RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PRESENCE OF TECHNOLOGY: *FOR FAMILIES*

Many caregivers may be wondering how to use ever-changing technology with their children. Fred Rogers reminds us that "it is through relationships that we learn best, and grow best." Families can build relationships in the presence of technology by exploring what it means for them to find balance, flexibility, and empathy. Here are some ideas to consider with your family as you navigate what technology looks like in your home.

Balance

It can be difficult to balance technology use in the home. Families are juggling the quality of digital programs and the time spent on screens with the emotional needs of their children. Small tweaks in the day's routine could help to balance the use of technology in the home. For example, alternating between activities on and off the screen can help families feel more connected, especially when doing activities together. It can take trial and error to find the right balance of technology type and time for you and your children.

Flexibility

The daily life of families can be very busy and can change from day to day. How much and what kind of technology you use can be just as varied. Families can be flexible in what technology looks like in the home; what was necessary yesterday may not be as important today. Sometimes being responsive to the child's needs, as well as our own, is what is best for the family.

"Although children's 'outsides' may have changed a lot over the years, their inner needs have remained very much the same. No matter what lies ahead, children always need to know that they are loved and capable of loving. Anything that adults can do to help in this discovery will be our greatest gift to the future."

– Fred Rogers

Empathy

Technology use can bring up many feelings for grown-ups and children. It may be difficult to navigate the recommendations and guidelines around children's use of technology. While families may want the perfect answer for the question of technology use with children, there really is no one right answer. Just as each technology is different, each child and each family are different, too. Understanding your children's needs, as well as the different technologies they use, can help you to make decisions for your family.

Building relationships in the presence of technology can happen during small moments. Here are some questions to reflect on your everyday interactions with your family in technology-rich environments.

Connection: Even while using technology, families can interact with mutually positive or appropriate emotions. When thinking about human connection in the presence of technology...

- What are some ways to spend time as a family interacting with technology together?
- How would you characterize your human connections in the presence of technology? Are they emotionally in-tune or mis-matched? Positive or negative?
- Are there questions you can ask your child about their technology use that helps you both to understand how to interact with technology and one another?

Reciprocity: Technology can afford opportunities for children and their caregivers to share and learn from each other...

- What does "serve and return" between you and your child look like in the presence of technology? Does it sometimes feel like you or your child is resistant or disengaged when using technology?
- In what ways can you engage in joint activities using technology with your children?
- What new technology skills or programs are your children using? How could you learn about these from your child?

Inclusion: In some ways, technology offers increased opportunities to invite and involve those who may not have been able or likely to engage before. Technology can also engage our hearts and minds in new ways...

- Who else could you reach out to others (family members, friends, teachers, classmates, etc.) when using messenger apps or virtual platforms?
- In what ways might you include your child in planning your family's guidelines for technology use?
- What types of projects could you and your child work on together?

Opportunity to Grow: There are many ways to use technology to help your child grow and learn. When thinking about the best way for your family to grow with technology...

- How could you support your child in learning with technology? How can you encourage your child to try things independently?
- What are realistic expectations for your child and family when using technology?
- How could you incorporate both screen time activities and physical movement activities in your daily routine to keep children's minds and bodies healthy?