

Dear PEPPS Community

Genesis 2: 1-3; Exodus 31:17; Exodus 34:21; Ecclesiastes 3:1

We are told in multiple places in the Bible that **we should rest**. Nature rests. The dormancy of winter, hibernation, pupating and many other natural processes show the importance of rest.



A field that lies fallow for a time, produces a better crop.

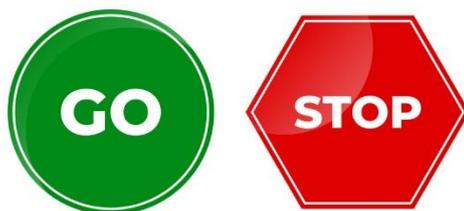
The benefit of resting is that one feels refreshed. After rest one comes back stronger and better than before.

To everything
there is a season,
A time for every
purpose under heaven.

-Ecclesiastes 3:1



Our children have been on the go this term and many are in the midst of writing exams which have them cranking up another gear. If we want them to flourish, we must allow them to stop. **The upcoming time in the holidays needs to include significant downtime.**



Ref: Vectorstock

Giving our brain a break allows the brain to organise itself and stop releasing stress hormones. When we are expected to perform all of the time, we are continually bathing our brains and bodies in cortisol and adrenalin. We were never designed to have these hormones permanently turned on so they accumulate and damage our bodies and our minds.

Finding time for our spirit or our soul is highly regenerative. Finding our calm can mop-up excess stress hormones. Our children have an opportunity to stop. **Let us empower them to constructively grow during their break.** Counterintuitively, brains and bodies form essential links and learn when they do nothing. 'Nothing' can look very different and, as parents, we owe it to our children to guide them into healthy practices. What should healthy downtime look like?

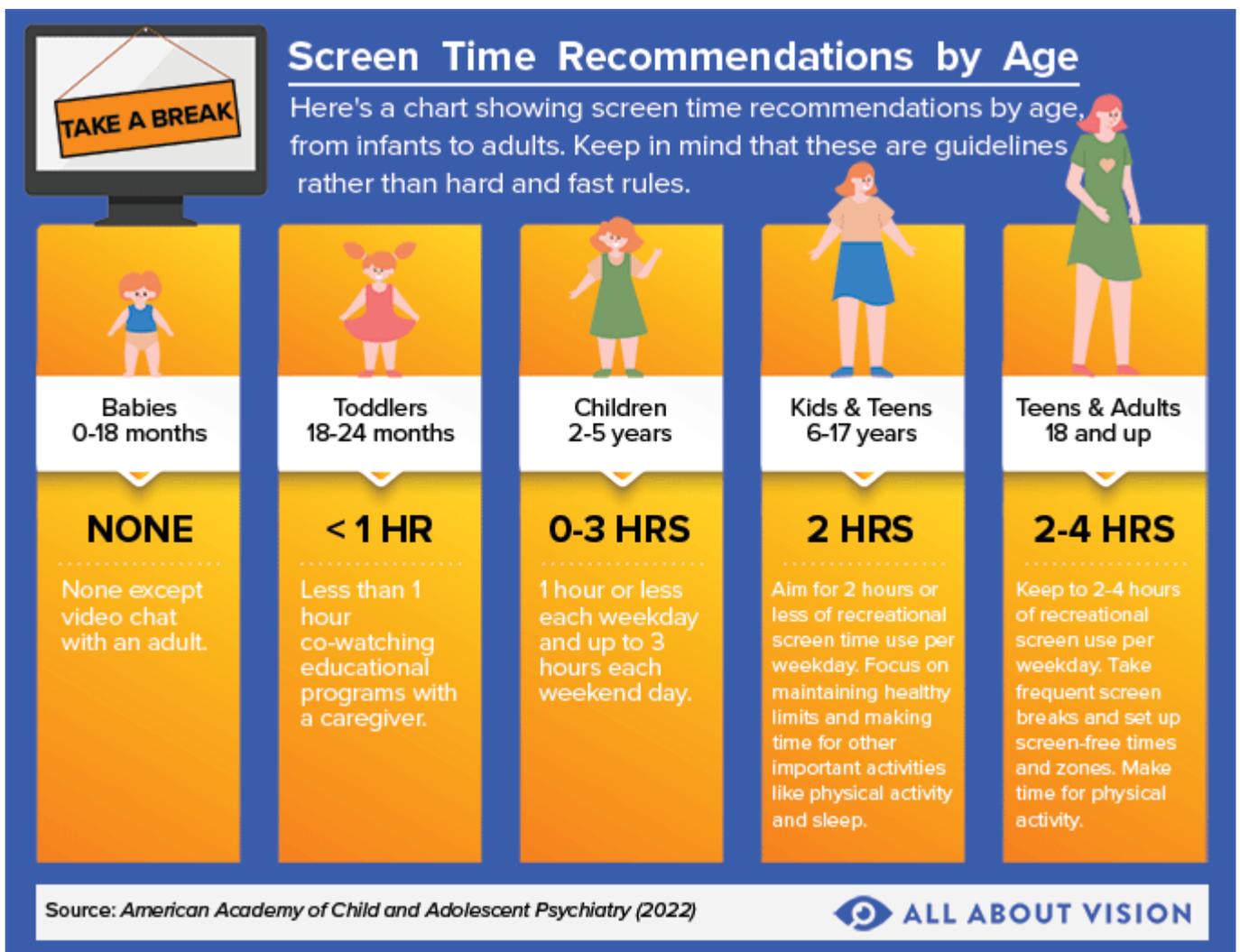
Let us start with what should take up the most time in relaxing – sleep. Even though it is holiday time, **we should try to keep our children in some sort of a sleep routine that allows for the optimal number of hours**



required for best development. We may choose to adjust the times somewhat if children do not need to be up very early to get to school on time, but the total hours should be strongly encouraged. I have written about the overwhelming value of sleep in a previous newsletter.

Sending our children to an Independent School, which costs more money than many other schools, is something we do to set our children up for success. If we are serious about setting our children up for success, we should ensure that they sleep enough. The good news is that sleeping is completely free! **The dividends of good sleep habits and sleeping enough hours are priceless – better health, better learning, better social engagements and better overall well-being.**

The next major player in modern children's relaxation is screen time. Screen time is not all bad and children delight in playing on devices, watching TV and socialising with friends online. It would be naive and limiting to forbid screen time. Children of today connect, learn and have fun on screens. The guidelines below seem very short. I wonder how many of us parents/teachers manage to limit our screen use to these guidelines.



We do know that **excessive screentime is correlated with poor health, anxiety and depression.** So we need to find the balance. Children should be **expected to exercise, eat nutritious food without the distraction of a screen, communicate personally with family members, enjoy some time outdoors, engage in a creative pursuit that uses their hands and remember to meditate/pray.**

Screen-breaks are essential.



Last month I attended the 'Free to Play' conference which highlighted the importance of **allowing children to self-direct their recreational time**. Children should not be over directed or supervised, but we also cannot simply allow them to go feral. Guidelines and boundaries can help children to feel safe enough to explore the world.



Trampolines, jungle gyms and swings in the garden are invaluable investments. Younger children benefit from time with creative/art materials, as well as blocks. Ensuring that your children have multiple resources available to play with and use can make time away from screens enjoyable.

THERE IS NO APP TO REPLACE YOUR LAP!

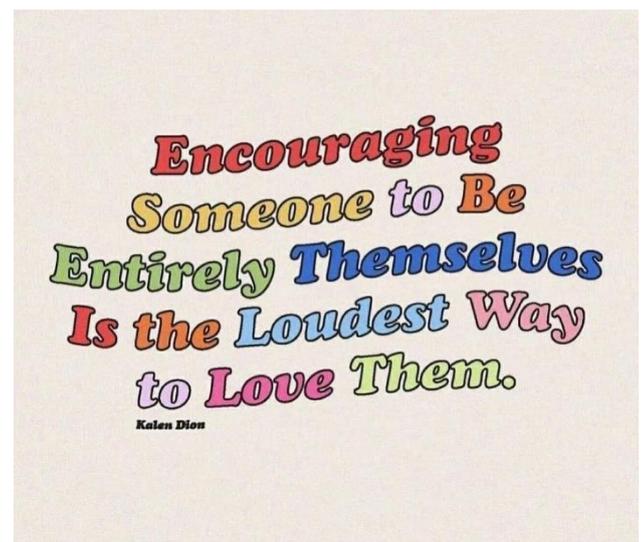


Every child benefits from books. Reading with your child every day has untold benefits for creativity and language development. Younger children can be read to, whilst older children can read in the same room as a nurturing adult who is also reading. Audible reading still stimulates imagination and vocabulary.

READ WITH YOUR CHILD EVERY DAY!

The most important thing you can do for your child during this holiday is to find time to give them. Many of us are working parents, but during the holiday, children long for the attention of their significant adults. Try to carve out an hour or two for your children daily. See if you can take each child out for a milkshake and a one-on-one chat. Ask them about their hopes and dreams. **Allow them the privilege and joy of being the centre of your attention and try to delight in their stories.**

Simultaneously, provide a few **ideas for a day well-lived**. I recommend an agreed one-page 'contract' suggesting that some time each day is spent doing various activities. **These 'contracts' are signed by the parents/caregivers and the child. They evolve as the child gets older.** Include reading, creative time, exercise, time with God or nature, healthy eating, and appropriate sleep in your expectations. Beyond that, allow the child to determine their schedule for their relaxation time.



Obviously, **children cannot be allowed to make unsafe choices**. If they are spending time online, it is the responsibility of parents to care about what children are doing and seeing online. I shared some safeguarding Apps in my previous newsletter.

It takes a village to raise a child. We are all responsible for keeping children safe. Our staff training on safeguarding included the following definitions:

Child abuse is an act or inaction that has the risk of harm to the child or infringes on the child's rights according to Section 28 of the South African Constitution.

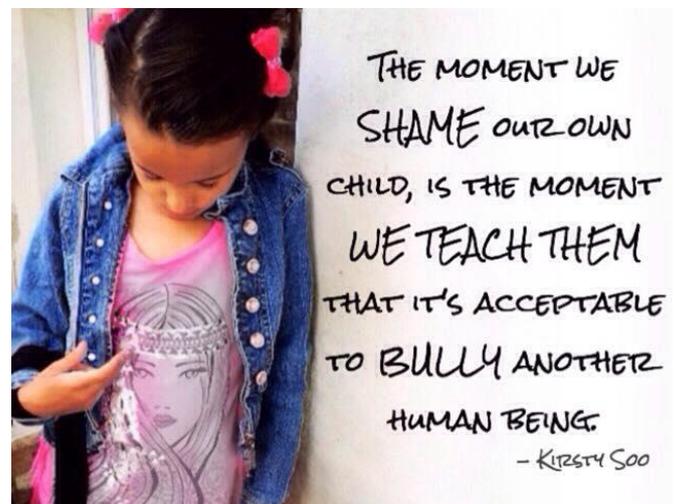
Physical abuse includes **non-accidental infliction of physical hurt with bare hands or with any instrument** (such as a belt to hit or a cigarette to burn.)

Physical abuse ALSO includes **neglect and abandonment**.

At PEPPS we **discipline with dignity**. There is no reason to use violence against children in order to keep them 'in-line'.

It is also possible to speak to children about their poor choices and behaviour without screaming and shaming them.

Children are little humans who deserve consideration, kindness and respect. I am not suggesting that children are allowed to be rude and 'rule the house'. **Boundaries, limits and reasonable expectations are completely appropriate**, however, bullying (physically or emotionally) children into compliance is not the way to raise an emotionally healthy adult.



Effective parenting requires us to make well-considered and conscious choices about how we engage with our children. This is not easy, but it is worth it 😊.

This term has been filled with an abundance of opportunities for each pupil to shine and show their talents. We look forward to sharing a report on each child at the end of this term.

May the upcoming holiday be blessed for your family. I wish you travel mercies if you are going away. **May peace and calm envelop you and your children during this time of rest.**



Yours in healthy, safe and excellent education

Annabel Roberts

PEPPS Executive Head