

CONNECTED PARENTING: TECHNOLOGY LINKS HOME AND SCHOOL BUT PULLS HEARTS APART

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Communication has never been easier with the emergence of technologically-powered messaging and social media applications (Temnikova & Vandsheva, 2022). With a tap of a button, people can now communicate instantly with anyone in the world. At school, teachers can now play videos from the internet when teaching, or even notify the parents about their children's activity. Amidst the many conveniences that technology offers, a troubling realization comes to mind – the more we connect with the world, the more disconnected we become from those closest to our hearts.

In the age of digital transformation, parenting has progressed in tandem with the technology children now own such as smartphones, tablets, and even laptops. The integration of smartboards in educational settings and tablets in domestic environments has resulted in unprecedented connectivity between home and school (Knauf, 2020). Initially, this connectedness appears to be a success: parents can easily communicate with their children even when they are staying at home, participate in virtual PTA meetings, and communicate with teachers instantaneously. Nonetheless, underneath this seeming connection exists a profound rift of widening emotional detachment between children and their families. As technology strengthens the link between home and school, it ironically weakens the emotional bond between children and their loved ones (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020).

The shift starts quickly. Parents provide smartphones to toddlers to soothe them in waiting rooms or restaurants. As they grow, they transition to iPads and gaming consoles, ultimately dedicating hours daily to digital environments that parents

frequently do not comprehend. Educational applications are advocated as beneficial, and certainly, many are. But in reality, the distinction between educational and recreational or gaming screen time is ambiguous. A child initially viewing a historical documentary on YouTube may quickly transition to watching a gaming stream or browsing social media, frequently without parental notice or oversight. What is presented as digital literacy may occasionally constitute digital escapism. You'll be surprised of how quick and capable children are of manipulating devices to transition from one educational video to gaming content.

At the same time, social media and texting applications have revolutionized the students and parents establish their relationships. Classmates now communicate via Messenger, Discord or Snapchat more frequently than in-person, even while in the same vicinity. The irony lies in the fact that the ease of communication renders meaningful conversations very unlikely. Children may be engaging in more verbal communication but conveying less content. Today, you'll find a family assembled in a single room, with each member fixated on their individual screens, engrossed in distinct realities using their respective gadgets.

This changing environment presents significant educational implications. Children subjected to excessive or premature screen exposure may result into sleep disruptions, shorter attention spans, inability to focus, and a decline in empathy (Madi, 2025). Although several digital tools aim to augment learning, the continuous exposure to platforms such as TikTok or Instagram may train the brain to anticipate stimulation in short periods of time. This complicates the ability to concentrate on extensive reading, intricate problem-solving, or comprehensive learning activities that requires concentration. Consequently, educators frequently encounter the combined issue of effectively incorporating Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into their lessons while minimizing its adverse impacts.

Parenting the children of today's generation demands a distinct form of vigilance. It is not enough to oversee physical boundaries; parents must also understand digital ones. Which platforms are utilized by their children? To whom are they chatting or talking to? What content are they engaging with, and for what duration? These inquiries are crucial. Children may perceive their phones as extensions of their identity, and even simple parental questions may feel intrusive for them.

With these implications, a balance should be created between empowering children with autonomy and shielding them from harm in the use of gadgets. When parents lean too heavily on tech tools for supervision, such as learning management systems or tracking apps, they can unwittingly replace dialogue with data. Instead of asking how a child is feeling about school, a parent might check an app to see their performance in a particular subject. Instead of addressing a problem face-to-face, they resort to sending a text from the next room. Though convenient, this kind of parenting can erode emotional trust and intimacy.

Technology's promise is connection, but connection is not the same as closeness. For example, a student may be able to video chat his/her teacher or submit a homework through a learning management system, and receive automated feedback but still feel isolated or misunderstood at home. The emotional labor of parenting such as listening, comforting, and empathizing cannot be delegated to devices alone. Parenting in this age requires physical and assertive connections.

To address this increasing disconnection, both schools and parents must collaborate, not just to enhance learning but also to preserve humanity and their connections. Educational institutions must provide guidance on the responsible use of technology and emotional intelligence, whilst parents should exemplify conscious interaction with their gadgets especially when they're at home with their children. Parents need to show that they are not just monitoring their children's progress, but walking beside them.

Connected parenting is not about knowing everything your child is doing online or what are they watching on their smartphones. It's about being the kind of presence that invites a child to share. Aside from being just "connected," children need something rarer: to feel seen. As the digital world continues to expand, perhaps the greatest gift a parent can offer is not more connectivity, but more presence.

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