

06. TALKING POINTS



There are a few schools of thought around the best way to talk to parents about the issue. Hannah Ortel at Delay Smartphones UK is a big advocate for speaking to parents 1:1, which is great if you are able to, but it can be quite time consuming. There may be opportunities to speak to parents at the school gates, birthday parties, sports games, or school events and this might be where you feel most comfortable putting your feelers out to see what sort of support you have in your community. Hannah suggests starting with parents you know who are likely to be on board already, and then making contact with all of the parents in a class group by sending a message along the lines of:

Hi (Parent's Name), I believe you are (Child's Name) Mum/Dad, this is (Your Name), (Your Child's name) Dad/Mum! Hope you're well. A bit out of the blue I know, but I'm trying to interview every parent in (Your child's Year group) about smartphones and their kids. Loads of research has come out in the last year and I'm keen to ensure fellow parents are aware of it! Working my way through everyone it would mean so much if I could pop up to chat to you guys about the research and alternatives whenever would suit you, would take about 30 mins! Promise no judgement at all. And if you don't want to, that's totally fine too! Thanks so much!

From here she suggests making a time to pop over to their house and talk through the research, and alternatives at a mutually convenient time. Delay Smartphones encourage parents to sign a pledge where parents commit to delaying giving their children a smartphone until at least 14. Unplugged Rebels have decided against setting up a similar pledge at this stage as we feel it may put some people off engaging in the topic if their feel pressured into committing to something in writing. If you decide to set up a pledge for your class or school that is absolutely up to you and we support you with that and in which case you might find the 1:1 method most effective in getting parents to sign up.

An alternative method is to write a similar message to your class group but instead inviting them to join your school Unplugged Rebels Whatsapp group that would may have set up.

From here you might suggest a coffee catch up where you can meet some interested parents a few at a time as new parents join the group and run similar sessions to what Hannah at DS suggests but in larger groups of around 3-5 at a time. You could host the meeting at your home, or at a local coffee shop if you prefer, just be prepared for possible interruptions from staff or other patrons while potentially discussing some pretty heavy topics!

It's really important that parents don't feel judged, even if they have already given their children smartphones or decided to give their child one earlier than the age of 14. So we should start with empathy and compassion and acknowledge that most parents are/were unprepared for this aspect of parenting.

You can start by asking where they are at with smartphones, have they already given them? If yes then ask how it is going, whether they have any boundaries or rules and how well it is all working for them as a family and anything that they are struggling with. Ask why they gave them at whichever age they did.

At this point I would explain that lots of research has come out recently, lots even in the last year. Explain that you'd like to go through this research and they can tell you what they are aware of and what they aren't.

You can print off the 1 pagers of research in the Ambassadors pack (also available on the website https://www.unpluggedrebelsnz.com/files/ugd/89fd9b_bd16fe576d6f402bbe14c88b35501294.pdf) or you can use the cards kindly created by Delay Smartphones as useful talking points. You may want to mention that the data on the cards is UK focused, but it is widely agreed that the statistics remain true between many Western countries including UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The image displays a collection of research cards from Unplugged Rebels NZ, arranged in a collage. The cards are titled as follows:

- EVIDENCE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**: Children spend long world with interaction. Hinder development of social skills and relationships.
- EVIDENCE FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH**: ...damaging children's spine. ...contributing to obesity in children.
- EVIDENCE FOR MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH**: ...damaging children's spine. ...increasing depth and anxiety in child. ...preventing children play outside. ...addictive. ...reducing children's academic performance.
- EVIDENCE FOR FOCUS & BRAIN CHANGE**: ...addictive. ...reducing children's academic performance.
- EVIDENCE FOR SEXUAL CONTENT & BEHAVIOUR**: ...exposing children. ...pressuring girls into sending sexual images of themselves.

The bottom card, titled "EVIDENCE", provides a summary of the research:

At Unplugged Rebels NZ we have been inspired by the incredible math of the UK group DelaySmartphones.org.uk and have found many references through them which we hope you find helpful. Please note: This is a global problem and these are global references.

18+	18+	18+	18+	18+
Sexual content & behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none">Exposing children to sexual & offensive contentPressuring girls into sending sexual images of themselvesExposing children to sexual abuse & grooming	Physical health <ul style="list-style-type: none">Damaging children's spineContributing to obesity in childrenPreventing children playing outsideDamaging children's eyesChildren's eyes: Stopping kids getting enough sleep	Focus & brain change <ul style="list-style-type: none">AddictiveReducing children's academic performanceCausing structural changes to children's brains	Mental & emotional health <ul style="list-style-type: none">Responsible for the high increase in cyberbullyingIncreasing depression and anxiety in childrenIncreasing lonelinessMaking children more likely to self-harm	Social development <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hinder development of social skills and relationshipsDamaging for family relationships

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Hand out each individual card and show them the stats on the back, it's important to ensure they do turn the cards over as many parents will just look at the front. Spread the cards out onto the table one by one. These additional stats/anecdotes are useful to mention depending on which card you are talking about.



Exposure to content: 27% of all video content online is pornographic. Porn has changed dramatically in the last decade, way more violent. 88% of videos on top 50 most popular porn sites had physical violence in them. The second most common cause of stroke for women under 40 is strangulation during sex. Access to purchasing drugs online, extremely easy delivered to your house, can be buying something different to what you think it is.

Access to games like TikTok choking challenge. Even if your child doesn't search for these things, other children will send them to them.

Nude images: Massive pressure for boys and girls, completely normalised. Boys need to show "evidence" that a girl likes him. From interviewing girls between the ages of 18-21, we are yet to find anyone who has not been asked for nude images.

Sextortion: huge growing problem. Giving images to someone who is not who you think and being financially extorted or those images will be made public. Has driven many teens to suicide.

Sexual abuse and grooming: Massive increase is largely because children are taking their phones to bed and predators are capitalising on that.

Spinal Damage: The weight of a child's head is 3/4kg. Teens are spending on average 9 hours a day on their phones. They are growing looking down with that weight pulling on their spine and neck, so we're going to have a whole generation with spinal disabilities. Look around at people in their early twenties

now and you won't be able to unsee it. *When parents have teens with smartphones already I often do explain that this can be rectified if they hang their necks backwards off a bed a couple of times a day for 15 minutes. (Obviously it is unlikely any parent is actually going to enforce this).

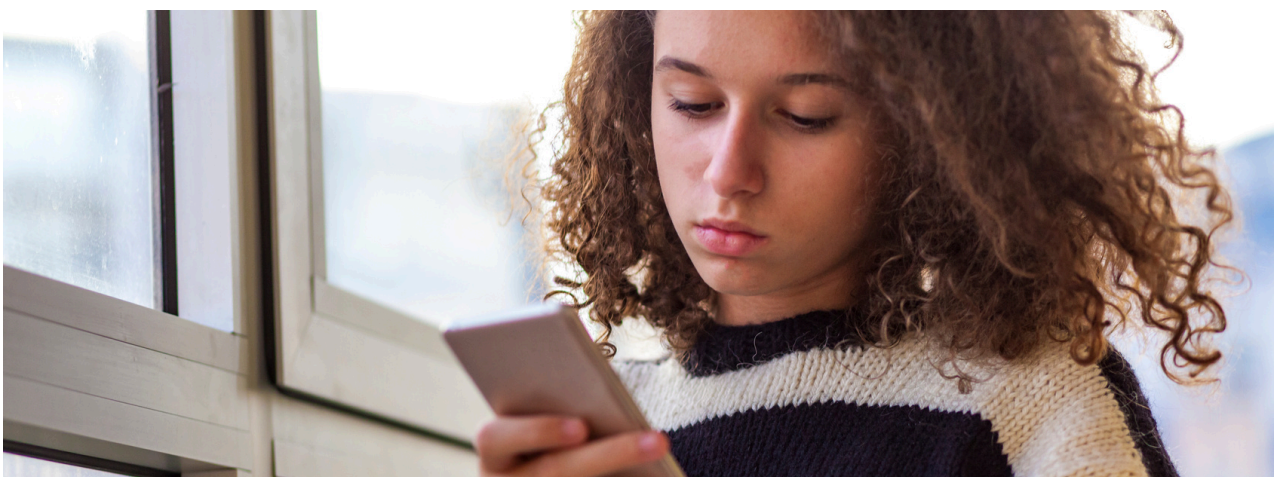
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Mental Health: The first generation of children who were given smartphones in primary school are now adults. We now know for every year younger they were given smartphones by their parents, the worse their mental health is today.* That same generation is begging us not to make the same mistake. This is from a study of 30,000 young adults, just published in 2023.

Cyberbullying: When we were younger everyone knew who the bullies were and at least when you went home you had respite. Now, no one knows who the bullies are or who is being bullied, it has become silent. And it is absolutely relentless, there is no break from it with smartphones.

Eyesight: We are meant to constantly change our focus, with smartphones kids are often scrolling for hours and the muscles used for long sighted vision aren't being used and so kids are becoming short sighted.

Peers are primary attachment instead of parents: Naturally in the transition from childhood to adulthood we expect children to lose their attachment to parents but it is happening too young, we think they are becoming independent but they are just changing that dependency to their peers due to the constant contact. Obviously their friends are incapable of offering the guidance, love and support they need and of course they are very fickle so when one day they are besties and the next day they are not, it can be completely crushing as that is their primary attachment.



Self Harm: With that enormous increase in hospitalisations, each one is a trauma for that whole family.

Brain changes/addiction: The notification dopamine hit is changing the grey matter in children's brains, we are turning our children into tiny addicts with no impulse control and a desperate need for instant gratification. We know that this primes the brain for transfer addiction to shopping, gambling, porn, sex, drugs, etc.

*Obviously a lot of this information is quite hard hitting and upsetting but it's really important that the info isn't watered down.

After showing all the cards, it's great to have them laid out on the table just to highlight how much is affecting our children when they are given a smartphone. Explain that although this is very bleak, you are actually coming here with hope. We can do something about this, and the more of us that delay giving our kids smartphones the easier it is going to be for us and for our kids, as we will change the norm.

It is a good idea to have some examples of alternative devices to show as parents may not be aware what is available on the market - you may have a couple yourself you can bring, or you could print off some examples from our "alternatives" page on the website to show and discuss <https://www.unpluggedrebelsnz.com/alternatives>

The screenshot displays a webpage titled "Phones" and "Watches" with a grid of product cards. Each card features an image of the device, a title, a brief description, and a "Link Here" button.

Phones

- DeMobile Phone - AGM M6:** In order to log with confidence, Tone Down Tech has acquired safety and compliance testing for the AGM M6. TDT is the only supplier of the AGM M6 in NZ to have a certified NZ Australian power adaptor.
- Flip phone - AGM M8:** The best rugged flip phone on the market. Features: Rugged flip phone for kids, Drop, dust and water proof, FM radio and torch, Basic camera, No internet.
- Nokia 5710:** Other notable specs of the Nokia 5710 are: 13MP back camera, 3.5mm audio connector, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth v2.0, microUSB v2.0.
- Nokia 2660:** The Nokia 2660 Flip phone from Personal Digital displays the incoming caller ID when the lid is closed. This phone features very loud speakers, which makes it a good phone for listening to music, talking on the phone.
- Nokia 3210:** Paying homage to the original Nokia 3210 design, Nokia Icon has been rebuilt from ground up. Long battery life, back camera and Bluetooth connectivity.
- Kid-Safe Smartphone - Galaxy A15 5G:** Designed in collaboration with Samsung, the Kid-Safe Smartphone is perfect for providing your child with a remarkably safe and clean digital experience.
- The Light Phone II (Not yet available in NZ):** Both the Light Phone II and II have Bluetooth & wifi. Both also support WiFi tethering as a personal hotspot. Although there is wifi, the device will never be able to browse the internet.
- Gabb (Not yet available in NZ):** Gabb Phone 4 Pro is the teen-safe phone that flexes to fit teens' content needs. Plus, apps from a Gabb Reviewed library of apps can be enabled by parents.
- Hand-me-downs:** Watch our UR's video on how to "dumbly" a Samsung smartphone.

Watches

- Spacetaik Adventurer 2:** A video enabled 4G smartwatch it has video calling, talk and text, GPS location tracking, school mode, emergency SOS, laugh, Gorilla glass, and much more.
- Moochies Helix Smartwatch 4G:** This smartwatch works as both a watch and a mobile phone with two-way calling, video calling, texting, GPS, geo-fencing, a safe list, SOS alarm and much more.
- Moochies Odyssey 4G:** The core functions of voice and video calling, GPS tracking, and messaging have been joined by educational games, music, step tracking, heart rate and temperature monitoring.
- Bounce Garmin Jr:** Two-way text and voice messaging via the Garmin Jr™ app on your compatible smartphone. Real-time location tracking, tracks steps, sleep, activity and more.

Remember, no judgement. Talk, don't tell. Listen. Ask questions. Really try to understand how people are feeling. Don't approach this as an argument to be won or lost. Be clear who's ultimately responsible: tech companies and governments.

Know – and say – that everyone wants to do the best for their children, however we handle this particular challenge.

Parents have been put in an impossible position. Either we allow our children access to something harmful, or we risk alienating them among their peers.

Talk about the growing evidence, but don't beat people over the head with facts and stats. The simple reality is that ten years ago, we didn't know the impact that smartphones had on kids. Now, we do. Now that we know better, we need to do better.

From Smartphone Free Childhood UK - Here are some more helpful talking points:

- Smartphones decrease attention-span, damage mental health and open up a world of things our kids shouldn't have to deal with
- We all know smartphones are addictive. For kids smartphones can get in the way of all the good stuff: playing outside, hanging out with friends, reading, talking and laughing.

Of course technology is part of the world now, and children need to learn how to use it. But young children aren't equipped to have a healthy relationship with something addictive. It's hard enough for us adults!

- There are alternatives. Many parents want to be able to contact their children for safety but this needn't be a smartphone.
- Tobacco companies used to market their products to kids as healthy - we think we'll look back on smartphones the same way
- Films are regulated, computer games are regulated, now smartphones need to be.

Be sure to take a good look at the document outlying FAQs and common push backs so that you feel prepared for the likely arguments you might come up against.

If you have any further questions, or need some support, contact your Regional Rebel through your region's (or nearest) Ambassadors Whatsapp group, join our monthly ambassadors zoom call or send me an email at urnz.ambassadors@gmail.com

