of our brain to develop. So it's something that as kids get older, they get better at it.

I want to clarify what I mean by screen time a little bit. It's common terminology that's the name of this presentation, but it's hard to enforce at home. Most schoolwork these days requires some kind of screen time. So for a parent that might count as time on the iPad, but for a kid it may not count to them. Also, parents may have minimum expectations of screen time that they don't realize. Do they have to have their phone on them when they leave the house? Do they respond to family text? Do they update the family calendar? There may be minimums that are expected, but we don't realize it, which can make a mixed message when it comes to talking about screen time.

And last issues with attention and transitions. They exist after the screen is turned off. So a lot of the kids that are in my office, they don't have a screen with them. They're not on their phones, but they're thinking about what their friends just posted to TikTok, they're thinking about the game they just played and their mind is still active. So I like to go beyond just thinking about screen time. And Dan Siegel, he's an author, he talks about the healthy mind



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Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



platter. I'm going to sort of glance over it right now, but that's something to look into more of, like thinking about a more sort of balanced way of looking at healthy practices for kids.

Good Practices for Healthy Transitions

Kevin Laham ([00:17:42](#)):

So I think it's important to have some practices that can help train our kids to be able to have better transitions. So first I think it's a good idea to practice some of these techniques with your kids regularly. And this is not a good time to practice when it's grandma's 80th birthday party and you need to get going and your child is on some kind of tech, because that probably will not go well. But I want to help set up situations with your kids where you can practice going on to technology, whether it's phone, iPad, gaming system, and then also turning off, shutting down. And it's something that I don't think we do naturally. We don't set aside time for it, but this is the point where so often this interaction around, especially turning off some or like we're shutting down some sort of tech is extremely filled with conflict and it creates this avoidance cycle where it's a bad interaction.

Kevin Laham ([00:19:01](#)):

Parents and kids fight over the iPad and then parents feel bad, the child feels bad, they stop talking to each other for a period of time and especially stop talking about tech. They don't want to reinforce that boundary. And then the next time that there is some issue, maybe instead of bringing it up, the parent doesn't and the kid just sort of stays playing. And then over time the next time that there actually is a big issue like grandma's 80th birthday party there's been no communication about it. You've been avoiding it the whole time. And then there's a huge fight surrounding tech and it just leads us back to that cycle where we want to avoid the interaction. And when this keeps going on, you're in my office. And now it's not just talking to each other about technology, it's like not talking at all.

Kevin Laham ([00:20:02](#)):



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



So instead I want to have practice when there's less pressure to be somewhere or to do something, practice when it can be seen as fun or as connected, especially for younger kids. Also important practice when you the parent have bandwidth for it, you have your own stressors, emotions, things that you're busy with. And it matters so much what your emotional and mental state is to be able to help your kid and then lastly quit while you're ahead and take small steps. It's better to have just some consistent good small practice that ends peacefully than to keep forcing it to get some kind of result. So the things we want to do when we practice with our kids surrounding technology, to be able to have those limits that we're maybe thinking of actually be put in place is to disrupt the hyper focus when we don't want it peacefully.

Kevin Laham ([00:21:06](#)):

So how we disrupt when a child is totally focused on their technology where it doesn't cause too much fight or too much reactivity. We want to get into a practice of disrupting that hyper-focus so the kid can start to do it on their own over time. Second, we wanted to help someone build their ability to focus when they do desire it because often what I see is that being on my phone feels easy. I don't have to think and I can just scroll through things and if I'm bored, I can just keep scrolling. I don't want to do homework because I have to focus for like 30 minutes straight. And that doesn't feel good when we're not training that when we're not used to it. Other elements, we want to add easy steps in between hard transitions.

Kevin Laham ([00:22:04](#)):

So if it's pretty easy for your kid to go from being on a walk to doing their homework and it's really hard for your kid to go from playing a game to doing their homework, but maybe it's a little bit easier to play their game and then go to a walk, can we start inserting a walk in between playing a game and doing their homework? Because we add in an easy transition to another easy transition versus just one big hard transition. So we want to sort of add in smaller, helpful steps rather than introducing harder steps that tech usually puts in there. In general, I think it's good to increase time after using technology before



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



starting up another activity. Usually our mind is more active and we need time to settle. And last, and this is probably the most important, I want to keep the parental presence positive.

1st-3rd Grader Transition Plans

Kevin Laham ([00:23:08](#)):

I have some examples where for kids the parent just turns into the bad guy just from doing their job as a parent of needing to put in some limits. So how do we do this? So first I like to think of some practices. So if I'm thinking of a first through third grader. I really don't think that with the technology, first through third graders can reliably manage their own technology use on their own. They need help from parents to step in and then regulate it for them. And in terms of helping them practice to be able to manage what goes on in their minds parents need to be really active with this. So I like to adapt some sort of normal childhood games to this.

Kevin Laham ([00:24:01](#)):

So like red light, green light, where you run and then you have to stop when they say red light and green light, they can run again. Or Simon says, Simon says, "Put your hand on your head," but add it in with tech too. So Simon says, "Pause the video," Simon says, "Play the video fast forward." Simon says, "hand the iPad to dad." And I really like that one of practicing the moment of passing whatever technology. It may seem really simple, but I've had parents and children in my office and I'll bring in a gaming controller and it's not even hooked up to anything. Just so that they can practice, can you pass the controller back and forth to each other? And we're trying to ease some of the tension from those kinds of interactions. Take some of that pressure off, be able to actually talk with your kids so it doesn't become a fight. So often these things become fights even at this age. So making it into a game. Another thing that I'll do is a little arts and crafts project, like, I'll make snow globes with these kids that are out of Gatorade bottles. So I add water glue glitter screw the cap on, duct tape it and they make snow globes. And I'll say Okay, when you're using tech, I have a snow globe here, our mind just goes really fast and it sort of shakes up all the glitter. And one thing we need to do after our mind's all shaken up for us



**Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript**



to think we need to let it settle and we'll look at the glitter and it's sort of boring, but also it's sort of fun because there's glitter and we watch the glitter settle and then they're like, "Okay, I'm done."

Kevin Laham ([00:26:01](#)):

And then I'll say, "Wait, no, is there still glitter in there? We gotta keep watching the glitter settle." And it gets into that practice of settling down. So maybe this is something that you do after you watch a YouTube video, we're going to let the glitter settle and we sort of have those kinds of moments drawing or writing about games. Like I said, the game is on their mind, the videos on their mind. This is a way to help communicate about their experience rather than, it seems like a taboo topic.

Third through Fifth Grade Transition Plans ("Gaming Coach")

So this is a time where you want to start introducing a little bit more skills for the child to practice. Probably the biggest one I think is like starting some kind of time management and then getting into the practice of being able to help a child talk when they're on tech.

Kevin Laham ([00:27:03](#)):

Or at least begin to stop what they're doing to engage with a real world person while they're engaged with tech. So one thing I call it a gaming coach. So this is also a time where I think supervised tech use is really important. They don't have a warning on a lot of these things, but I would, like they do for trampolines and stuff like that requires parent supervision. I think in this sort of end range, you know, the phone, the PlayStation should have a little sticker that says, "Requires Parent Supervision." Which is not often how I think families use tech. Instead it's like, use the tech because it'll keep your attention while I need to attend to something else. And it makes sense. That's what my mom did with me a lot of times. I've talked with her about these different kinds of practices.

Kevin Laham ([00:27:54](#)):

But the tough part though is that the tech is training your child to have attention in different ways. It's training them to look for that hyper-focus state or to respond to that distraction state. But it's not



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



training in that focused state. Where we're focused on what we want to be focused on and being able to shift our attention where we want to shift it. And that's the skill that we really want to train with our kids. So gaming coach is like where I'll sit with them while they're playing a game or if it's like somebody who watches YouTube, like sort of director mode where I'll sit next to them and I want them to narrate what they're doing while they're doing it. And I may give them sort of tasks like either in game or while they're doing something with their phone that may seem boring.

Kevin Laham ([00:28:57](#)):

I'll even say things like, pro gamers actually don't just like to play the game for seven hours. They actually practice some things. So try to do this spin 20 times and they're like, okay, and they'll do it 20 times and they get bored of it. I'm like, "No, you got to sort of keep doing it." It's still training the attention a little bit more and like having a little bit of a different relationship with the game while they're playing it. Also time trials, it might give them sort of like obstacles, like some obstacle course things. I think there's some YouTube channels that have these big obstacle course things that kids like. But it's like, can you play a game for at least 10 minutes and then can you run to the end of the block and back and then stack these LEGOS and be on the couch in 20 minutes?

Kevin Laham ([00:29:48](#)):

That would be a really hard task. That would be more for a fifth grader. I think you'd want to start a lot smaller with a third grader. Maybe it's like, "Can you do it for one minute? Can you do it for two minutes?" But to have them practice paying attention to time while they're involved with tech. In that hyper-focused state, time is lost. And it's not just disobedience, I can admit this too, This happens to me when I might be playing. And also some games also manipulate time. There's a game StarCraft Two that on the pro circuit it was taking an hour of real time to have 45 minute StarCraft minute games. Where the time on the clock, one StarCraft minute was about like 50 seconds instead of 60 seconds. So it didn't seem like you were spending as much time. So it's not a level playing field.



**Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript**



Fifth Through Seventh Grade Transitions (“A Game Plan”)

Kevin Laham ([00:30:47](#)):

This is a really important time because what I see the most is that the tech that kids are getting involved with can outpace their developmental level. This is the time where some kids might be on social media, their friend just got the new Xbox or and it's a pretty wild time in terms of what tech your child may be using regularly. And it may be outside of what you as a parent's intuition wants them to do. But, this is a really tough time there where there's, the biggest mismatch between these things. So a few things that I would want to see families do is I call a game plan. Just like you might make a plan for homework with your kids where they are going to do your English homework, then your math homework? And sort of helping them with what's called executive functioning. You're helping them organize their day and put it in order so that they can execute on that. You want to have them do that even when they're on tech. "What apps do you plan to use when you're on your phone?" "Do you know what you're going to do? Who are you going to play with?" Almost like when they're going out with friends during this time, you might ask more of these kinds of questions.

Kevin Laham ([00:34:12](#)):

It's trying to add thought at the start. And because often kids in this age range, they're at school, they may not be having a good time. All they're thinking about is starting using their tech. They're not planning ahead, they're not thinking about how long they're going to be on it. They're not doing that. And I think they still need parents' help to anchor that in. And similarly I think that this kind of conversation about using tech and screen should also apply with homework as well. So being able to say, just as they need to use these kinds of settling skills, be able to transition from one thing to another to manage their anxiety. If they can use it for games, they also need to use it for things like homework or chores. Because chances are, if a kid is struggling with transitioning between using technology, they're also probably struggling with these kinds of transitions elsewhere.

Kevin Laham ([00:35:15](#)):



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



And it may be more about getting started on something that requires focus rather than stopping something when they're hyper-focused.

Social Media Debrief

Get in the practice of talking about social media with your kids during this time.

Eighth Grade and Beyond Transitions

This is where it gets a whole lot tougher, especially if you haven't had the experiences having these kinds of practices. Most of the techniques during this time, it's less about games and what games do you play with your child, but how do you communicate with them? Your relationship matters most during this time. So I call it highs and lows of tech use. I think it's really important to help kids get specific when they're using tech. What did they enjoy about it? What was frustrating about it?

Kevin Laham ([00:36:09](#)):

When were they disappointed? Because often when the kids first start talking about tech, they're just like, I played a game. I was on my phone or I did nothing. Often when I talk with high schoolers and beyond they'll say, "I was having fun for the first hour and then I kept playing even when I didn't want to." And I don't think parents really recognize that moment happens at some point because it's really hard for a kid to put that into words when they don't have practice doing that or they're defensive about their use. This next one may seem silly, but it's sitting in the same room as a tech user. The example I have for here is there's one of the families that I just started working with and working with the high schooler and, the mom got home from work went up, took a shower, and then she was going to go to the basement to do her laundry and she thinks she's home alone and opens the door to the basement, turns the light on, and just hears from the basement.

Kevin Laham ([00:37:18](#)):

"Mom, it's not my time yet." And she was shocked. She didn't even know her kid was down there, but her son was so conditioned because the basement was where the computer was set up that when the



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



light for the basement got turned down, it meant that he was going to have his games taken away. So mom didn't even do anything in that instance, didn't even know he is home. But there's a fight that has been cooking for a long time. And if that's the kind of situation that you have in your house, first step is that we have to try to deactivate that. We have to de-condition that. Can you be in the same room? And it doesn't mean that it's a fight. And it'll be weird at first, especially for teens where it's like, Hey, wait, why are you in the room?

Kevin Laham ([00:38:07](#)):

Why are you just like reading a book while I'm playing a game? It can feel weird, but that's the first step, especially if there's a lot higher conflict. The last thing before we go to Q and A is just a lot of times with parents, they're not able to meet their kids' friends, especially in high school like maybe they were used to having when they grew up. And I think one of the major reasons that anxiety among parents is growing is that you don't know who your kids are interacting with and that's can be really tough with tech sort of makes it easier that way. So try to encourage being able to be introduced to, your kids' friends that are on Discord to, be shown kids' friends through Instagram.

Kevin Laham ([00:39:04](#)):

And it takes having some openness to at least engage with your kid on these things so that maybe you're signaling to them that you are welcoming of who their friends are, who they want to meet, so that maybe you can meet them in person. Maybe you can sort of build some of these things. Or if they are friends with people that aren't local, you're at least maybe getting a little bit more of a sense to know who's in your child's lives because when we don't have that, it makes it, really tough for parents. So last thing is really just your relationship with your child matters. And hopefully some of just thinking differently about these kinds of transitions might help develop some of that empathy. So you can begin modeling how to change some of these interactions when it comes to tech.



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



Q&A

Rachel ([00:40:22](#)):

Thank you so much, Kevin. That was terrific. Thank you very much. You want to go to your resource slides?

Kevin Laham ([00:40:30](#)):

I referenced Dan Siegel two of his books that I really like "[Yes Brain](#)" and also "[Brainstorm](#)" are about using mindfulness with children. And he goes into more depth about some of these things that I'm discussing. And another one is the more recent resources that I just have fallen in love with, which is [Healthy Gamer GG](#). He has different mental health guides. He was a gamer himself that failed out of undergrad and then he went to India to sort of train in meditation and then yoga then came back and became a Harvard psychiatrist. And he presents on a lot of these topics, I think in a really great way. And there's a lot of different online parent support groups that he has there.

Rachel ([00:41:46](#)):

We had some questions in advance and then we got some questions in. So I'm going to start with this one.

My kid is a gamer. This is his thing, this is what he does. How do I help him develop interest in other things without mandating it? I don't want it to become a battle.

Kevin Laham ([00:42:04](#)):

I guess in the spirit of some of what we talked about here I'm thinking about how old is your child, right? Like that's probably one of the big things of where it could be really important to, to think about maybe how active a role can you play in this? I guess first I would start with talking with them about why they are interested in the games and the gaming and then build from there. What I find is that there's different motivations that gamers have for why they like gaming. And that'll dictate what other interests that they might have outside of the game. Somebody that I might talk to might be really competitive.



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



Kevin Laham ([00:43:08](#)):

I'm just the best when I'm able to do this, I'm really focused. And that's where something like martial arts might also resonate with them where maybe they would more readily transfer to something like that. Or maybe the child's, it's just so fun my friends and I just like laughed the whole time and we really enjoyed that and maybe they'd be interested in some other things beyond that. So I guess that's the first place that I would start is trying to understand what about gaming that they're interested in and sort of broaden out from there. Where else do you get to have that feeling is maybe a question that I would follow up with, do you feel that at school at all? Do you feel that when you're with your friends or are there other things that we could do to help you get that feeling? Because we only can play games for this certain amount of time, but I still want you to have that feeling throughout the week.

Rachel ([00:44:24](#)):

I have an introverted 13 year old and I know that gaming is a large part of his social interaction with other kids his age. Many of these kids seem to have a lot more time allotment to the game that I feel is appropriate for my child, especially on school days. How do I balance the fact that this is a real format of social interaction with the limits that I think are appropriate?

Kevin Laham ([00:44:53](#)):

Great question because it is nuanced. Everybody has these different kinds of things and also some of their friends, maybe they're not allowed to game that much. Maybe the boundaries are not enforced at home or other things might be going on. Gaming is not just one monolith kind of thing, right? So if it is something where it is with friends, it can be maybe more of a limit. Like, you know what if your friends were over here, I wouldn't let them stay over here past dinner. So it's not really about the game.

Kevin Laham ([00:45:50](#)):

Like actually if you want, we could play just a two player game, you and I or we could do a single player game if you want that. I'm not saying you have to do that, but the idea is like it's important for there to be time when actually you're away from your friends. I know that stinks. But even if, your friends were



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



around and you were, playing in person, I would probably have you stop playing with them and you can maybe say like, Yeah, you know, back when I was growing up, once the street lights came on, I had to say goodbye to my friends and I had to go home and I had to just sort of have like downtime with the family.

Rachel ([00:46:32](#)):

I think this question was actually asking the opposite: that the child is introverted and doesn't necessarily do a lot of social things. And so this has become a social outlet. And if that is the social outlet, do you still manage it in the same way?

Kevin Laham ([00:46:51](#)):

I still think it's helpful to practice the attachment exercise of coming together and then separating, that's an important part because they still would have to sort of learn some ways of saying goodbye to the person by shutting some of these things down, realizing that the friends will be there tomorrow. . And sometimes it is introversion or maybe it's also some social anxiety that might be going on with the difficulty of maybe having other kinds of social relationships and one way to help manage that is like having some practice of saying goodbye, recognizing that they'll be there again. And I don't discount relational time with family either. Like, that could also be really good for the child's development of relationships outside the home too.

Rachel ([00:47:54](#)):

Do you weigh the type of screen time, like in terms of gaming versus watching YouTube versus other social media?

Or is it like, do you use that as a way to switch from one to the other? Or do you just put it all in one bucket?

Kevin Laham ([00:48:21](#)):

Yeah, gaming squared plus YouTube squared equals it's such a hard question. I think this is where I went back to clarifying screen time, so like Dan Siegel's, Healthy Mind platter, it says, you know, sleep time,



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



physical time, focus time, connecting time, play time, downtime, time in and a kid can make an argument that screen time is all those, you know, I took my phone on my run and I went to sleep, listen to a podcast and I was playing a game and this is what I want to do in my downtime. Instead of just sort of like trying to weigh it based on what the tech is, instead try to weigh it on what the impact it has on your child.

Kevin Laham ([00:49:23](#)):

So if you're paying attention to your child as they're engaged with these things, is their mind, like maybe playing a video game is like really, really activating and you notice a shift, like that's going to be weighted differently than if they're doing their homework and it's like maybe one of those quizlet things where they sort of get excited about answering the questions there. **So I wouldn't focus just on what the tech is, but more so what's the impact on your child's mind state and getting in tune with your child's mind state because kids aren't paying attention to that. But that's why I think it's important for parents to pay attention to that.**

Rachel ([00:50:13](#)):

So then make your rules based on those kinds of things and like how intense it is for your child versus restricting one way or the other?

Kevin Laham ([00:50:24](#)):

Yeah, like I would want it to be a little bit more collaborative along that of like, because for some families, especially if there's sort of like no limits in the household at all and it's sort of just going to this some of these things may be more of like a step down where it's like I might work with a family of like, okay, can you transition from playing video games where you're yelling and screaming and it's like these fights too turning the game off and like, can you watch YouTube? Does that mean that I just go up to a family and say, "Hey, you should watch YouTube." No, it's just that for this kid, like this is a little bit of a slower speed. It's when they're playing a game, their mind's on this like they're like on the auto bond



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



Right. And right. Okay. We need to sort of help their mind just go into like one of those country roads where it's 50.

Rachel ([00:51:18](#)):

My ADHD kiddo has a physical reaction at the two hour mark where you can see his brain overload. Do you have any resources for thinking about the ADHD brain and technology?

Kevin Laham ([00:51:40](#)):

That healthy gamer GG just [released a guide for ADHD](#). I think it's really, really helpful. Fantastic. Because it's a pretty broad. One thing that I think that some of our mental health resources don't always have is some of like the neuroscience, because it can feel too complex, but I think it's really important to actually like understand what's going on in our brain because I think it helps us have some compassion. And when I work with kids with ADHD, so much of it is education. So that they can start understanding what's going on in their minds. because one thing with ADHD, we often think about it as the problem time is when they're not paying attention during school because they're getting distracted, they can't focus. And then a parent might say to me, but you know, when he was into LEGOS before he could just do that for seven hours and that was so great. And it's like, well that's actually a product of ADHD too. They're more likely to get into this hyper-focused state. And we attribute positive thinking to that and it is good in many ways because they're able to do great things. But then that could also happen with tech where it's like they're in this hyper-focused state and ignoring whatever they're feeling. So when I think about that situation at like the two hour mark, they're overloaded. They may have been frustrated because they're losing, they may have been criticized by other people because there may be social issues going on with someone who's playing games while they're ADHD. That could lead to somebody maybe making fun of them and that's not getting processed. It's getting skipped over and then it sort of bubbles all up all at once. So we want to help them sort of stay aware.

Rachel ([00:53:51](#)):

Any other resources?



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



Kevin Laham ([00:53:59](#)):

Unless you're a major developer for Apple or Google or something like this, we're not able to change and impact the tech too much. **But what we can do is actually work with our child and their minds on these things.** The other big resource that was at the bottom of my, or the bottom of my resources, other parents so often parents that come to me, I'll ask them, "Have you, who else have you talked with about this?"

Kevin Laham ([00:54:51](#)):

And they say, "No one." And either they're embarrassed or they feel like it should be going a certain way. That's why I think organizations like CATCH here are so amazing because it actually gives an opportunity for parents to connect with each other and to realize, well what is working, what's not working in other households? And the biggest thing I see is that it gives parents some ability to have it go wrong, to actually to try to make some changes because these practices that I talked about today, they're not going to work the first time. They might not work the fifth time. That's why it's practice. You want it to really be a practice where eventually over time it just can become more regular.

Rachel ([00:55:38](#)):

My daughter will get on the iPad whenever we're not paying attention. What is the best way to talk to her about it and how do you recommend to set up discipline or usage boundaries?

Kevin Laham ([00:56:09](#)):

So one of the things I definitely want to keep my eye on is sneaking and sort of stealing it. The first thing that comes to mind is why do they need to sneak it? What are they afraid of happening? If it needs to be kept a secret or they have to lie about it. So that's where I think it's really important to keep the parental relationship positive because this can get really sneaky really quick. So depending on the age here it may be more of how to make some kind of a conversation about what they want and like, why couldn't they ask? To sort of start to break that down a little bit.



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



Rachel ([00:57:07](#)):

I can say from my experience it was I set a limit that they didn't like and so they snuck it on the side.

Kevin Laham ([00:57:15](#)):

Yeah. Okay. So I think part of that would be maintaining consistency with the limits without just and especially depending on age, you're going to have moments like this. So I think as a parent not not taking it personally first, that's often one thing that I see with parents where, it feels like this has to be a big problem that they need to solve right away. And instead I want to help parents try to take a more long term view. That okay, them having a child going outside the limit and then the parent addressing it. That is a moment of practice. And if you're able to do it to a point where it doesn't, shatter the relationship, then you can come back at night you can still come back together no matter how many, maybe even though you maybe had that tough moment with your kid and it's like they, you're the worst parent ever and I hate you.

Kevin Laham ([00:58:23](#)):

I want to be on my iPad. If you're able to come back after that, that's a rep. And over time the child is going to learn what that limit is. And also that it doesn't change my relationship with my parent either. But it's tough. It's really tough in those kinds of moments. I don't have a silver bullet there of how to have your child just obey the limit. Instead, I think you're probably doing a pretty good job of being able to, because you're right, you can't pay attention a hundred percent of the time. You can't, but you can maybe help bring them back and maybe you might introduce something like, how do we settle after this? Well it sounds like you were stirred up that you wanted to go right into it versus taking a few steps and realizing that, oh, me going on the iPad right now also means that I now I can't be on the iPad tomorrow.

Rachel ([00:59:21](#)):

You mentioned earlier this idea that like oftentimes we know the things that we should be doing in order to do things as well and to maintain our health and all those good things. And I think often it's very



Lunch and Learn
Tech Transitions Helping Kids Manage Screen
Time
Transcript



hard to remember and practice all of those things. And, and that, we don't always do it as adults and so we need to give our children grace and say things like, Oh, I know that's really hard.

Kevin Laham ([00:59:48](#)):

This parental intuition I think is so important. It's so important you have it, you may lose connection with it because you're anxious, you're scared, and all this tech stuff is changing so quick that it's like you don't, like, you want the right answer. Like you want to be the perfect parent often. But getting more in touch with that intuition and being able to speak from that place is I think one of the most important things for parents beyond any of the information that I've given you today.

Rachel ([01:00:26](#)):

That's great. Well that's a great place to end. Thank you so, so much, Kevin. We are so grateful and I think there's been lots of thank yous in the chat, so thank you so much. We really, really appreciate it.

Kevin Laham ([01:00:38](#)):

Great. Thank you so much.