

Technology Unplug Protocol ***Technology Withdrawal Plan for Families***

What do you mean by technology?

Technology is defined as TV, video games, internet, cell phones, tablet, and all hand held devices. Technology referenced in *Technology Unplug Protocol* is technology used for entertainment purposes only, e.g. not music or technology used for vocational or educational purposes. That said, many parents assume that they need to be available 24/7 for work, and therefore are constantly plugged into their technology devices. This creates numerous issues regarding technology reduction, and requires parents get on the same page and agree on designated times of no technology to set an example of appropriate technology use for their children.

How do I know if my family and/or child(ren) has a problem?

Technology usage patterns are set by parents, and therefore if a child or youth is overusing or is addicted to technology, generally their parents have similar issues. Therefore, it is imperative for all family members to participate in a family *Technology Unplug Protocol* in order to get their family back on a healthy track. Should families wish to track outcomes of *Technology Unplug Protocol*, please refer to page 3 for the *Outcome Measurement Tracking Tool*.

Symptoms associated with technology overuse or addiction are:

- ✓ developmental delay
- ✓ obesity/overweight
- ✓ sleep deprivation/fatigue
- ✓ depression
- ✓ anxiety, agitation
- ✓ tantrums
- ✓ anger, aggression, violence
- ✓ social phobias
- ✓ attention deficit, learning difficulties
- ✓ poor school performance

If your child or family has any of the above symptoms associated with technology overuse, they may benefit from a *Technology Unplug Protocol* intervention. If a child or family has severe symptoms, meaning excessive and uncontrollable symptoms, it is strongly suggested that the family receive the assistance of a counsellor who specializes in technology management, prior to engaging in the *Technology Unplug Protocol*.

Technology Unplug Protocol

The following *Technology Unplug Protocol* is designed to enable families to better understand their usage of technology, and guide them toward a protocol that results in more balanced usage of technology and healthy activity. The *Technology Unplug Protocol* is a four step plan to *wear*, or in some cases *lean*, your family off technology. Designed by pediatric occupational therapist Cris Rowan, the *Technology Unplug Protocol* consists of the four R's – *Rate, Reset, Reorder and Rules*. The *Technology Unplug Protocol* enables families to explore the changes technology has caused to their family structure, and envision a new and healthy future.



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1) **Rate:** identify technology usage amount.

Many families have no idea how much technology they actually use on a daily basis, and consequently often overuse technology without conscious thought. While one can easily see the effects of overeating, overusing technology is more ubiquitous. Child technology usage often follows that of the highest using parent, as this parent inadvertently encourages high technology usage in all family members to normalize or condone their own high usage rates. Engaging in *work* or *school* related technology at home is difficult for the user and other family members to discern from *entertainment* technology, and requires family discussion.

2) **Reset:** determine time period required to 'unplug' from all technology.

Families who are heavy users of technology, often don't know each other very well, and consequently don't feel comfortable in social situations with other family members e.g. dinners, community outings, and holidays. As a result, family members use more technology to alleviate discomfort associated with social situations. The more time spent using technology, the more disconnected are your family members. Disconnecting from technology, and reconnecting with family members, can be threatening and difficult. Start by having dinner together as a family, without technology.

3) **Reorder:** replace time spent using technology with alternate activities.

Technology kills a lot of time which could be filled with more healthy and inter-connected family activities. Many families have no other activity pursuits than technology, and need to spend time to schedule in alternative activities. Suggest development of family theme nights e.g. Monday – bake cookies night, Tuesday – board games night etc. to get started with scheduled activity replacement. Use the *Technology Schedule* as a tool.

4) **Rules:** agree upon rules that will support the family technology unplug.

Each family should discuss what type of structure and rules they need to establish to support and complete the *Technology Unplug Protocol*. Suggest each family acquire a *Tech Box* with that can be locked, and that all technology during designated unplug times is stored there. Key or combination for lock should be given to the lowest technology user, generally this would be the youngest child in the family. Penalties for cheating should be agreed upon, as well as technology usage rules when members are outside the family home.

Procedure	Moderate Use	Heavy Use	Very Heavy Use	Severe Use
Rate	3-4 hours/day	5-6 hours/day	7-8 hours/day	Greater than 8 hours/day
Reset	3-4 week unplug	5-6 week unplug	7-8 week unplug	3 month unplug
Reorder	Pursue 3-4 activities	Pursue 5-6 activities	Pursue 7-8 activities	Pursue 10 activities
Rules	Lock up all tech in <i>Tech Box</i> , locked cupboard, or filing cabinet. <i>Work</i> or <i>school</i> tech times should be designated and managed by family.	Follow same rules for Moderate Use . Create specific <i>times</i> and <i>zones</i> for tech e.g. red – no tech, yellow – some tech, green – all tech.	Store all tech outside of home at friends/family; leave cell phone at work; acquire non-texting phones for emergencies.	Follow same rules for Very Heavy Use . Cancel accounts for cable, satellite TV, Netflix, Facebook etc.



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Technology Unplug Protocol - Outcome Measurement Tracking Tool

Pre-Technology Unplug Date: _____ Post Technology Unplug Date: _____

Name and designation of person filling out form _____

0–no impairment; 1–resolved; 2–minimal impairment; 3–moderately impaired 4–severely impaired

Performance Domains	Name:		Name:		Name:		Name:	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Physical								
• development								
• weight								
• sleep								
Functional Independence								
• dinner								
• self-care								
• community outing								
Emotional								
• withdrawn								
• anxious								
• up and down								
Self-regulation								
• impulsive								
• tantrums								
• entertains self								
Social Communication								
• expression								
• comprehension								
• interaction								
• eye contact								
• playful								
Behaviour								
• odd								
• perseverates								
• aggressive								
• defiant								
Sensory								
• hyper-reactive								
• hypo-reactive								
Cognitive								
• attention								
• learning								
• safety awareness								
TOTALS								

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