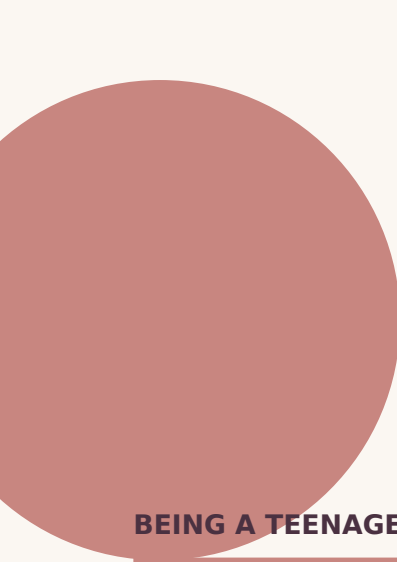
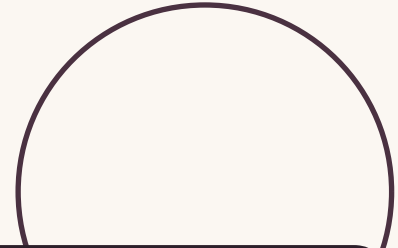




BEING A TEENAGER • FAMILY GUIDE

Getting the Balance Right

*Why your smartphone and your body
can be best friends when they work together.*



A FAMILY POCKET GUIDE

Small shifts. Big changes. Sixty minutes a day.

beingateenager.org

CHAPTER ONE

The Magic Balance

Imagine holding a device in your hand that is more powerful than the computers NASA used to send astronauts to the moon. Your smartphone is a doorway to the entire world. With a single tap, you can share a laugh with your grandmother in another city, learn how stars are born, or stream a video that makes you smile after a long day at school. It is an extraordinary tool, and you do not need to lock it in a drawer to live a healthy life.

But have you ever noticed how easy it is to pick up your phone for a quick check, only to look up and realise an hour has vanished? The clever apps in your pocket are designed by digital artists and psychologists who know exactly how to keep your eyes locked to the screen. Whilst screens can enrich our lives, finding the sweet spot between online connection and offline movement is the ultimate secret to feeling happy, energised and strong.

The Brilliant Side of Your Screen

Phones are not the enemy; in fact, they do some things incredibly well. Staying close to your family and friends, especially when you cannot see them in person, is vital for your mental health. Your phone is also a personal library — a place to look up maths formulas, translate a phrase, or learn how to play a new chord on the guitar.

Light entertainment, like watching a creative video or playing a quick puzzle game, is a great way to relax. The key is intentional use — using your phone because you want to learn or connect, rather than just scrolling because your hand feels empty.

CHAPTER TWO

The Sneaky Side of the Scroll

When we spend too much time sitting down with our phones, things can start to go slightly wrong under the surface. Scientific researchers at King’s College London discovered that teenagers who develop what they call Problematic Smartphone Use — when we find it hard to put the phone down even when we want to — are twice as likely to experience feelings of anxiety and depression.

It is not just our feelings that suffer; our sleep does too. The blue light shining from your screen tricks your brain into thinking it is still daytime, blocking a natural sleep hormone called melatonin. The NHS warns that missing out on deep, restful sleep makes it much harder to concentrate at school, saps your energy, and can leave you feeling unusually irritable the next day.

WHAT THE SCIENCE TELLS US

A major UK study found that nearly half of young teenagers with problematic phone habits reported symptoms of anxiety. Crucially, the researchers pointed out that the issue is not always the number of minutes we spend on our phones, but how much control we have over our habits. Putting phones on “do not disturb” and keeping them out of the bedroom at night are among the most effective ways to reclaim that control.

CHAPTER THREE

The Power of One Hour

So, how do we fix this balance? The answer is beautifully simple, and it does not involve throwing your phone away. The NHS and physical health experts recommend that children and young people aged five to eighteen move their bodies for at least sixty minutes every single day.

When you sit still for hours looking at a screen, your muscles fall asleep, and your brain can get foggy. But the moment you stand up and move, magic happens. Physical activity releases natural “feel-good” chemicals in your brain called endorphins — your body’s built-in happiness boosters.

Moving for an hour daily strengthens your bones, protects your heart, clears your mind, and actually helps you sleep much better at night. That sixty minutes does not have to be done all at once, either — it can be broken down into fun, active blocks throughout your day.

CHAPTER FOUR

Three Easy Digital Hacks

Three simple, evidence-based steps to keep your phone in its place as a helper, not a master.

01**Embrace the Golden Hour of Movement**

Whether it is kicking a football in the park, dancing to your favourite music in your room, riding your bike, or walking the dog with your family — get your sixty minutes of active movement every day. Invite your friends along; moving together is even better.

02**Set a Screen “Sundown” Time**

Set a time in the evening — ideally an hour before bed — to put your phone on charge in another room. This gives your brain time to wind down, allowing you to drift off easily and wake up feeling refreshed.

03**Curate Your Notifications**

Turn off non-essential notifications. Every buzz is an invitation for your phone to steal your attention. By turning them off, you decide when to look at your phone, rather than letting your phone decide for you.

Your phone is a wonderful window to the world, but the real world is where your body lives, breathes, and grows. By finding your balance and moving for just one hour a day, you can enjoy the very best of both worlds.

APPENDIX

Sources & Evidence

King's College London (2020 / 2022 studies) — Research linking problematic smartphone use to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and insomnia in British teenagers.

NHS England Guidelines — Physical activity recommendations for children and young people (5 to 18 years) to engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily.

The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health — Evidence concerning the displacement of sleep and physical activity by excessive screen use.

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND MENTORS

The brain hasn't changed — the world around it has. This guide is a starting point for conversation, not a script. Read it together. Try one habit this week. Come back to the others when it feels right.