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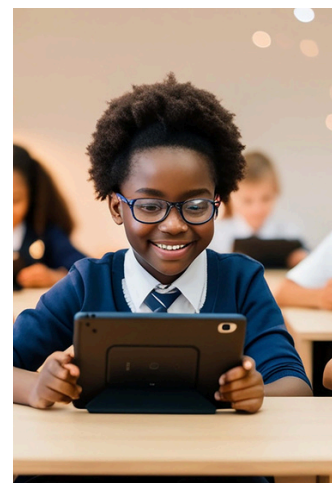
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STAYING GROUNDED IN A DIGITALLY CHARGED WORLD



Bethany Yu

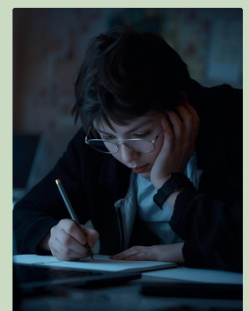
*Developmental & Educational
Therapist*

In our previous newsletter, we explored why so many children today are growing up more anxious, more guarded, and less resilient than generations before them. Many parents shared that the piece resonated deeply, but also left them wondering: what comes next? If screens and social media are part of our children's world, how do we help them grow up well within it?

The reality is that social media is no longer a minor influence. For many children and teens, it is woven into how friendships form, how identities are explored, and how the world is understood. While limiting and delaying access remains important, especially in the early years, protection alone is not enough. At some point, children must learn how to live alongside digital platforms without allowing them to shape their sense of self, attention, or worth.

What makes the difference is not screen time alone, but what anchors a child beyond the screen. Children who experience real connection, real challenge, and real contribution are better able to engage with the digital world without being overwhelmed by it. They are more likely to notice when something feels unhealthy, to step away when needed, and to stay grounded when comparison creeps in.

In this issue, we shift from fear to guidance. We explore how children can stay grounded in a digitally charged world, what skills matter most as social media becomes unavoidable, and how parents can move from constant monitoring to thoughtful coaching. We also listen directly to a teenage voice, because understanding how young people experience social media is essential if we want to support them well.



TEEN FEATURE – SOCIAL MEDIA THROUGH MY EYES



Ashton Dylan Bin Kasno

We often talk about teenagers and social media. This month, we wanted to listen.

WHAT DO YOU MAINLY USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR?

I mainly use it for entertainment, such as funny videos, music remixes, and gameplays, and occasionally to message friends. I also use it for educational purposes, like getting ideas for school projects. I do not use ChatGPT much, and only as a study aid, because copying answers does not actually help you learn. I think it depends on a person's values and their ability to tell right from wrong.

HOW DOES SOCIAL MEDIA FIT INTO A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY FOR YOU?

Phones are banned in school. I scroll on TikTok on the bus to school, keep my phone in my locker until 4 p.m., and use it briefly on the bus home.

At home, I earn screen time after studying or behaving responsibly. This system is based on trust and integrity, which I think is important.

HAVE THERE BEEN TIMES WHEN YOU USED SOCIAL MEDIA MORE THAN YOU PLANNED TO?

Yes. I used to doom scroll and shut out everything else. Over time, it reduced my attention span to the point where I struggled to focus in class and even failed a weighted assessment. That experience led my parents to restrict my social

media use, which helped me regain control. I do not doom scroll anymore.

WHY DO YOU THINK SOCIAL MEDIA IS SO ADDICTIVE?

Social media is addictive because of bright colours, trends, memes, and the pressure to keep up with what everyone else is doing. If you do not follow trends, you can even get bullied. Many teens care deeply about appearances, which can create unrealistic expectations and lead to depression. That is why I believe it is important to stay humble and not believe everything you see online.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHEN TO PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY?

Academics always come first. My parents give me freedom, but with that freedom comes responsibility. I plan my own schedule, book my own tuition, and take accountability because I do not want to let my family down. Being forced does not build real motivation.

“Academics always come first. Freedom only works when you are willing to take responsibility.”

WHAT DO YOU WISH ADULTS UNDERSTOOD ABOUT TEENAGERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA?

“Social media is not always useless. It depends on the child's values.” It can be used for learning, creativity, and problem solving, and sometimes it is an important part of a teenager's world.

“Social media is not always useless. It depends on the child's values”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNGER STUDENTS?

Never let social media define who you are. A phone is a privilege, not a right. If you are not grateful, you can lose touch with reality. When I was younger, I was more connected with nature because my grandparents brought me out on walks, and that balance still matters.

GROWING A STRONG SENSE OF SELF IN A DIGITAL WORLD



Prudence Low

*Speech Language Pathologist
& Clinical Director*

Adolescence is more than a stage of social change. It is a powerful period of construction. During these years, teenagers are shaping who they are, what they value, where they belong, and how they see themselves in the world.

This process unfolds through real experiences: friendships, mistakes, conversations, challenges, reading, play, and reflection. It is deeply personal and often emotionally delicate. It is also during this sensitive window that social media enters.

Social media is not inherently harmful. It is simply powerful. It brings a constant stream of images, opinions, comparisons, and expectations into a mind that is still learning how to regulate emotions, hold perspective, and decide what truly matters.



One of the strongest pressures social media introduces is comparison. Teenagers are exposed to carefully curated snapshots of other people's lives: success, beauty, popularity, happiness, without the context of struggle, uncertainty, or growth behind them. Over time, this can quietly shape how a young person measures their own worth.

In a world that is very loud about what is desirable, families become the place where children learn what is valuable. Parents help shape the internal compass their child will carry into adulthood.

Our goal is not to raise teenagers who never touch social media. Our goal is to raise teenagers who are not governed by it.

We are not raising influencers. We are raising humans.

USING AI WITHOUT LOSING THE SELF

As artificial intelligence becomes more visible in education, many parents are asking important questions.

Is it allowed? Is it helpful? Is it safe for my child?

In Singapore, there is no blanket ban on tools such as ChatGPT. AI is recognised as part of the modern learning landscape, with an emphasis on ethical and responsible use, without replacing core thinking skills.

For secondary school students, AI can support learning when used thoughtfully. However, teenagers are still developing problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, self-direction, and confidence through effort. When AI replaces thinking instead of supporting it, growth is replaced by performance.

The guiding principle is simple: AI should support the mind, not replace it.

Teenagers benefit most when they attempt, think, struggle, and explore ideas before turning to AI to refine or expand their work. Their voice, opinions, creativity, and moral reasoning must always remain their own.

Real confidence grows from effort, persistence, and learning, not from polished output alone.

AI is a powerful tool. But the teenager must remain the thinker, the builder, and the owner of their own growth.

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS



Jerlyn Tong

*Developmental & Educational
Therapist*

For many parents, supporting children in a digitally saturated world can feel overwhelming. There is constant pressure to monitor, restrict, and protect, often driven by fear of what might go wrong. While caution is understandable, long-term resilience does not grow from control alone. It grows from guidance, trust, and skill-building.

Where possible, delaying access to social media remains a protective step, especially for younger children. However, delay should not mean avoidance. Preparation matters just as much. Conversations about social media can begin long before a child has an account through discussions about advertising, online comparison, popularity, and how attention is captured and monetised.

When children understand how digital platforms work, they are less likely to internalise what they see.

As children grow, boundaries are most effective when they are co-created rather than imposed. Involving children and teens in discussions about screen use, time limits, and online behaviour helps them practise decision-making and self-regulation. This does not mean giving up adult authority, but shifting from rules without explanation to collaborative problem-solving. Teenagers do not need constant surveillance. They need guidance, trust, and skills.

Keeping real-world responsibilities non-negotiable is another important anchor. Chores, schoolwork, commitments, and follow-through build competence and a sense of contribution that no online validation can replace.

Protecting sleep, shared meals, and face-to-face time also provides essential grounding. These daily rhythms remind children that their worth is not measured by notifications or followers, but by presence, effort, and connection.

Ultimately, the goal is not to eliminate screens, but to help children develop an internal compass that allows them to engage thoughtfully, step away when needed, and stay rooted in who they are beyond the digital space.



CLOSING REFLECTION

At Total Communication, we support children and teens by strengthening the skills that screens cannot provide.

Language and literacy are not just academic tools, they are foundations for deeper thinking. When children can articulate their thoughts, question ideas, and express emotions clearly, they are better equipped to reflect on what they encounter online rather than absorbing it passively.

Our social groups provide safe, guided spaces for practising real connection. Here, children and teens learn to read social cues, manage disagreements, take perspective, and build relationships that are grounded in shared

experiences rather than curated images.

These interactions offer something social media cannot replicate: genuine feedback, repair, and growth.

Therapy supports regulation, resilience, and perspective-taking skills that are increasingly essential in a fast-paced digital world. Through structured support, children learn to tolerate discomfort, manage comparison, and navigate strong emotions with greater flexibility and self-awareness.

We do not compete with screens. We build what screens cannot provide.

As partners with parents, our role is to walk alongside families as children grow, change, and face new challenges. We cannot give our children a screen-free world. But we can give them a strong inner world, one built on connection, competence, and confidence that carries them through both online and offline spaces.

Together, through thoughtful guidance and consistent support, we can help children stay grounded, resilient, and secure in a digitally charged world.

CELEBRATING EVERYDAY GROWTH

At Total Communication, we pay close attention to the small moments that signal real developmental change. These milestones may look subtle, but they reflect growing identity, perspective-taking, and social understanding that support children both online and offline.

Finding “I” and “You”

At six years old, “Sarah” (name changed) recently began using pronouns like I, you, mine, and yours spontaneously and meaningfully. For children on the autism spectrum, this marks an important step in developing a sense of self and understanding others.

Alongside this, she has begun to show playful awareness of perspective, noticing when others are not looking and acting accordingly. Together, these moments signal a growing understanding of self, others, and shared reality.



When Play Becomes Truly Social

We also observed a meaningful shift in the play of another six-year-old, “Nathan” (name changed). During pretend play, he began assigning different abilities and limitations to characters and adjusting the storyline accordingly. His play became more flexible, imaginative, and collaborative, with ideas being co-created rather than directed alone. These changes reflect growing perspective-taking, cognitive flexibility, and social awareness.

These quiet milestones matter. They are the building blocks of language, emotional regulation, friendships, and learning. Small steps like these signal a child’s inner world becoming more connected, flexible, and resilient, and they are always worth celebrating.





TALKING ABOUT SCREENS: A FOCUS GROUP FOR TEENS

Age: 12–17 years

Who is this for?

For teens with excessive screen time, social media dependence, online comparison, anxiety, or difficulty switching off from their devices.

What's the goal?

A therapist-led group with a safe space to talk about screens and social media. Participants learn to manage urges, reduce comparison, and build a sense of self beyond the screen.

Interested?

Contact us to find out more about our focus groups and group sessions.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS PROGRAMME

Age: 7–16 years

Who is this for?

Children and teens who struggle with focus, emotional regulation, organisation, impulse control, or screen-related distractions.

What's the goal?

To build attention, self-control, planning, and problem-solving skills so children can manage everyday demands with more confidence.

Interested?

Contact us to learn how the Executive Functions Programme can support your child.



LANGUAGE STIMULATION PROGRAMME

Our Language Stimulation Programme (ages 4–7) boosts language, social, and thinking skills through play and storytelling building confidence and real-world communication without screens.

“ WE CANNOT REMOVE OUR CHILDREN FROM THE DIGITAL WORLD, BUT WE CAN EQUIP THEM WITH THE INNER SKILLS THEY NEED TO MOVE THROUGH IT WITH CONFIDENCE, PERSPECTIVE, AND CARE. ”



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