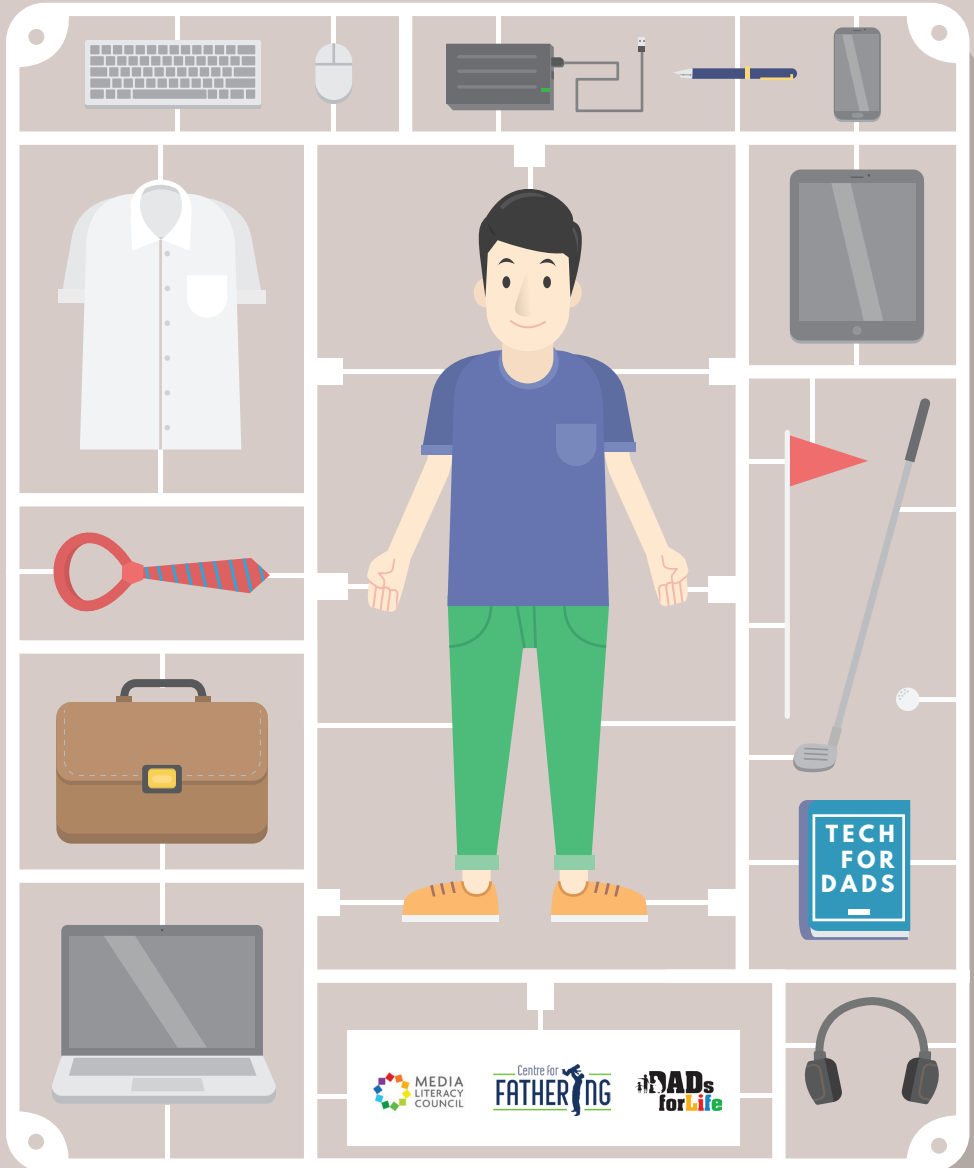


# DADS' MEDIATECH Resource Kit







# **OBJECTIVE**

This Resource Kit serves as a quick starter's reference guide for fathers (of young children and growing teens) to take a more active role in their families' adoption of technology.



# PREFACE

Enjoy this MediaTech Resource Kit written for Dads, by Dads!

Technology can be a powerful enabler in parenting in a digital age. As a father of young children, I struggle with setting the right example, habits and boundaries that will help my children grow securely and responsibly in the unregulated playground of the digital world.

This Resource Kit contains practical tips for your home, and is the first of a series being produced by an expert team of passionate fathers. While the swift pace of emerging technologies is a challenge in the fathering journey, it is also an opportunity to work with our children, to equip them with the values they need for life.

Join us on this MediaTech journey in learning together as Dads for Life!

*Bryan Tan*

**CEO, Centre for Fathering & Dads for Life**

# FOREWORD



As a father, I understand the many difficulties of raising digital natives. Children today are often better than us when it comes to most things technological: their lives seamlessly include new technologies from internet-enabled toys to smart watches, they thrive with unprecedented levels of global smartphone usage, and they are often our first stops when we need help with our phones or computers.

Given their high rates of exposure to digital devices, it is necessary for children to learn to side-step cyber risks while reaping the benefits of online knowledge acquisition and exploration. To that end, fathers are important teachers, guides, and resources.

This Resource Kit hopes to equip fathers with information packaged in easy-to-understand and easier-to-carry-out tips, so as to set a better example and raise children to become safe, smart, and kind digital citizens. The Media Literacy Council has worked with Centre for Fathering on this Resource Kit to enable all fathers to gain the necessary skillsets to best raise our digital natives.

*Lock Wai Han*

**Chairman, Media Literacy Council**

# THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN FAMILIES USING TECHNOLOGY



Families these days are surrounded by all sorts of gadgets. From desktop computers to tablets and mobiles, screens everywhere demand our attention. Our children are growing up in a digital age, and the use of technology is an important part of their education. We know that they will need digital literacy skills to help them navigate a world filled with information, and the tools that will help them overcome the challenges ahead.

It is important that our children build a positive and constructive relationship with technology: technology should serve them, and not the other way round. Schools may train their skills, but it is at home where families lay the foundation for how our children use technology, and eventually how they will shape the future of the digital world.

# BEING CONFIDENT

## DIGITAL PARENTS

As parents, we often feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities that we are called to bear. Our childhood seems so different from what our children are going through today. But we must remember that the good old-fashioned values that have passed down from generation to generation still apply in the digital age. Some examples of these values in action today:



**Don't believe everything you read.** We are bombarded by a lot of information today, and need to be extra careful to verify what we watch and read, especially before sharing it with all our family and friends.



**Eat your vegetables.** It is easy to only consume information that we agree with, and our social media newsfeeds sometimes only provide us with the information that we like. This can make us blind to other perspectives that can help widen our understanding of an issue or develop empathy for those who are not like us.



**Treat others as you want to be treated.** Behind the security of our screens, we are sometimes quick to criticise or judge others, especially when we think we cannot be identified. We need to help our children understand that their words have the power to lift someone else's spirit up, and also the power to make others feel lousy. We need to learn that we are responsible for our words, whether spoken, written, analogue or digital.

# DIGITAL RULES FOR OUR HOMES

Many of us set up rules for our kids to follow. But at times, we struggle to follow these rules ourselves because they may be too challenging. Try to focus on small acts you can do and small changes in behaviour you can put in place today, so that you can set an example for your kids – things they can see and do too!

## 1 KNOW YOURSELF

You need to be aware of how much time you spend looking at your screen every day. Use an app like Moment (for IOS) or QualityTime (for Android), that tracks your online usage by time spent and app used. Not only might the numbers shock you into cutting down the time you spend online, but the app also sets daily limits on your mobile usage.



## 2 PUT IT AWAY

**OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND (LIMIT TIME SPENT ONLINE)**

When you come into your house, you might have a few habits making up a routine: taking your shoes off at the doorway, changing into more comfortable clothes, or getting some food. Add another step in your daily routine: putting away your phones and other devices.

Have an area in the house, like at the charging dock or on a shelf away from the living room, where you can put down your devices on as soon you enter your home. This tells your children that you have 'turned off' from the virtual world and that you will be present for them at home. It also makes it a lot harder to check your WhatsApp or Facebook every few minutes!

Then, start setting limits for how much time you can spend online every day. Even if you need to do work from home, set out a specific, limited amount of time every day or evening to check your emails or do your work, and try to do this in the living room so that your children can watch you too.



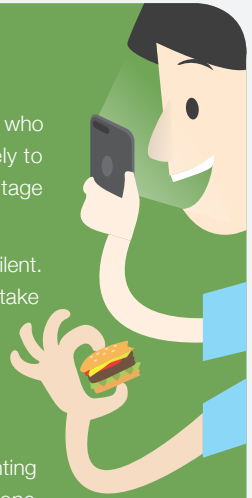


### 3 DON'T EAT AND SURF

Family meals are one of the most important parts of your child's life. Children who eat with their parents have been found to have better grades, be less likely to smoke, and even be happier (David and Uhrenholdt, 2010). Take full advantage of family mealtimes by being present.

If you are at home, leave your digital devices to charge and switch them to Silent. Or if you're dining out, leave your devices at home or in the car, or if need to take them you, leave them on Silent and be sure not to take them out during the meal – from the time you enter the restaurant to when you leave. This sends the sign that, for a specific and constant period of time every day, your child knows that they have your complete attention if they need it.

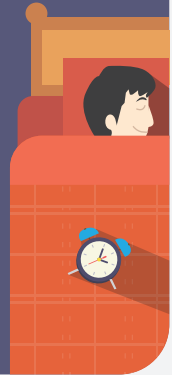
For dads who want to take this to a greater commitment, consider implementing a "Tech Free Day" where the entire family goes without technology on that one day every week and spend the time interacting with each other instead.



### 4 SLEEP WITHOUT (DIGITAL) COMPANY

It has been proven that keeping your digital items with you at night is harmful – the light from the screens makes it harder to sleep, the very presence of the devices in the bedroom can be a source of stress, and if you wake up in the middle of the night, having your phone at hand's reach makes it more likely that you start scrolling through your social media feeds and less likely that you fall back to sleep.

Instead, use an old-school alarm clock. Having half an hour of non-digital time before you go to bed and after you wake up in the morning lets you get a more restful night's sleep. It also tells your kids that you don't need these devices to sleep or wake up!



### 5 SHOW YOUR CHILDREN THE WORLD OUTSIDE THEIR DEVICES

Many children now have been raised on so many types of digital entertainment that the thought of non-digital, even old fashioned, entertainment may seem impossible. Remind your children that there is a world outside their screens by engaging with them in ways that don't rely on your gadgets.

Besides family mealtimes, make time after dinner or before bed where you can spend time together playing, for example, board games, cards, or charades. You can bring your child for a short walk to the park, or even a walk to get dessert. Find something that interests you and your child, and be consistent – have a specific time of day or week where you will be free of digital devices. This might be difficult at first, and there might be resistance both inside you and from your child, but if you stick to it, you will find something that works for all of you!

# THE FINAL MESSAGE: BE HONEST ABOUT OUR FAILURES

The most important message you want to get through to your child is that you are in this digital journey together. So, when you struggle to keep any of the agreed rules – when you woke up to check your email and set a few reminders for work, or when you went completely over your daily limit – tell them! Let them know that achieving a balance between online and offline lives is difficult for you too, and that you also struggle in your attempts.

But, remind them that you continue to try because it is important! Make promises (and keep them) – that you will definitely leave your phone outside the bedroom the next night, or that if you use your social media more than the allowed time in the next week, you'll delete the app for two weeks. Doing so reinforces the idea that you are still trying and learning, and that they should too.



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## ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY COUNCIL

The Media Literacy Council works in partnership with industry, community and government to champion and develop public education and awareness programmes relating to media literacy and cyber wellness. In an increasingly interactive and participatory media landscape, the Media Literacy Council seeks to cultivate and encourage the public to become discerning media consumers with the ability to evaluate media content effectively, and use, create and share content safely and responsibly. It also advises the government on how to respond to emerging issues relating to internet and media content.

## ABOUT CENTRE FOR FATHERING

Founded on Father's Day in 2000 with the aim of turning the hearts of children towards their fathers, the Centre for Fathering (CFF) believes that an active and involved father is essential for a child's successful development. When fathers develop better bonds with their children, it is not just their families that benefit, but our society as well.

CFF champions the "Dads for Life" movement to inspire and involve fathers to be good influencers in their children's lives ... for LIFE. The movement seeks to mobilise fathers to ACT:

- Be Aware of the importance of a father's role
- Commit to be good fathers and role models to their children
- Spend Time, acquire Tools and bring Transformation to lives

CFF is a non-profit organisation registered in Singapore (Registration No: 200101825N; IPC No: IPC000149).

