Ep #166: How to Foster Healthy Use of Technology with Forest Bronzan

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
Lisa Smith

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Welcome to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*, a podcast for parents that are tired of yelling, threatening, and punishing their kids. Join mom and master certified parent coach Lisa Smith as she gives you actionable step-by-step strategies that'll help you transform your household from chaos to cooperation. Let's dive in.

Lisa: Welcome, welcome, welcome. Welcome to today's episode. I know I say this every week, and every week it's true. I am super excited to be with you all this week, and I have a special guest. I know I've been having a lot of guests lately, haven't I? Yes.

Well, today I've got a real treat for parents of kids who are into tech. iPads, phones, computers, YouTube, Roblox, Instagram, gaming. I mean, are there any kids that are not into tech? Let's be honest. So basically, I'm talking to you today. Yes, you.

Today I'm joined by a special guest, a new friend of mine, Forest Bronzan who is the CEO of Camplight.com. Y'all let me just tell you something before I welcome Forest. Y'all, this is cool. We've been waiting on something like Camplight for a while, I have gone down the rabbit hole of Camplight. I have to say I'm a big fan.

So Camplight. I'm probably going to butcher this, and we'll give Forest a chance to correct and do the real intro here in a second. But Camplight is a membership for parents that realize the tech isn't going anywhere. Our kids are going to grow up with it. They're going to use it. It's a way to connect, get ideas, and really navigate the tech while your kids are also navigating the tech. So join me in welcoming Forest. Forest, thank you for being here. It's super exciting to have you on the episode today.

Forest: Lisa, thanks for having me. I'm looking forward to the conversation.

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Lisa: So let's start out. Tell us a little bit about you and how Camplight came to be and then what it really is. Let's just start there.

Forest: Yeah, so I'm a parent of two kiddos. My son's in fourth grade. My daughter's in first. So I'm in the thick of it. Camplight, it's a really interesting story of how it came about. I'm on the board of Digital Detox, one of the cofounders there, and Digital Detox started as this very kind of immersive experiential company. Summer camps for adults and digital detox retreats. We've since morphed into a lot of data and analytics. We do work with schools around the world. We do scoring for adults and students to really understand how technology is impacting their lives.

All of this research, I travel the world to just better understand how technology impacts all of us, really led us to the ultimate discovery that of everyone impacted, and technology impacts everyone on the planet. Parents and children are the most impacted. I think it's the parenting challenge of our generation. At all ages, you're going to be navigating uncharted territory.

So that's what led to Camplight. We wanted to create something that consolidated some of the best thought leaders out there, digital wellness experts, mental health professionals, to really help parents navigate this crazy time. Everything from phones, social media, porn, bullying to things like distraction and loneliness. So Camplight kind of creates that opportunity for parents to align and kind of learn the good, the bad, and the ugly.

As you mentioned, I think it's really important to note we're not anti-tech. We're not the alarmists out there saying that everything is bad. There's only negative that can happen. Not at all. In fact, we think that there's some beautiful positive uses of tech. That said, we need to be very mindful of those negative impacts, and take just a really pragmatic approach. It's not

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going anywhere. So let's come together and form a movement of parents that want to deal with this head on and approach in a really practical way.

Lisa: Yeah, I really feel that. When I was learning about Camplight, I really feel that you're not anti-tech, and it looks like you walk your talk. I know when smartphones first came out, I realized that they were not going to go away. My son was always going to have, the baseline was going to be a smartphone and then some.

So I really set out never to be against it. It's lining up against a girlfriend or boyfriend or a friend that you don't like of your kid. It only makes them want it more. It becomes the forbidden fruit. So I don't think it really brings any value to hate tech. I want to get your take on this. Anything to excess is not good for kids, right?

I have a son who plays basketball in college, and he played a lot of basketball growing up but sometimes we just need to take a break from it. Because it doesn't matter whether you're playing the violin 12 hours a day, reading, scrolling, TikTok, or shooting baskets. At some point we have to take breaks and rest our brain.

Forest: Yeah, I agree with you. That said, I'd probably rather my son play eight hours of basketball than eight hours of TikTok. But yeah, fundamentally agree.

Lisa: Fair enough.

Forest: Yeah, I agree. I think that the challenge is parents and schools are very kind of reactionary. They're focused on, they're very late to the game. Okay, wow TikTok and Snapchat are causing these issues. Let's focus on them. Discord is causing this issue. Let's focus on that. When we should be taking a much more holistic approach.

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It's not about one single app. TikTok is not going to be around in five or six years, probably. Maybe it will, but it'll go away at Facebook, and it won't be around for teen. So we need to take a much more thoughtful approach. Or how are we come together as a community? How are we navigating this as parents? Kind of thinking through our values as a family and individually for the next thing that comes. So it's less about one specific app, and more about how we're going to approach it from a very holistic point of view.

Lisa: Yeah, that's totally true. This just made me think when my son was in sixth grade, he loved playing Fortnight. I remember one day I sat down, and I played with him, and I wrote a blog post, which I should resurrect. It was the five things I learned about playing Fortnight, and it gave me a new perspective.

I don't remember all five things, but I remember a couple of them were he had to learn how to navigate conflict. He had to learn how to be a leader. He had to learn how to be on a team. It's one of those games where everybody loses together. He had to learn how to be a graceful loser.

I actually remember I came away from it wow, there are some good things there. There's some things we need to be mindful of too, like thinking that your new best friend is Joey when it's really a 50 year old man living somewhere else. But outside of that, I also realized there were some great things there that come from that platform. So I think what you're saying is it's not any one platform. It's a holistic approach to technology as a family.

Forest: Absolutely. I mean, there's always going to be that risk of a bad actor in any of these platforms. For me, I'd rather teach my kids how to spot that and how to navigate that. Now, I'm not intentionally throwing them into the warzone, right? But there's naturally going to be things that come up and they need access, or they want access, or even things evolve. Kids evolve, and technology evolves.

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So I want them, my kids and then the kids that we work with, the parents we work with at Camplight, to just take a much more kind of wholesome approach to how do we balance our time? How do we kind of prioritize our responsibilities as individuals? How do we look out for some of these dangers?

Now, don't get me wrong, like I'm not promoting social media for kids at all. I don't think there's any data point showing a benefit of social media for children less than ninth or 10th grade. But I think we're approaching it, and we're asking the wrong question. So many parents focus on a finite age, seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade. Then all of a sudden, they're ready. It doesn't work that way.

It's also not a black or white situation. There's some cases that social media is a net positive for a child. Right? We could go through some of those examples.

Lisa: Yeah. Can you give us an example?

Forest: Yeah. So we work with a lot of parents that are in impoverished and kind of crime filled areas. We've had just dozens and dozens of stories, and this is very isolated, but dozens of stories of it's an option of is my son or daughter on social media, or are they out dealing drugs and joining gangs? Right. Wow, if those were my two options, I'll pick social media all day long.

So there's others like that aren't going to apply to the masses, but it's not fair to blanket statement that it's bad for everything. ChatGPT is another great example. A lot of schools, and this is a huge issue the last couple years in particular. A lot of schools are freaking out. What do we do? Kids are coming in with papers written by ChatGPT? Parents are trying to figure out how do we do a ban on this. I don't think that's the right approach.

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I think we need to figure out well, how can we use ChatGPT in a healthy way, a way that possibly makes things a little bit more efficient? Not to write papers, but can it cut down on some of the process? Can we learn from it? Can it give us some inspiration? I think the answer is yes. A lot of professionals use it. A lot of academics use it as well in a really healthy way. So instead of, again, taking that reactionary approach of ChatGPT is ending the world of creativity. No, I don't think that's quite so true. Let's take a step back and figure out how we can navigate it.

Also, I think another important point is most parents have no idea how these systems work. So ask an average parent, they can't describe Discord, or they don't understand ChatGPT. They don't understand Snapchat and why it's appealing to kids. So I really think it's important for parents to educate themselves on the what and the why before they come in and crack down just so they have a little bit more context.

Lisa: I couldn't agree more. I also think that, as a parent, we have a responsibility to set the limits, to decide what's allowed, how long, how much, and set the limits and communicate them before handing the technology over. I see so many parents, particularly around the holidays, hand over something, a phone, an iPad, and then want to backtrack from there to set limits.

So for me personally, I never recommend a parent give a piece of technology as a gift. Because when I give you a gift, let's say I mail you a Peaceful Parent sweatshirt. I don't have conditions on how you're going to wear it, or if you wear it at all. I might mail you one, and you might give it to Goodwill. I might mail you one, and you cut the sleeves off, you might give it to your daughter, you might wear it every Sunday. It's a gift. You get to do what you want with it.

Now if I give you a tool as a part of my team, and I say hey, this is how we're going to use the tool, that's completely different. So I think that a lot

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of parents gift a phone, let's say. Let's use this as an example, right? We give the new iPhone 15 to my kid with no rules, no conversation, no discussion. We gift the phone. So first of all, I'm a kid. I think it's a gift.

Then all of a sudden, the parent realizes whoa, wait a minute. Back the truck up. I need some limits and rules around here. Now we're backpedaling, trying to enforce some limits after the fact, after I've handed the gift over.

Forest: Yeah, so there's three things you said that I want to double click on. So in terms of gifting, yeah, Dr. Mothner and I just had a session on this December around the holidays. Yeah, a gift should be something that doesn't come with restrictions and that you're going to take back for a lot of just intrinsic reasons. But a phone isn't a gift. It's a responsibility. So we're pretty strongly against giving technology that can be used in a certain way that you're going to have to put a lot of restrictions on as a gift.

That said, no shame at all. If that's what's happened in your family or that's what you want to do for whatever reason, then great. Let's go to step two of how do we kind of reframe that as a responsibility and have that as an open discussion of this is going to come with ongoing conversation. It's not this open ended indefinite gift. So I think if you're going to gift it, whether it's a birthday or Christmas or whatever, then it has to come with that dialog of what to expect. That was my first comment.

Second comment and kind of similar to this, and this is where I have frustration with things like Wait Until 8th. Again, like wonderful organization. They're doing some great things. Or parents that put this finite age of ninth grade, my kid's going to get social media then they just give it with no training manual and no education.

I would rather have a seventh grader on social media that has had a very thoughtful approach to how to navigate the world and how to navigate

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balance with technology than a 12th grader, a 10th grader that's getting it completely free rein. There's nothing developmentally special about 10th grade or ninth grade versus eighth grade. Not at all. I think too many parents, that's something that they overlook. Yes, high school, it feels different than middle school. It's this coming of age. They're going to get a phone or social media, whatever it is. But then it's no education around it.

The third, and you mentioned in terms of restrictions, that's so critical in terms of kind of screentime. I mean, that the prefrontal cortex isn't developed until you're 20/22 years old. So kids don't have the ability to self-regulate. They just don't.

So it's unfair for parents to expect a child to say okay, well have the discipline to shut it off when you feel you're spending too much time. It doesn't work that way. Their brains haven't developed in that way. So you need to set that example and provide those parameters that are going to kind of foster healthy use of whatever it is, video games, TV, screens, etc.

Lisa: I couldn't agree more. I think that another adjunct to what you've said, as the parent coach here, not the tech expert but the parent coach. When we talk about phone responsibility, I really want to encourage the listener. Even if you haven't done this, you can go back and do it. Outline the rules, right? What are the rules of engagement? What can they have?

If you have a no social media policy for your kid, and you find out that they have a fake account. While you're in your higher brain, while you're calm, decide what the consequence of that is going to be. Make sure the kid is aware of it ahead of time. Sign a contract that outlines the rules.

If you have a rule of, which I highly recommend, having a charging station in the kitchen, and all phones at X hour go to the charging station for the night. If you find out that your kid's getting up in the middle of the night and getting on the phone, bringing it in the room, have the limit laid out up front

so that the kid has a choice. This is how we turn on the internal compass, even with technology, right?

So it's okay. If I find out that you've been on the check in the middle of the night then there's no phone for X amount of days or whatever your limit is. But communicate it while you're both calm so that then your kid feels the consequences of his actions rather than you're dysregulated. You find out your kid has, quote, lied to you, broken trust, and we get all emotional about this. We want to take the phone away for a year. We threaten to cancel the membership when we're really not going to do that.

We get into this downward spiral that is not healthy in setting limits up front. It's a much better way to go is to outline the rules of engagement on the front end rather than the back end.

Forest: Yeah, I think that can be healthy, especially just over communicating. We're huge fans of communication in so many different forms. To your point here, having that open conversation and also setting the tone that we're going to have more conversations.

One thing, though, that I think is important is for parents not to necessarily be, for lack of a better word, like alarmist reactionary if something happens, right. So for, I'll give you an example, a child comes to you and says I saw this concerning deep fake AI news story. I don't know if it's real, and it really bothered me.

A lot of parents will react and say okay, we're shutting off social media. We're shutting off the phone because that was a bad interaction. But that's only going to teach your kid that they don't have a safe space to come and talk to you about something. So you want to be very open. One of the most important things we find is that you create that safe space and an environment for them to talk to you about absolutely anything.

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If you teach them by example of taking something away, they're going to be much less likely to open up. That's so critical once they get to middle school, high school. If there's a bullying situation, or there's something else really serious going on, they don't want to fear that their main connection and device to their friends is going to be taken away because they bring up something that's concerning.

So I'd encourage parents to try to be open minded, do a lot of listening, do a lot of kind of inquisitive question asking, and kind of collaborative discussion versus immediately react. Be less reactionary and more collaborative.

Lisa: Always. Yes, even in setting the limits upfront, I would encourage parents to be collaborative, right. So let's say that you and your child agree that in fourth grade, she's not going to have a Snapchat account. Right? You've decided she needs a phone, and you're uncomfortable with her having access to Snapchat. I'm just picking on that app.

I would even encourage the parent to be collaborative in the conversation of what are we going to do if you can't resist that temptation, and I discover that you've made a fake account that I didn't know about? How are we going to handle that? What is that going to look like for us as a family?

Because I'm agreeing that we're going to bring this phone into the family, and you're going to have access to it. I need you to understand that I'm going to hold you to this. Then what are we going to do if it doesn't work that way? Very much it works better when we have collaborative conversation about it.

Forest: Yeah, I think it's a little nuanced. But overall, I think I agree. I think what's important, though, is to still remain somewhat nimble. There's going to be things that you can't possibly predict, just whether it's certain apps or access or situations that come up. So, being nimble, and, again, kind of

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creating that environment where they shouldn't have to create a fake accounts if they kind of agree with the reasons behind what we're doing.

I think all this needs to start at a much younger age, right? So we started this conversation when our kids are in kindergarten. Not necessarily of here's when you're going to get a phone. That's hard to answer. So many things can change in a month or in a year.

But more so let's have open conversation. Here's some of the concerns with going on right now with social media, with fake news, with AI. Here's also some really great benefits. Here's why we're a little bit more kind of conservative in that front. I think just having that dialogue, and so they get it into the talk track, not only A as a family we talk about these things, and I'm kind of comfortable bringing up my concerns as well. Ask them what's on their mind.

But then second, you're sort of setting this tone from an early age and it's not a surprise later. When you get to sixth grade, and they ask for TikTok and you say no. It's like well, we've been talking about it for five years. Not TikTok in particular, but social media and sort of the reasons behind it.

I think the more opportunity you have to kind of integrate the science behind it, here's what some of the latest data is showing. Here's why it's we're sort of at the tip of the iceberg of social media in particular being potentially harmful for kids. Kids are pretty smart. They could start to absorb that at a younger age.

Yes, when they get older, they might just turn to the instant gratification and want the account. But I can't emphasize enough just having that open dialogue and start building that trust.

Lisa: I love that. I think that's so important. Thank you for bringing that up because I agree with you 100%. I think having these open dialogues from

an early age, and like you said, sharing your concerns, sharing what you think the benefits might be, just really talking about it as a family rather than making bold statements, right?

You'll never have TikTok, or no, you can't have a phone, or no. That's command, and I always talk about in my work command leads to at best compliance. What we want is connection and cooperation. Right? So that is true, and having conversations around tech as well.

Forest: Yeah, and getting to kind of being nimble. So my daughter's in first grade and a lot of parents and peers will ask me well, are you going to give her a phone or social media in seventh grade? That's a long time from now. I can't answer that. There's so much that can change. Also, I think, I don't want to use the word mistake, but I think a question that's not framed the right way is what age should my child get a phone? That's not the right question to ask.

If some expert or influencer is telling you a specific age, I would probably run pretty far. It's so nuanced. It depends so much on what do they need the phone or want the phone for? What are they going to be doing on it? What's their portfolio of their interaction with things not related to tech? Are they meeting those responsibilities and obligations? There's so many different variables that I can't give you an exact age. In some cases, it might be fourth grade. Some cases it might be never. It's so dependent on the community, on the family, and on the individual child.

Lisa: I think also other factors are what is the family situation? Is it a co-parenting home where there's two separate homes, and there's going back and forth? One of the parents wants to be able to communicate with the kid one on one without going through the parent when they're away? Where does the kid fall? Is he the youngest of four, and there's going to be a lot of transportation things going on? Is the kid actively involved in something

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club like, like sports or music where there's a need to communicate details? Then there's the kids maturity, and what do the parents have going on?

Yes, I don't think that every fourth grader in the world is not at the same playing field, and every family is not the same. So I couldn't agree more that one can't say oh, this is the right age for X, Y, Z.

Forest: Yeah, and one thing we find, we work with communities around the world. The more successful communities are the ones that are, at least in spirit, aligned on approach. That may not necessarily mean we're going to agree in on exact age, sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, but they're having these conversations. They're talking with their kids, friends, parents, and peer groups. How are we approaching this? Are we on are we aligned on some of the concerns? Just keeping that conversation open.

Because then what happens is if you're not having those conversations, your friend, let's say they have five close friends. All of a sudden one gets something and then the other falls through, and there's not that dialogue. Unfortunately, most communities, or many communities, don't have that open dialogue with their peer groups. But it's so, so important, especially at the local level. It matters nothing what a kid's doing in New York if you live in California, right? Like it really is at the micro level.

But another comment I want to make though, and I want to be very careful not to come across like I'm shaming any parents. I get it. Parenting's tough. But I think parents need to do a better job, I'll just say it, at modeling the behavior they hope their children are going to emulate, right.

I can't tell you how many students we work with. We've pulled thousands, tens of thousands. A common theme is my parents complain so much about my screentime or my TikTok or whatever it is, but they're hypocrites. They're on it just as much. They're on the couch at holidays, scrolling

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through Facebook reels. We need to be careful about that at a very young age.

Because if you look at a very rudimentary example, if you're hoping that your child's not on the phone at the dinner table, you can't be at the phone at the dinner table. Not only when you're hoping that happens, but as they grow up because they're going to learn and model that behavior.

If you're checking your phone and scrolling through stuff at a stoplight, of course they're going to normalize that behavior. Then down to things like presence, just subtle things. If you're engaging with your child, and you're spending time with them, whether it's a Lego or a video game or whatever it is, showing them that a distraction is more important and looking at a phone notification, that teaches a really interesting thing that we probably don't want them to learn right.

Now, what I will say is there are times when you do need to check that notification. You do need to take that call. That's a perfect opportunity to explain that. Look, I have to take this call because grandma is going to a doctor, and she needs a ride. This is why I'm taking the call. So explaining what you're doing and just having that open talk track is key. But back to my first point, I think we need to do a better job as parents to model behavior that we hope our kids learn.

Lisa: Absolutely. That is a core principle that I teach. Kids don't do what we say. They do what we model. This is true in every situation, right? Kids look to us for in this family how do we solve this problem, right? So if I feel justified that when I get overly frustrated, I get to yell at you. Then when they get overly frustrated, they yell at the people that they're frustrated with because this is what we model in the family.

Likewise, if I'm on my phone all the time then I model that's the primary point of interest. That's where my attention goes. That is so important that,

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listener, you hear that. Again, no shaming, right? But if you can do better, please do. I can say that we have been a family that has never, ever brought cell phones to the table. Whether we're eating at home or out at restaurant, we've always tucked those away.

My son who's a freshman in college came home for Christmas. We were all sitting one night at the dinner table having dinner together. He said, "Mom, I." He pulled out his phone, and he said, "I'm waiting to hear back from my friend about what the plans are for the night. So I'm just letting you know now when my phone rings, I'm going to take it, but I'll be quick to get the information and be right back to the table." It was this is the fruits of our labor right here.

None of us have ever, again unless it's an exception like I'm waiting for an important phone call to find out test results or grandma's information or something that is urgent. We've never been people that have pulled their phone out. In fact, we don't even have it in the kitchen. Like at dinnertime, my phone's in the other room. That modeling, I can see how that's paid off.

Forest: Good for you.

Lisa: It's so important.

Forest: Just to double click on the not shaming. I run a company focused on digital wellness, and I'm not perfect. So there's always room to improve. Everyone on the planet has room to improve and kind of readjust their priorities.

Lisa: But I think the point is to take inventory, right? Kids don't do what we say. They do what we do. So as you're listening to this episode, you're driving to work. Ask yourself this question. What am I doing well? What am I doing well in the tech area? What am I willing to admit could use some work? Maybe you're on your phone at the stoplights, right, and your kid's

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like, "Hey, Mom, the light turned green, or the person behind is honking." You're modeling that for your kid that it's okay to be on their phone while you're driving at the stoplight.

So just be aware and ask yourself, where could I do 10% better? Could we put the phones away at a certain hour each night for charging? Could we not have the TV on during dinner? Could we have no tech in the morning before we, maybe you're a family struggles to get out the door in the morning on time.

The reality is if no one was on their phone in the morning at all before we got in the car to go to school, that would be a blessing. Or let's experiment with that and see if that improves the quality of the mornings and the ability and then set that limit for your family.

I know that certainly was our limit. When Malcolm was, he got a phone at the beginning of seventh grade. The deal was no phone in the morning at all until we got in the car to go to school. When we did that, we had harmonious mornings. The few times that he broke the rule and was on his phone in the morning, there was chaos. So it was like we could all see this was a good family rule. Then we modeled that as well by not sitting at the kitchen table scrolling through Facebook while he's eating his oatmeal.

Forest: Yeah, and every family is going to be a little bit different on what their inventory is. But yeah, I would certainly encourage that. Taking inventory as a family. One thing I do personally is at the end of the day, usually in bed, I kind of just do a personal inventory. Was I proud of how I spent my time today? If I wasn't then how can I improve that tomorrow?

Lisa: Yeah, that's a great question. Okay. So I want to tackle this issue as well because I think that this is an untalked about area. Forest, I think you're the perfect expert to give parents some insight. So let's say that I have kids in elementary or junior high or maybe even high school. The

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school has assigned some technology to my kid. An iPad, a Chromebook, a computer, or a computer is required. It goes to school, and it comes home with me, as the student.

As the parent, I am frustrated because every time I walk past my kid who's supposed to be doing his homework, he's doing something not homework related. I don't know how to set some limits and have some conversations and use this tool as it's intended.

But I want my kids to focus on their homework during homework time and not have this take five hours because they're closing out the window of homework and getting over on something else, whatever it is. But I am also worried because I want my kid to focus on getting the work done and actually doing the homework rather than having all these distractions. So help us out with that dilemma.

Forest: This would be a school provided device? A Chromebook, a tablet?

Lisa: Yes, it's school provided.

Forest: So I think there's two or three fundamental things to discuss here. It's messy. It's a little bit complicated. The first thing that I would do, and I kind of want a separate sort of protocol at home because we could have sort of our own rules of engagement. But first thing I would do is check with the school like what's their IT policy? What blocks and infrastructure do they have in place? What's allowed on the device?

Some schools are oblivious, and they'll just let anything on there, Discord and everything. Others, they have much more control. So I would start there and just have a conversation with the school just to understand what's supposed to be there. If something's not there, or something that's there that isn't supposed to be there. I think that's a fair conversation. Look, you said that this isn't supposed to be on there. We're seeing a lot of kids

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that have downloaded this. Let's put that back to the school to make sure that these other apps aren't there.

If the school doesn't have a program or a policy in place, I think that's another fair conversation. We're assigning these devices for educational purposes. Great. Let's not argue about that right now. But wouldn't you agree, talking to the school, that we shouldn't really have YouTube and these other things that are completely unschool related and put that back on the school to implement that with their technology to get that removed. So I think that's the first point.

Second is like with that if you have a concern as a parent, you shouldn't be shy to have a cordial conversation with whoever the appropriate contact is at the school about this because this is messy. Most schools, they're all over the map in terms of policy. They have the right intent. They're trying to do something productive and efficient, but it falls short.

I think the second comment I have, and this gets a little nuanced. But in terms of the focus at home, I think there's two things going on. One, it's that conversation with your child. So in a perfect world, the devices don't have some of these other apps that might distract them. But if they do, I think it's a conversation look we need to focus on homework time. Homework time is homework time, and we need to kind of create that social trust with the family. That's what we're going to focus on.

Here's the reasons for that. We want you to learn. We want you to continue to develop. That's not going to happen if you're constantly distracted. So can we agree to really focus in and do this and have that agreement with your child. That's easier said than done. I might be oversimplifying it.

But I think that's important that they understand the benefits and sort of the rules of homework. It would be like saying, let's say unrelated to the school device, we're going to be doing math flashcards in front of a cartoon. That

doesn't work, right? So we need to have that separation just on within the single device, we need to focus on it.

But I think the other challenge, and you didn't ask this, but I want to bring it up, is depending on what they're doing on the school devices, we're starting to see some research that it's counterintuitive. I'll give you a great example with math learning apps.

A lot of them are engineered, at a younger age. So first, second, third grade. A lot of them are engineered to be a lot of fun. They have a lot of a gamification to them, but they're not actually learning as much as they do with written math books and flashcards. So that's a whole other discussion because it might be part of the school curriculum already, and that's a much bigger battle.

But something as a parent, and I'm not saying that all math apps are doing that. In some cases, it's a benefit. Kids can learn more, but not always. We're starting to see a trend where, and some research is probably going to be coming out in the next year or so, where it's counterintuitive. I'm using math as an example. If that's your child, and you're starting to notice that, then I think you need to raise your hand and have another conversation with your child or the school and make some adjustments.

What you don't want is them to go through four or five years of learning on an app that's not actually teaching them. You need to calibrate and make some changes if that's the case.

Lisa: Can you give us an example of that?

Forest: Of what?

Lisa: Like real time.

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Forest: Of what that calibration would be?

Lisa: Yeah. Or just, let's say your child is struggling on the learning apps. What are some alternatives? I know you guys have some good recommendations. So share those with us.

Forest: Yeah, I mean, I'll give you example with my own son. So, and this wasn't through a school app, but this is through a math learning app. We had this great conversation. I was bringing out algebra flashcards. He was like, "Dad, the flashcards are just so boring. They don't have any gamification."

I said okay, let's talk about that. Does the whatever app, I throw this app under the bus, but does this app have gamification? He's like, "Oh, yeah. It's so much fun." I said okay, well do you feel like you learn? He's like, "Well, no. I don't learn from it. I learn way more with the flashcards, but it's a lot more fun."

So case closed there. So, again, this wasn't, I want to be clear. This wasn't a school focused app, but it was something that we noticed. So then we cut that off, full stop, and we went hardcore flash cards and algebra learning books, and it is 10x faster in terms of learning math. So that's my particular case.

We hear a lot of cases like that though, whether it's reading comprehension, whether it's math and other cases. If it's something that schools really pushing, then it gets a little tricky because if they fall behind on the school curriculum and the school class, and they're going analog then when they get to the classroom. So that's where it justifies a conversation with the teacher. Every school and every classroom is going to be a little bit different on how they want to approach it.

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But, again, like I would just really encourage open conversation. My child seems like, ask the teacher a question. It just seems like my child's not learning as much on this particular app. What do you seeing with other kids? What would you recommend we do?

Lisa: That's great. That's great advice. I also really love your suggestion of contact the school, find out what their policy is. Your child may have loaded things onto the tablet or the computer that the school doesn't enforce, which then you can remove that. You can make sure that it's not on there. You can also remove it too as parent if you don't agree with it, even if the school doesn't have a policy. You are the peaceful leader in charge of your household. You can remove some of these things from the computer if they're distracting your child.

Forest: 100%. I wanted to make that point clear. I wasn't alluding that you just need to defer to the school and wait for them. If you're seeing something that's concerning.

Lisa: I know you weren't. I'm just reminding the listener, I'm reminding them that they are the peaceful leader in charge. Because sometimes we forget that. Particularly a lot of my listeners are raising strong willed kids, and the power struggles are real. The kids are determined. They're strong willed, and they want what they want.

So it's always just a good reminder that we don't need to be dominant about it, but we are the peaceful leaders of the households with the fully developed brains. We do get to set the limits that we want our kids to follow.

Forest: Agreed.

Lisa: Yeah, yeah. So just want the listener, just a gentle little reminder there. Then there's also, and I use this myself. I want to just, you're a great

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person to comment on this as well. There are these apps you can also install the while you're doing the homework, they block out access to anything else. Right? You just made a funny face. So.

Forest: Well, yeah. I think that gets into parental monitoring apps. There's a bunch out there when we get into kind of social media, and we're mixed opinions on them. So in some cases, yes. So in terms of the app blocking, that's a little bit more straightforward because we're focusing on this time, and we want to remove distractions than create a barrier.

Lisa: That's more what I, let me just be clear, I was talking about the app blocking just it. Let's say you have a teenager, and you have agreed that during homework hours, I need to focus on homework at blocking can be useful, just as a self-monitoring tool to remove the temptation of flipping over to Facebook or Snapchat or whatever to see what other people are doing.

Forest: I wouldn't disagree with that. Yeah.

Lisa: Yeah, I use that myself. Because sometimes I have tasks I don't want to do. So it's easier to just wander over and hit something. So I use the app blocking tools when I really want to have a stretch of getting something done. Like okay, I'm only allowed to do this. I find even just shutting all that down and removing the temptation to be a very useful tool for myself.

Forest: Yeah, and you're absolutely right. James Clear's book *Atomic Habits* talks exactly about that. How can create friction from bad habits. I think where I want to be careful for adults in particular, whether it's the Opals of the world or that whatever app locking app you're using, is usually what we see a lot with those is it works for a very short amount of time. then eventually, people just bypass and go back to old habits. So it's not necessarily a habit improver, but it is a temporary fix.

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So in this case of the child, and they have other apps, I think I would question why do they have all these other apps on there? But if they do, then yeah like during homework time, let's put that on. It's on for two hours. Everything else is blocked. They can focus in. I think that's a really good use of app blocking tools.

Lisa: Good. Yeah, that's helpful, I think, to the listener. All right, Forest, you've given us a lot of great ideas and ways to work with our kids on tech and ways to check in with ourselves. I think this has been really great. Thank you for being here. This is not an area where we get to think about it. We should, but we don't always think about it.

I think a lot of parents feel I hand the phone over and then I've lost all control of it. So I think what you're attempting to do is help the parents feel in control in collaboration with their children. Is that a good way to think about it?

Forest: Yeah. No, it's uncharted territory. We haven't gotten a full generation of having to navigate this for kids. So we're all learning. I would also encourage folks not to be so hard on yourself too. This is tough business. This is difficult, and you're going to face big challenges, and we're not going to always get it right. So be kind to yourself as well.

Lisa: I love that. Be kind to yourself. Yes. All right. If the listener wants to know more about Camplight, tell them where to go to get all the details.

Forest: Yeah, check us out at camplight.com. You can find everything you need there. We'd love to welcome you into the crew if it ever seems like it would add value.

Lisa: That's awesome. Okay, so camplight.com, check it out. It's pretty cool what you guys are doing. I think it's pretty amazing. I think it's much

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needed. So I'm sure parents are really enjoying being a part of your community.

Forest: Yeah, we're having a lot of fun so far, and I think we're adding some value. So I appreciate your comments.

Lisa: Yeah. Okay. That's tech in today's day with our kids. Go forth. Model well, stay connected, keep the conversation open. Think about responsibility versus gifting. Think about ways to collaborate. Again, I can't say it enough, be mindful of what you're modeling for your children when it comes to tech because I promise it matters. Until we meet again, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

Thank you so much for listening today. I want to personally invite you to head over to thepeacefulparent.com/welcome and sign up for my free peaceful parenting minicourse. You'll find everything you need to get started on the path to peaceful parenting just waiting for you over there at www.thepeacefulparent.com/welcome. I can't wait for you to get started.

Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit thepeacefulparent.com. See you soon.