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Teens will follow parents' lead with screen time

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While we as parents might express concern about the amount of time our children spend looking at a device, it would be enlightening for us to look at our own screen time.

How often are we distracted by something on our phone or tablet when we are with our family? Remember when going to a youth sporting event meant you were focused on the action on the field or court? Take a look in the stands now; how many adults are looking at their phones? How about when we're relaxing at home? Do our children have to compete with our mobile devices for our attention?

According to a new Pew Research Center survey, 51% of teens surveyed say they often or sometimes find their parent distracted by their cellphone when they are trying to have a conversation with them.

How can we be intentional, yet reasonable, as we manage this hyperconnected dynamic within our families? Here are a few suggestions:

- Our kids will take note if we purposely put away our devices during key family gatherings, such as dinners. Consider having "tech-free/device-free" time during the evenings and intermittently on weekends.
- In one-on-one or small group conversations, ensure you are attentive and not distracted by your device. Modeling self-discipline will be picked up by your teen.
- For our younger children, explore software by Google, Amazon and Apple that programs limits on device use.

We know that our children are always watching us. It's important that we be mindful of our use of technology.

When it comes to our children's screen time, the American Academy of Pediatrics encourages parents to focus on the content on the screen itself. They recommend limiting recreational/entertainment screen time to one to two hours per day for children over age two. There is no screen time limit for educational content and use. For more tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics about children and media, visit <http://bit.ly/AAPMediaTips>.

In District 87, we believe in "robot-proofing" our graduates so they can thrive personally and intellectually, both now and in the future. Our key strategy in this effort is to be relentless in crafting learning experiences that are distinctly human. Identifying and adhering to reasonable limitations with our devices will ensure we stay distinctly human.