



Take ^{the} **Challenge**
TAKE CHARGE

Turn Screens **OFF.**
Turn Life **ON.**

TEN-DAY 
Screen-Free Challenge
WORKBOOK

Developed by Liberty Military Housing in collaboration with Kristine Paulsen from the Take the Challenge Now Foundation.



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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS TAKE THE CHALLENGE - TAKE CHARGE?

IN 2021, LIBERTY MILITARY HOUSING AND THE TAKE THE CHALLENGE NOW FOUNDATION CREATED THE TAKE THE CHALLENGE - TAKE CHARGE TEN-DAY SCREEN-FREE CHALLENGE.

The ultimate goal of the ten-day Challenge is to begin a journey to be more present with ourselves, our families, and our communities.

Many parents want their children to spend less time using technology for entertainment. The ten-day screen-free Challenge is the first step in reducing screen time. The Challenge does not include using technology for school or work.

Feedback from Take the Challenge - Take Charge Participants

“ Both my daughter and myself showed less frustration and bonded more. Communication improved as expected.

“ We always enjoy our family time; however, this Challenge allowed us to realize that screens were a bigger problem in our home than we thought. We have changed the amount of time we let our kids on their iPads, and we made a few life changes.

“ I was able to sleep better.

“ You find there are other things to do besides TV. It began to get really easy to find things to do.

Who Can Participate

Everyone can participate! Toddlers to adult age can participate in Take the Challenge - Take Charge. Historically, participants include Liberty Military Housing residents, team members, community partners, and the general public.

How to Participate

Take the pledge to participate in the Take the Challenge - Take Charge for ten days. Encourage your family, friends, and co-workers to participate.

Use this workbook throughout the Challenge. The workbook contains information and activities to help you form positive media habits. Each activity is appropriate for all audiences. Alternative activities are noted throughout the workbook. If you feel the activity isn't a good fit for you at any time, please feel free to look ahead or find screen-free alternative activities.

What do I need to do to prepare, and what supplies do you need?

We have you covered! This workbook will connect you to helpful resources, including ideas for fun and healthy activities. After the ten-day screen-free Challenge, you and your family will find it easier to develop healthy media habits. We hope you continue using the new practices you formed and decrease “unhealthy” media usage.

This workbook outlines what you and your family should do each day. It provides information to review and an activity to complete. We encourage you to complete one activity a day.



What is Considered Media?



Let's take a moment to review what is considered "media." The term "media," the plural of medium, refers to the communication channels through which we disseminate news, music, movies, education, promotional messages, and other data.

We know it is unrealistic to tell you to turn off your mobile device for ten days or go screen-free during work or school. We are asking you to focus on eliminating or reducing the following types of media:



TV content or movies

Includes watching on a television (TV) set, on-demand streaming services like Netflix, recorded shows, computer, or smartphone device.



Computers & social networking

Includes playing games on a computer, sending or receiving instant messages, going to social networking sites, watching or posting videos on sites like YouTube, or surfing websites.



Video gaming

Includes playing on a console or handheld gaming device (including a cell phone). Count time spent playing computer games as computer use.



Movies in a theater

Includes physically going to a movie theater to watch a movie.



Texting on mobile devices

Texting, sharing gifs, memes, or other types of communication via text messages.

MEDIA CONSUMPTION

A 2021 study conducted by the Common-Sense Media Organization of tween and teenage children asked how and for how long the children consumed media and concluded that online video viewing is through the roof. More than twice as many young people watch videos daily than in 2015, and the average time spent watching has roughly doubled (*"The Common-Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens, 2021," Common Sense, 2022*).

Military families tend to face an increased risk of these negative feelings and emotions due to the stressful nature of military life. Heavy social media usage can magnify the negative feelings of military members and their families.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is concerned that too much entertainment media is causing decreases in sleep, physical activity, and in-person social interactions, causing physical health problems, psychological problems, and difficulty

socializing with others (*"Problematic Child Media Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic," American Academy of Pediatrics, 2022*).

ACCORDING TO THE COMMON-SENSE SURVEY IN 2021, CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS USE ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA FOR 8 HOURS AND 39 MINUTES DAILY, WHICH IS MORE TIME THAN STUDENTS ARE IN SCHOOL FOR A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY.



Social media may create negative feelings, including:

- ✓ Inadequacy about your life or appearance
- ✓ Fear of missing out (FOMO)
- ✓ Isolation
- ✓ Depression and anxiety, cyberbullying, and self-absorption

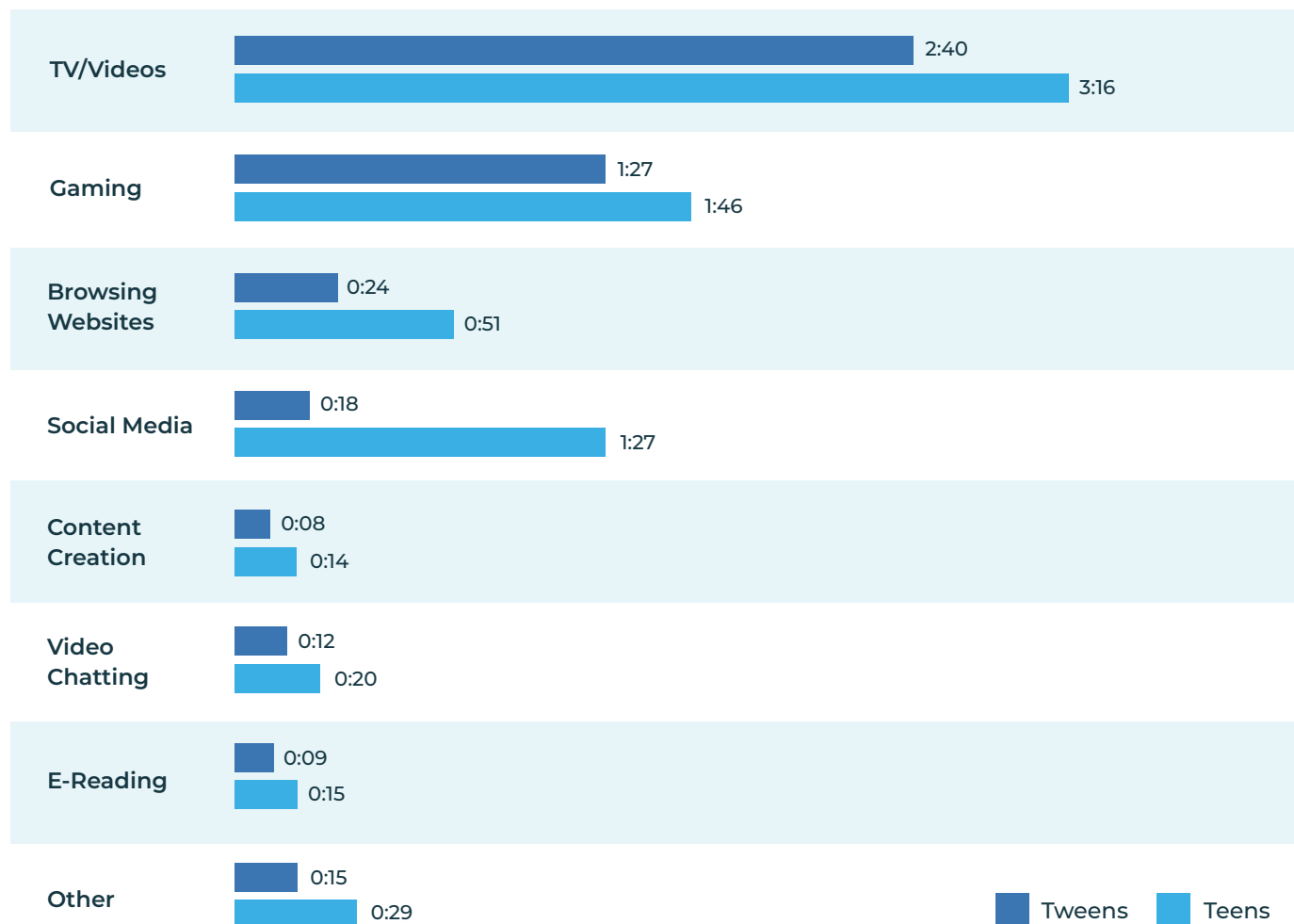
(*"Social Media and Mental Health," HelpGuide, 2022*)

Tweens and Teens Media Consumption



AVERAGE DAILY ENTERTAINMENT SCREEN USE BY ACTIVITY AND AGE

Media used by tweens ages 8 to 12 and teens ages 13 to 18. Source: Common Sense Media, 2021
Note: Does not include screens used for school or work.



It is not just the amount of screen time students are watching, but what they are watching that is troubling. Children are exposed to large amounts of violence. The average American child sees 200,000 violent acts on TV alone by age 18.

Exposure to violent media is a cause of aggressive behavior and is correlated with violent criminal behavior, including mass shootings. It is important to note that the link between violent media and aggression is found in every country where studies have been conducted. Several long-term studies have also found that high exposure to violent media in childhood is related to violence later in life, including criminal behavior, spousal abuse, and assault (*"Risk Factors for Youth Violence: International Society for Research on Aggression, 2018)*.

Lifetime Projections



AVERAGE TIME SPENT IN A LIFETIME



Source: 2023 Projections from Bureau of Labor Statistics

Impacts of Media

Research on excessive media use is associated with obesity, lack of sleep, school or work problems, aggression, and other behavior issues.

Impacts on Infants and Young Children: Newly released research suggests that the brains of infants and young children show significant differences between children who don't use/ use (or are exposed to) smartphones, tablets, or video games more than seven hours a day – which might seem extreme, but it's still five hours less than the average adult in their life. The same study from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that even children who consume two hours of media a day have lower thinking and language scores on tests than their peers who don't.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting entertainment screen time to less than one or two hours per day for young children.

Impacts on Teens: Teens are expressing higher rates of depression and loneliness the more time they spend on their phones – despite claims by 81% of teens that phones make them “feel” more connected.

Impacts on Adults: Media exposure during the 24/7 news cycle can increase perceptions of threat and activate the “fight or flight response,” producing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, which can lead to subsequent physical and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, fatigue, and loss of sleep. In one study, participants who watched just fourteen minutes of negative news showed increases in both anxious and sad moods and a significant increase in the tendency to catastrophize a personal worry.

Benefits of Being Screen-Free



Grow personal connections and socialize with others.

- When you get outside and explore your community, you will have opportunities to meet others who share your interests. Growing your personal connections leads to a sense of belonging and can help you feel you are not alone.
- Being engaged and feeling connected with others will help reduce feelings of depression and anxiety.
- By setting down your device, children may feel their parents are more emotionally available and help strengthen the family bond.



Healthier lifestyle.

- When you eliminate distractions, you pay more attention to your body and its signals when it's full.
- Less screen time provides more time to be physically active.
- Limiting electronics at least one hour before bedtime contributes to better sleep.



Positive environment for children to thrive.

- Children from families who eat together show better academic scores.
- Decreasing screen time can improve focus and reduce behavior problems.
- Children feel less anxious and depressed which contributes to less violence when dealing with problems.
- Decreasing screen time allows more time for play and creative activities.



Encourages positive mental health.

- Putting down the phone and going outside is a mood booster. Sunlight helps keep your serotonin levels up. This helps raise your energy and keeps your mood calm, positive, and focused.

While the effects of quitting social media are positive in the long run,

your immediate reaction may be stress and anxiety caused by a neurobiological withdrawal from the sense of being constantly connected.

“If you’re using social media addictively, which some people are, you have elevated levels of dopamine, so when you stop doing that, there is some withdrawal,” says David Greenfield, Ph.D., assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and founder of the Center for Internet and Technology Addiction. Luckily, these feelings usually do not persist beyond the first few days of quitting social media, so you should be able to enjoy the positive effects soon enough.



The Challenge Starts Now. Are you ready?

On Day 1, please sign the Take the Challenge - Take Charge Pledge.

TAKE THE CHALLENGE - TAKE CHARGE PLEDGE

I/we agree to commit and sign this official contract to participate in the ten-day Take the Challenge - Take Charge program. _____ agrees to:

- Follow the Take the Challenge - Take Charge guidelines and activities honestly and diligently.
- Take the opportunity to self-reflect and have an open conversation about the activities in this book.
- Limit screen time and complete the activities during the ten days.
- Meet the Challenge with enthusiasm, a positive attitude, a spirit of perseverance, and a willingness to try something new.
- Continue to use the positive screen-time habits after the ten-day challenge ends.

Signature(s)

DAY ONE



During the first day of the Challenge, we ask you to reflect on how much you (and your family) spend on media on devices.

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW TO FIND YOUR EXACT USAGE OR ESTIMATE THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU SPEND ON DEVICES.


Most people would be surprised at how much time they spend consuming media.

- When you think about your day, how frequently and for how long did you spend consuming media?
- How often did you check notifications on your phone or mindlessly scroll through Instagram or Facebook?
- When you get home from work or school, how much time do you spend watching tv, playing video or computer games, or watching YouTube?


How to find the amount of time you spend consuming media on your mobile device

We encourage you to look at your mobile device to find when you consume media on your phone. After you have gathered the data, don't forget to put the device away to complete the Challenge!

If you use an iPhone, turn on screen time to access your screen time report.

1. Go to Settings  > Screen Time.
2. Select Turn On Screen Time, then select Continue.
3. Select This is My iPhone if you're setting up Screen Time for yourself on your iPhone. Select This is My Child's iPhone if you're setting up Screen Time for your child (or family member).
4. To use Screen Time on all your Apple devices, scroll down, then turn on Share Across Devices.
 - a. If you've set up Family Sharing, you can turn on Screen Time for a family member through Family Sharing on your device.

To view your screen time report:

1. Go to Settings  > Screen Time.
2. Select See All Activity, select Week to see a summary of your weekly use, or select Day to see an overview of your daily use.

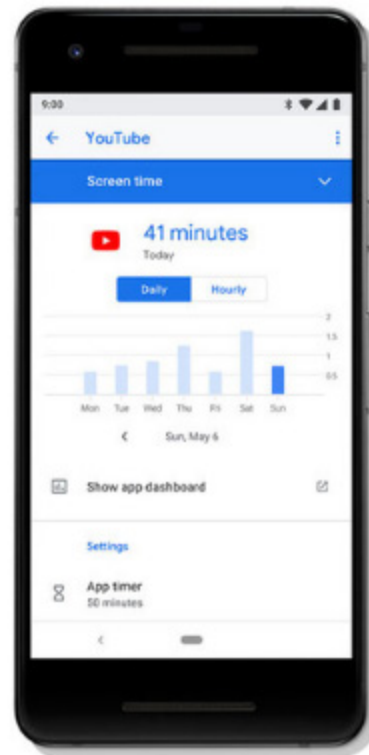
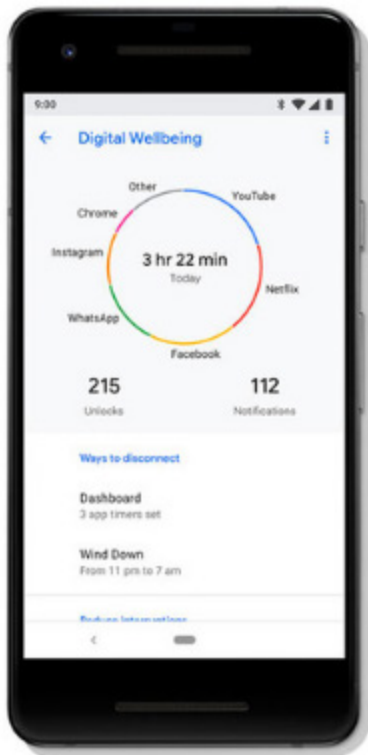


If you use an Android phone, you must set up Digital Wellbeing.

1. Open your phone's Settings.
2. Select Digital Wellbeing & Parental Controls.
3. Under "Your Digital Wellbeing tools," select Show Your Data.
Tip: You can also manage a child's account if you are the default parent on their device.
4. Add the Screen Time widget.
Use the widget to find the top 3 apps you use daily.

On Android 9 and later devices:

1. Touch and hold the Home screen.
2. Select Widgets.
3. Touch and hold the Screen Time widget. You'll get images of your Home screens.
4. Move the Screen Time widget where you want it to sit on your Home screen.



#1

Activity: MEDIA CONSUMPTION JOURNAL



Directions: Use the space provided below to list the types of media you use.

Next to each type of media, list the average hours per day, per week, and per month.

You can estimate the time or use the data collected using the Screen Time Report (iPhone) or Digital Wellbeing app (Android). You do not need to include media used for work or school.

Media	Avg. Hours Per Day	Avg. Hours Per Week	Avg. Hours Per Month
<i>Example: TV</i>	2.5	15	60

Totals:

--	--	--	--



ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY: MEDIA SCAVENGER HUNT

Directions: List all the media you can find in your home. Then estimate how many hours a day you think you spend with that item. After listing all the media, you can see and select items that you can commit to turning off or limiting during the Challenge timeframe and beyond.



DAY TWO

A central image showing a person's hands holding an open book. The image is framed with rounded corners and overlaid with decorative elements: a sunburst of light blue dashes in the top right, and two light blue stars in the middle left. The text 'THE IMPORTANCE OF READING' is superimposed in large, bold, white capital letters across the center of the image. Below the text, there are two horizontal light blue brushstroke lines.

**THE
IMPORTANCE
OF READING**

Reading with Children



Reading with children from a young age helps support cognitive development, improves language skills, concentration, and discipline, and strengthens the bond between parents and children.

At just a few months, infants can see pictures, listen to your voice, and point to objects on cardboard book pages. Kids Health says, “Kids whose parents talk and read to them often know more words by age two than children who have not been read to. And kids who are read to during their early years are more likely to learn to read at the right time” (*Reading Books To Babies, kidshealth.org, 2023*).

Continuing to read with your children through all stages of development provides them with an understanding of the world around them and makes sense of what they see, hear, and read. Reading to your child cultivates a lifelong love of reading. “Reading aloud presents books as sources of pleasant, valuable, and exciting experiences. Children who value books are motivated to read on their own, and will likely continue to practice independent reading throughout the rest of their lives.” (*The Importance of Reading to your Children, Children’s Bureau, 2023*).

Reading as Adults



Reading is equally as important for adults. A 14-year long study of individuals aged 64 and older, reported by Psychology today, found that those who read at least once a week were less likely to experience cognitive decline than those who did not. “At the 14-year mark of the study, and regardless of educational level, those who read more enjoyed greater protection [against cognitive decline].” (*Does Reading Improve Health? Psychology Today, 2023*)

Additionally, “Reading fiction has improved one’s social cognition and ability to empathize with others. One study found that frequent fiction readers were associated with better social ability and that the tendency to get absorbed in a story correlated with higher empathy scores” (*The Mental Health Benefits of Reading, Research shows that literature can help—from the clinic to the community, 2022*).

Best Books for All Ages



The Washington Post compiled this list of the 100 best books for readers aged 1 to 100.

- ✓ **Age 1:** *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- ✓ **Age 5:** *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein
- ✓ **Age 10:** *Smile* by Raina Telgemeier
- ✓ **Age 16:** *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
- ✓ **Age 18:** *A Gate at the Stairs* by Lorrie Moore
- ✓ **Age 21:** *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway
- ✓ **Age 27:** *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey
- ✓ **Age 32:** *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- ✓ **Age 40:** *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by Jean-Dominique Bauby
- ✓ **Age 45:** *Where'd you go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple
- ✓ **Age 53:** *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman
- ✓ **Age 60:** *The Five Years Before You Retire* by Emily Guy Birken
- ✓ **Age 65:** *65 Things to Do When You Retire* edited by Mark Evan Chimsky
- ✓ **Age 70:** *Master Class: Living Longer, Stronger, and Happier* by Peter Spiers




SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

Most libraries offer summer reading challenges for children of all ages. Kids can earn prizes or rewards for reaching specific goals of books they read. Contact your local library to see if they have a summer reading challenge.

#2

Activity: TAKE THE READING CHALLENGE

We encourage you to get with your family, friends, classmates, or co-workers and start a friendly reading challenge.

 **Directions:** Use the log below to record all of your reading activity for the next 8 days. Include books, magazines, newspapers, etc. You can even include the time you spend reading this workbook!

Simply track the time below and after the Challenge is over compare your time to see who wins.

Item Read	Time

Total:

DAY THREE



BENEFITS
OF A READING
COMMUNITY

The National Endowment for the Arts says that “reading for pleasure reduces stress, heightens empathy, improves students’ test scores, slows the onset of dementia, and makes us more active and aware citizens.” Community reading programs meet our need to read, talk, and grow together.

“When we read, we learn new things; when we read together, we learn about the book and the people we read with. When we all get on the same page, we make better collaborators and problem solvers because we understand our world better. We become a community of engaged, educated, and empathetic individuals, and we can make better families, neighborhoods, and a better world.

When we read together, we become part of something bigger than ourselves.”

Source: weareonthesamepage.org

Reading Together Can Make A Big Difference

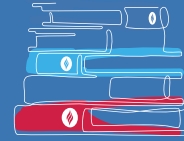


Build Relationships: When families share the experience of reading a book together, children build positive associations between their service member-parent, making it easier to welcome them home when they return from deployment or temporary duty assignments.

New Experiences: Reading exposes children to new situations before encountering them. It also helps pique their interest in the world around them.

Improved Concentration: Although most children don’t like to sit still and listen, reading helps children learn to focus and helps create discipline.

A Lifetime’s Love of Books: Reading together can spark a lifetime love of stories and books.



LIBERTY'S LITTLE LIBRARIES

At Liberty Military Housing, we believe that connecting our military families with essential resources strengthens individuals and allows the military community to flourish. One such resource is access to books.

Placing books in the hands of our military families can cultivate literacy and create a foundation for lifelong learning. For these reasons and many others, Liberty Military Housing has committed to increasing book access for residents across our communities and to date has installed over 115 Liberty’s Little Libraries.





Activity:

READ. DISCUSS. PARTICIPATE.

 **Directions:**

1. Read

Stop by a Liberty's Little Library to find a book. Every book can open your world to something new. If you do not have a Liberty's Little Library in your community, we encourage you to borrow books from a school, public library, or neighbor.

2. Discuss

Attend or host a book club and share your experience.

3. Participate

Are your books collecting dust? Take this opportunity to look through all of your books and donate to Liberty's Little Library. We ask that the books be in good condition and appropriate for all ages.

4. Repeat

Don't forget to return your books and visit your Liberty's Little Library often.



BOOK IDEAS FOR ALL AGES

ABOUT MEDIA USAGE

Unplugged by Gordon Korman

Tek: The Modern Cave Boy by Patrick McDonnell

On a Magical Do-Nothing Day by Beatrice Alemagna

Doug Unplugged by Dan Yaccarino

If You Give a Mouse an iPhone by Ann Droyd

Katie Friedman Gives Up Texting! by Tommy Greenwald

Unplugged by Donna Freitas

The Day the Screens Stood Still by R.L. Ullman (Ages 3-10)

Go Out and Play by Adam Ciccio (Ages 5-11)

The Manic Panic by Richa Jha and Mithila Ananth (Ages 5-11)

Chandu and the Super Set of Parents by Roopa Raveendran-Menon (Ages 7-12)

This is Not the Jess Show by Anna Carey (Ages 14-17)

DAY FOUR



Children of all ages must engage in physical activities regularly. As we reviewed on Day 1, the increase of screen time for youth is contributing to obesity, reduced physical activity and decreased health. Encourage children, preteen and teenagers to engage in regular physical activity to avoid short and long term health effects.

Benefits of Being Active



Putting down the phone and taking a walk or playing outdoors increases your endorphins and provides that feeling of happiness in your brain, boosting your mood and improving your physical health. Regular activity may help lower your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain cancers. Being active is a great way to deal with stress. Staying active can boost energy, mood, and overall well-being.

Children: The amount of physical activity children need depends on their age. Children ages 3 through 5 years need to be active throughout the day. Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 need to be active for 60 minutes every day.

Adults: Physical activity is anything that gets your body moving. Each week adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and 2 days of muscle strengthening activity, according to the current Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

Some Activity is Better than None

We know 150 minutes of physical activity each week sounds like a lot, however you don't have to do it all at once. It could be 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You can spread your activity out during the week and break it up into smaller chunks of time.

AT LEAST 150 MINUTES A WEEK

Source: www.cdc.gov



FUN FACTS



To burn off a plain **M&M candy**, you will need to walk the **length of a football field**.

Walk to the “Shut Up and Dance” beat, and **you’ll be going about 3.5 mph**. If you can keep up with “Shake It Off,” you’ll be **cruising at more than 5 mph**.



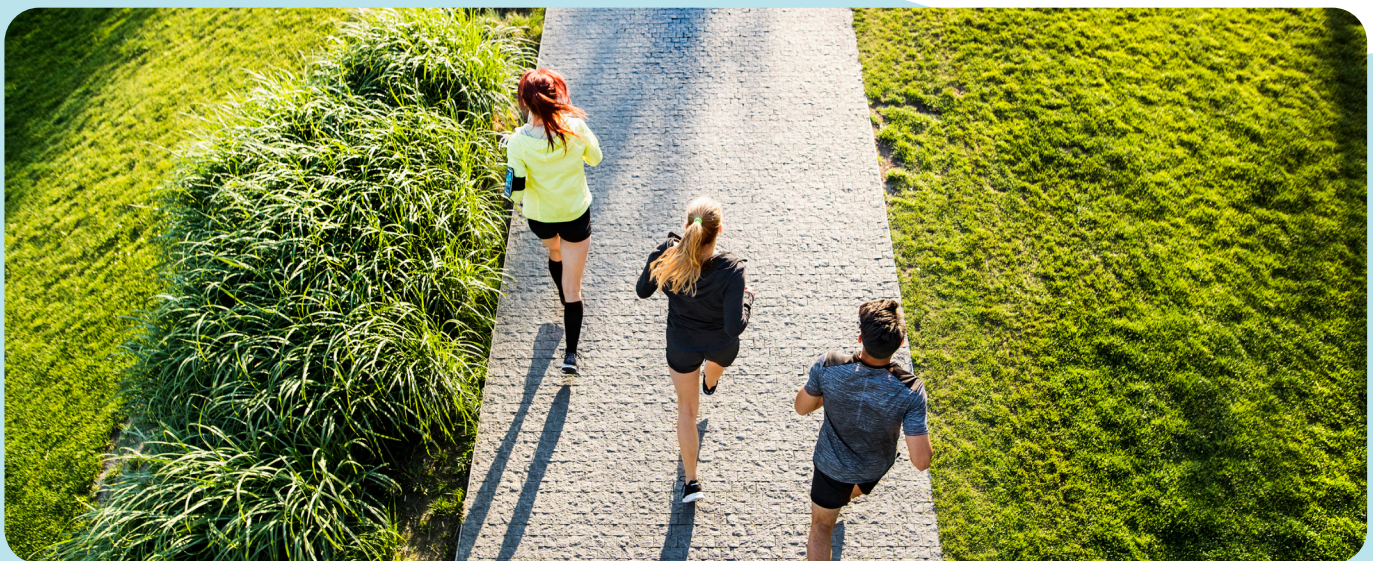
A person walks **65,000 miles in their lifetime** – equivalent to walking 3 times around the Earth.

Adults walk at an average speed of 3 to 4 miles per hour, equating to 1 mile every 15 to 20 minutes. If you walked 15 minutes daily, at the end of 7 days, you would have walked from **New Jersey to New York**. At the end of 30 days, you would have walked from **Los Angeles, California to Tucson, Arizona**, and at the end of 1 year (365 days), you would have walked from **Seattle, WA to Brazil**.



Adding **150 minutes of brisk walking** to your weekly routine can **add over 3 years** to your lifespan.

Did you know that you use **200 muscles** to take a single step forward.



#4

Activity: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANNING

 **Directions:** List your favorite physical activities.

Ways you can increase your physical activity.

- Create a routine and take a walk after dinner every evening.
- Take the stairs vs elevator.
- Stand while talking on the phone.
- Play with your children and/or pets at a park or in your yard.
- Park far from your destination.
- Do squats and lunges while brushing your teeth, watching TV, waiting for food to cook, etc.
- Turn music on and dance around your house.

Next, make a plan.

Start slowly and add a little at a time.

The idea of being active at least 150 minutes per week may seem like too much at first. Start by moving for 10 minutes a day. Every few weeks, add 5 to 10 minutes until you are active at least 30 minutes most days.

Tip: Make a list of the people—your partner, brother, sister, parent, kids, or friends—who can support your efforts to be physically active. Give them ideas about how they can help, such as praising your efforts, watching your kids, or working out with you.



Take Action

Now get outside and move!

DAY FIVE



IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

Getting a good night's sleep is just as crucial for your health as eating healthy and exercising.

Poor sleep is linked to:

- A greater risk of chronic health issues, including heart disease
- Exercise and functional limitations
- Low concentration and productivity
- Mental health issues
- Weakened immune system
- Weight gain and inflammation



Children who don't sleep well are twice as likely to have aggressive behaviors or emotional issues. According to Science Daily, aggression and bullying are linked to sleep problems in children. They are also more likely to get lower grades, as they can be sleepy and lack focus in their classes (*"Kids who bully, have aggressive behaviors are twice as likely to have sleep problems."* Science Daily, 14 Feb 2023).

How Media Use Impacts Sleep

- Checking social media and emails and scrolling through websites can keep you awake at night due to the stimulating effects of the light from your digital screen. It is recommended to turn off devices for at least one hour before going to bed.
- The blue light emitted from screens will make your body feel energized instead of relaxed, making it more difficult to fall asleep.
- People who use media before bedtime are twice as likely not to get quality sleep.

Suggested Hours of Sleep Based on Age

Make getting the right amount of sleep a priority for you and your family to set yourselves up for a productive and successful day.

- **Preschool & school aged children:** 11-13 hours a night
- **Teenagers:** 8 - 10 hours a night
- **Adults over the age of 18:** 7 – 9 hours a night



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Tips For Getting A Good Night's Sleep



Create a habit of turning off devices at a set time every night.



Practice yoga/ meditation.



Charge your devices in another room.



Journal.



Refrain from using blue-light devices near bedtime.



Drink a warm and soothing beverage such as milk or chamomile tea in the evening.



Take a soothing bath.





Activity:

TRACK SLEEP PATTERNS



Directions: It's day five of the screen-free Challenge. How are you feeling today? Have you noticed any differences since you have limited your screen time?

Use the first line of the log below and answer the questions based on last night/today.

Next, use the sleep log below to track your patterns for the next seven days. Five of the days will be screen-free because of this challenge. However, two days will be after the challenge ends. We encourage you to identify any differences that you notice once you incorporate screens back into your routine, if you choose to.

Day	What time did you go to bed?	What time did you wake up?	How many hours did you sleep?	Did you wake up in the middle of the night?	If so, how many times?	If so, how long were you awake?

DAY SIX



BEING SOCIAL OUTSIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

While social media can be a great communication tool, we often invest our free time in less beneficial media than in-person, human connection.

How Do You Socialize Without Social Media?

Consider a recent conversation with a friend, family member, or colleague. Odds are someone will mention something “viral” they saw on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter and ask, “Did you see it?”

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS FOUND A WAY TO CREEP INTO EVERY FACET OF OUR LIFE.

EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SOCIAL OUTSIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA WILL ASSIST

YOU IN LIVING A HAPPIER, MORE FOCUSED, SCREEN-FREE, OR SCREEN-REDUCED LIFE.

When quitting or reducing your social media and media usage, looking for other ways to spend your time is important. Pick a new hobby, volunteer, attend a meet-up, join a group, or learn a new skill. Below are some organizations or groups you can contact to be social outside social media.

Free events for Liberty Military Housing residents - The best way to turn your screens off and turn life on is by engaging in fun family activities and participating in local community events and programs. Did you know that Liberty Military Housing has a team dedicated to creating events and programs exclusive for residents?

In addition, Liberty is dedicated to improving the quality of life for military families by partnering with organizations to ensure military families have access to the resources they need to thrive.

More than just entertainment, events, and activities, the Community Services program creates opportunities for residents to become neighbors, form new friendships, improves the quality of life for many military families, and therefore enhances military readiness and retention.





Armed Services YMCA - The Armed Services YMCA provides free or low-cost programs and services for military children, spouses, and the family unit. Find a branch near you in California, North Carolina, Virginia, and Missouri, and contact them to learn more about events and resources available to you and your family. (asymca.org)



Volunteermatch.org - Visit Volunteermatch.org and enter your location to see a list of volunteer opportunities near you. Choose one that interests you and reach out to them to get involved.



Your public library - Visit your local public library to learn about community events and programs. Many public libraries hold meetings for clubs and organizations such as anime clubs, chess clubs, and book clubs. Libraries also have events for all ages ranging from babies (3-12 months) to adults only (18+) for various interests and ability levels.



Meetup.com - Meetup.com is a website used to connect people with similar interests. Enter your location or specific interest to find groups in your area to join. Some examples of groups you can join include outdoor enthusiasts, Soccer clubs, Women in Tech, country line dancing, movie buffs, and more. Don't find a group with your interest? Start a group and organize an event to find others who share your interest. Not sure what you're interested in? Browse events by your location to see all the groups near you.



Local School - Teachers may need help with photocopies and bulletin boards, librarians may need help re-shelving books, and administrators may need help putting together packets of papers to go home. Your child's school may also have a Parent Teacher Organization/Association (PTO/PTA) in need of volunteers for events or administrative tasks. Contact your child's school for more information.

#6

Activity: FIND NEW RESOURCES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

 **Directions:** Note some upcoming events that you can schedule to attend in the future.


For this activity, we encourage you to go and visit a new place in your community. Being screen-free will allow you an opportunity to be fully engaged in this new experience.

Date	Activity



FAMILY ALTERNATIVE

As a family, use this chart to plan activities to spend your screen-free time together. Each family member picks one activity they want the family to do together, or you can choose multiple activities.



DAY SEVEN



Most American families eat a meal together LESS than five days a week.

For many of us, weekdays fly by in a blur of getting children ready for activities, rushing to work, and running various errands or chores around the house. Unsurprisingly, most American families only eat a meal together less than five days a week. Coupled with our need to constantly stay virtually connected, 1 in 3 of us are also scrolling through our phones at the dinner table.

We can keep bonds strong with our friends and relatives by eating together device-free. Children younger than 13 who regularly eat meals with their families exhibit fewer behavioral problems. Family mealtime conversations have been proven to improve literacy among children. Dinner is also the perfect opportunity to build self-esteem in children. By listening to what children say, you show them they are valued, respected, and essential.

Sharing a device-free dinner with loved ones isn't just an opportunity to catch up on each other's day but has significant health benefits, too.



Going device-free during dinner makes you happier.

A study by the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology found that when phones were present during a meal, participants felt more distracted and enjoyed their time spent with friends and family less than those who put their phones away.



Family dinners have profound health benefits for children.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that children who eat dinner with their parents five or more days a week are less likely to use drugs, make healthier food choices, and perform better in school.



Sharing a meal helps strengthen family bonds.

Children who frequently eat dinner with their family report feeling closer to their parents. Using dinner time to create positive memories with your children will help them feel more comfortable at home and alleviate some family stressors.

Sharing a device-free dinner as a family significantly benefits one's psychological and physical health. But you may not know how to start; breaking habits is hard!

Three tips to keep conversations running smoothly during mealtime



Stay away from open-ended questions.

According to psychologist Eileen Kennedy-Moore, asking questions such as “How was your day?” or “How was school?” can result in answers such as “Fine” or “Ok.” Asking more specific questions, such as “What games did you play at recess or camp?” or “What was your favorite part of the day?” that require more elaborative answers will help the conversation flow during family mealtime.

Get the whole family involved with meal planning and prep.

While spending time together is an integral part of dinner time, so is the meal's preparation.

Simplify your expectations.

You don't have to set a white tablecloth or prepare a multi-course meal to have a successful family dinner. Sharing a quick meal for just 20 minutes with your family is more important than stressing out about crafting the perfect meal.



More benefits of a media-free meal:

- Better preschool vocabulary
- Stronger cardiovascular health
- Better overall nutrition
- Greater sense of resilience





Activity:
DINING SCREEN-FREE

Having the entire family help plan and cook dinner will make everyone more excited about eating together as a family. Cooking together is also a great way to initiate conversations and learn new skills. If you're dining with family or friends, use that time to divide tasks, so one person is not responsible for the food prep, serving, and clean up. Everyone should share the joys of feeding, nurturing, and cleaning up.

 **Directions: Assign the following tasks:**

Step:	Assigned To:
Meal Plan	
Food Shopping	
Food Prep	
Serving	
Clean Up	

After the challenge, you and your loved ones can plan to make the same meal together over video chat. This is another excellent opportunity to share an experience despite physical distance.

While the food is a nice perk, bonding time is the primary goal.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

● What is a trait of someone in your family that you admire and hope to have inherited?

● Whom would you choose if you could invite any historical figure, living or dead, to dinner?

● When people talk about you 100 years from now, what do you hope they will say about you?

● What is something I/we may not know about you?

● What project are you working on now that you want to share something about?

● What was the happiest day of your life so far?

● What is the kindest thing someone has said or done for you this week?

● Describe your perfect day.

DAY EIGHT



COMMUNICATION



What happens when we become too dependent on mobile devices? We lose our ability to have deeper, more spontaneous conversations with others, changing the nature of our social interactions in alarming ways.

“EIGHTY-NINE PERCENT OF AMERICANS SAY SOMEONE TOOK OUT A PHONE DURING THEIR LAST SOCIAL INTERACTION. EIGHTY-TWO PERCENT SAID THAT ACTION DETERIORATED THE CONVERSATION.”

Putting a cell phone on the table during lunch decreases the emotional importance of what people are willing to talk about and reduces the connection between the two people. When you realize how frequently we have our cell phones nearby and the negative effect it has on our conversations, it's not surprising that people report feeling more disconnected than ever.

One of the biggest struggles families face today is the ability to communicate effectively with each other. Social Media has allowed us to connect and share with more people than ever. Still, ironically, the quality of those connections and interactions has lessened, and our interpersonal communication skills have declined.

A recent study by LivePerson concluded that 74% of Millennial-aged adults preferred conversing digitally rather than in person. As technology advances and reduces the need for in-person meetings, the more our interpersonal communication skills decline.

Numerous psychologists consider communication the top factor in building a healthy family structure. Communication involves respect, love, caring, and empathy and helps you understand your loved ones. Effective communication means using verbal and physical language to reach positive outcomes.

Tips To Help You To Improve Family Communications

WITH CHILDREN:

- **Be available.** Make time to talk without distractions. Sit down and look at them when they talk. Give them your undivided attention. Even 10 minutes a day can be of great value.
- **Be a good listener.** When you listen to your child, you help them to feel loved and valued. Ask them what they're feeling. If you are unclear about what they're saying, repeat what you hear to be sure you understand correctly. You do not have to agree with their words to be a good listener. Modeling your ability to stay calm and have patience with your children will help them stay calm and listen to you later.

- **Show empathy.** If your child is upset, a gentle touch or hug may let them know you understand those sad or bad feelings. Do not tell your child what they think or feel. Be sure not to minimize their feelings by saying things like, “It’s silly to feel that way” or “you’ll understand when you get older.”
- **Give Clear, age-appropriate directions to your children,** such as “when we go to the store, I expect you to be polite and to stay with me.” Make sure your child has understood the directions you have given.

WITH ADULTS:

- **Be intentional about spending time together.** Make it a point to spend 20-30 minutes together each day for uninterrupted conversation and catching up.
- **Be specific.** When issues arise, be specific. Avoid generalizations like “you do this all the time.”
- **Avoid mind-reading.** Don’t assume you know what the other person is thinking or what they will say. It is very frustrating when someone else acts as if they know what you feel better than you.
- **Listen without being defensive.** Both spouses must be able to HEAR each other’s complaints. Let the other person speak freely about what is bothering them. Focus on a solution rather than being offended by what they said.
- **Freely express positive feelings.** Most people are more inclined to express negative emotions than positive ones. Positive feelings of appreciation, affection, respect, admiration, and approval are like making deposits into your emotional account. For every negative, there should be five positive deposits. If your compliments exceed your complaints, your spouse will pay attention to your grievances. If your complaints exceed your praises, your criticisms may fall on deaf ears.



#8

Activity:


EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication includes showing respect, love, empathy, and mindfulness.

Being mindful of how we interact with others allows us to become more empathetic, compassionate, and honest while training to recognize and resist adverse or aggressive reactions to those around us. Effective communication includes both verbal and physical language to reach positive outcomes.

Below are three communication activities to try by yourself or with family and friends.

1. Practice Mindfulness

 **Directions:** In this activity, follow the steps below to increase your mindfulness and improve your ability to remain present in your communications.


 **Participants:** One or more.

- 1. Take a seat.** Find a place to sit that feels calm and quiet to you.
- 2. Set a time limit.** If you're just beginning, it can help to choose a short time, such as 5 or 10 minutes.
- 3. Notice your body.** You can sit or kneel however is comfortable for you. Just make sure you are stable and in a position you can stay in for a while.
- 4. Feel your breath.** Follow the sensation of your breath as it goes out and as it goes in.
- 5. Notice when your mind has wandered.** When you get around to noticing this—in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes— simply return your attention to the breath.
- 6. Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in. Just come back.



Source: MindfulStaff

2. What Do You Mean?

 **Directions:** This activity aims to show how we interpret the same word or concept differently. All participants will define terms that are important to healthy relationships. Each participant will need a blank sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to complete this activity.

 **Participants:** Two or more.


Before the game begins, think about what is essential to have healthy relationships and effective communication. Each person will write 2-3 notecards with a single word on each notecard.

For example, one card will read “Love,” another card will read “Respect,” and so on.

One person will draw a card and read the word aloud to the other person or group. Everyone will write their definition for the word on their sheet of paper. Do not look at what others wrote. Once everyone has written down their definition, rotate turns to the next person to draw a card and continue this process until all the cards have been drawn and defined.

Review each of the words drawn and share your definitions. Discuss how your definitions may be similar and different. You may be surprised to learn the differences in how your family defines important words - helping you understand why there are miscommunications within your family.

3. Follow My Instructions!

 **Directions:** Good communication involves both talking and listening. This activity is relatively simple. Choose one participant to be the instructor and rotate until each person can give instructions.

 **Participants:** Two or more.

- The instructor will choose an activity the rest of the group must do with their eyes closed or blindfolded, such as folding a piece of paper.
- The instructor gives each person a piece of paper. With closed eyes, they listen for instructions on folding the paper (fold in half, diagonally, fold the right edge, etc.)
- Give at least seven different instructions.
- When done, tell everyone to open their eyes and look at their creations.
- Everyone will have different results, showing that each person perceives instructions differently.

DAY NINE



GAME NIGHT

Who doesn't love a family game night? While people are undoubtedly spending a lot of time and money on newer gaming methods, the board game industry continues to thrive amongst its competition.

One of the reasons behind this is the realized or unrealized positive psychological benefits people get from playing board games with the important people in their lives.

8 Benefits of Playing Board Games



1. Reduces Screen Time - Our primary goal during the Take the Challenge - Take Charge!

If your regular after-dinner routine includes every family member heading in different directions of the house, consider adding family game time to your routine three times a week. It will get you into the routine of replacing some of your family's screen time with an activity that will bring the family together through fun and laughter.

2. Creates Connections with Friends and Family

Every time you have a positive interaction with someone else, it strengthens your bond with that person. Playing board games furnishes the fun and positive environment needed to cultivate deep connections with other people and promote strong family relationships.

Board games are frequent "ice-breakers" when people meet for the first time. For example, teams may play a game at quarterly employee meetings if there are new employees. Next time you meet someone new or reconnect with someone you haven't seen in a long time, bring along a board game to initiate that connection.

3. Produces Great Memories

All too often, when we are physically in the presence of other people, the focus is not on each other—it's on each person's smartphone, tablet, or television. In 20 years, will you remember that social media post you just came across? Or that level of Candy Crush that you finally beat? Probably not. But you will remember the laughter and the positive way you felt when someone made a strategic comeback or spun that lucky number.

4. Offers Valuable Teaching Tools for Children (and Adults)

- How to communicate
- Follow rules
- Stay seated
- Patience
- Being a graceful loser (or winner)
- Waiting for your turn
- Being honest
- Working as a team
- Thinking outside the box
- Being proactive and anticipating future events

5. Reduces Stress

Having fun while playing board games helps get your mind off negative things that may lead to stress. Focusing on escaping into the world of a board game rather than your job, money, or other troubles you're facing is an effective method for reducing stress and allowing yourself to have the break you need.

6. Increases Cognitive Function

The researchers found that those who played more games later in life had increased cognitive function in memory, thinking speed, problem-solving, and general cognitive ability than those who didn't engage in game playing.

7. Makes Socializing Easy

Playing board games offers people a way to interact with a group without the pressure of coming up with things to discuss. For people who are shy or have mental health issues such as social anxiety, this can be a helpful way to work through these issues without additional social pressures. Interacting with others while playing a structured game can help you develop and refine your social skills without resistance.

Studies have shown that socializing with others and experiencing more human connection is the most effective way to lead a happy and fulfilling life.

8. Increases Confidence

Board games require making multiple decisions contributing to the game's result. Practicing making decisions contributes to increased confidence and self-esteem.

64% OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTEDLY
PLAY GAMES WITH THE PRIMARY
INTENTION OF INDUCING
RELAXATION, AND 53% PLAY
SPECIFICALLY TO REDUCE STRESS.



#9

Activity #9: HOST GAME NIGHT

 **Directions:** Follow these tips for the ultimate board game night.

OPTION 1: MAKE SURE YOU HAVE MULTIPLE GAMES AVAILABLE. CHOOSE A FAMILY FAVORITE, OR USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TRY A NEW GAME.

Are you looking for a new game but not looking to purchase one?

- **Trade with friends or neighbors for the night.** Select your favorite game and ask them to do the same. Swap games for the evening. Even better- invite them over and play both games!
- **Check your local thrift store for discounted prices on games.** Be sure to check and make sure all of the pieces are there.
- **Get creative and do charades.** Ask everyone to write out different actions/words/movies on a slip of paper and place them in a bowl. Divide into teams, and you're ready to play!
- **Check your local library.** Some have board games and puzzles to check out.

OPTION 2: SET A PLAN TO PLAY A GAME DURING YOUR LUNCH BREAK AT WORK. FRIENDLY COMPETITION IS GOOD FOR EVERYONE AND MAY EVEN BECOME A NEW MONTHLY LUNCH TRADITION AROUND YOUR OFFICE.



ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY:

Work on a puzzle or crossword.



Top Games from theSpruce.com:



Best Overall:
Exploding Kittens
Card Game



Best Drawing:
USAOPOLY Telestrations



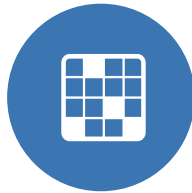
Best Board Game:
Days of Wonder
Ticket To Ride



Best Card Game:
Asmodee Spot It!
Card Game



Best Dice Game:
George & Company
LLC Left Center Right



**Best for Young
Children:**
Think Fun Zingo!



Best for Older Youth:
Gamewright
Forbidden Island



Best Physical:
Endless Games The
Floor is Lava Game



Best Outdoor:
Gutter Games Beat That!
The Bonkers Battle of
Wacky Challenges



Best Trivia:
What Do You Meme?
Family Edition

DAY TEN




KEEPING THE CHALLENGE GOING

THE TEN-DAY CHALLENGE IS THE BEGINING OF A JOURNEY toward being more present with ourselves, our families, and our communities. Reducing or eliminating screen usage over the past ten days was the first step in creating lifelong healthy habits.

We hope you had a positive experience and encourage you to incorporate these healthy media habits in your daily life.



Activity:
**PLANNING FOR FUTURE
SCREEN-FREE TIME**

 **Directions:** Reflect on the feelings produced over the past ten days. What went well, and what was difficult for you and your family?

1. Here are some starter questions to ask yourself and others:

- How do I feel when I take a break from screens?
- How do I feel when I honor and engage my values?
- How do I feel when I redirect my behavior to something more valuable than attending to the screen?

**2. Realistically, what activities are you hoping to incorporate?
What changes are you willing to make to keep the Challenge going?**

Here are a few ways you can continue to work on living a media-reduced life.



- ✓ Attend a FREE Liberty Military Housing event.
- ✓ Take another trip to your Liberty's Little Library for a new adventure.
- ✓ Sign out of your social media accounts a few days a month.
- ✓ Put your devices away during meals.
- ✓ Schedule one screen-free experience a month with family and friends.
- ✓ Write cards and letters and donate to the local assisted living community.
- ✓ Commit to one day of the week, every week, to turn off devices and focus on connection and reflection.
- ✓ After dinner, start a new routine of walking, reading, or playing outside with pets.

Congratulations, you have completed the Challenge!



Did you have a positive experience? We want to hear about it! Send your experience to info@livelmh.com. Tell us what went well and what didn't go well. Be sure to share any photos. If you are posting on social (after the Challenge of course) be sure to tag **#LMHTaketheChallenge**.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

I/We Took the Challenge
with Liberty Military Housing.

Take ^{the}
Challenge
TAKE CHARGE

Name _____

Date _____



Turn Screens **OFF.**
Turn Life **ON.**



APPENDIX



RESOURCES

Are you looking to incorporate more activity into your screen-free time? Check out these organizations for opportunities to keep you and your family active in your community.

Take the Challenge Now Foundation

The Take the Challenge Now Foundation provides lesson plans, PowerPoints, and family activities promoting healthy habits for media usage. Visit their website at www.takethechallengenow.net to learn more.

Fairplay

The Fairplay Non-Profit organization is committed to helping children thrive in a “screen-obsessed” culture. Each year they have a screen-free week to promote healthy screen usage habits. Visit www.fairplayforkids.org for more information.

Armed Services YMCA	asymca.org
Compass.....	nsfamilyline.org/compass
FOCUS.....	focusproject.org
Military One Source	militaryonesource.mil
Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR)	navymwr.org
National Military Family Association.....	militaryfamily.org
Operation Homefront.....	operationhomefront.org
DOD Library	www.dodmwrlibraries.org
VolunteerMatch	www.volunteermatch.org
Meetup	www.meetup.com

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Do you have feedback or questions about Take the Challenge - Take Charge? Send them to info@livelmh.com.



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Three decorative stars are positioned to the left of the main text: one light blue star and two white stars.

Take the
Challenge
TAKE CHARGE

Turn Screens **OFF.**
Turn Life **ON.**