Introduction and pediatric philosophy

Welcome back to the conversation. I am now with Doctor Rachel McConnell, who is a board certified pediatrician with an online coaching practice that provides comprehensive pediatric care with a focus on building long term relationships with families and supporting children through every stage of development, from infancy to adolescence.

Doctor Rachel's approach combines evidence based medicine with practical, family centered guidance to help children grow, thrive, and stay well. Doctor Rachel, welcome.

Hi, Jason. I'm so excited to be here. Thank you. Yeah, this is a really important conversation. I think, you know, even for those who are listening that may not have children or though maybe they have grandchildren, and maybe there's somebody in their world that have children.

And, you know, when I think about this whole category that were in, you know, broken brain toxic, that all the things that are going on for us adults, it becomes so much more important, in my opinion, to intervene as early as we can in the developmental process.

Because as I was mentioned to you before, we before we hit record here in the longevity space, people always ask me what, what's the most important thing, right?

Living a long time, etc., etc. and we think about it in those terms of what are people doing in their 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond. And my whole thing was like, really?

The foundations of our health are established at essentially conception to maybe puberty somewhere in there, right. The way we see the world or the development of our microbiome, of course, the neurological sort of framework and connections that our brain makes.

Our emotional regulation. So much of that is set. Now it can be changed, right? We are highly adaptable creatures. That's the good news. If you're watching this and you're, you know, 62, but at the same time, the better sort of foundation that we can build at the beginning, you know, it just sets us up for success in our emotional, you know, our relationships, our work, our physical health, everything down the line.

Right. So I'm curious, though, what got you into pediatrics? What was sort of your draw in that world? So when I was in medical school, I actually thought I was going to do ob gyn.

And so I did that and I realized, like one that was not for me. And two, I felt like I could really make an impact with parents, with their children for their whole life.

Because you have that relationship, you can start when they're born, and you can really influence a parent to help make the right choices. And then you get to see that family over and over to build the trust, to build the relationship, and then to really help them have good habits that make a foundation for their whole life.

Yeah, you know, I, I've worked with a lot of parents that have, you know, kids struggling with physical, mental and emotional kind of challenges. And it it's really tough, right?

It's of course tough for the children because they're they're new to this world. They're trying to figure the whole thing out. Right. And then parents. Right.

We kind of get lost in like, how do I support my child and the dynamic shifts in the household, like everything starts to get wonky, even with something like sleep issues.

Right? Like that in and of itself can create a bunch of challenges. And so to me, this is a real leverage point for not only the child, but for the entire family.

Right? It really can set the stage for a much more ease for family environment. So and yet we're we're in a world now where it's becoming more interesting.

I don't want to say challenging. It's just more it's more interesting. We're facing new challenges with screens, social media. Right. The coming of AI that's now changing the game.

You know, after sort of Covid, we have a lot more sort of digital online schooling happening.

Screens, overwhelm, and early childhood habits

And yet there's also more options in sort of these worlds too. So it's just becoming a little less the template has changed, right? We have so many more things we can consider.

So what are you seeing in your practice over the years? What's changing with the challenges that the kids are facing? Where are some of the things that you're working with?

So especially you mentioned social media in screens. I think that is huge. And initially it was the recommendations or no screens, at least until they're two.

And I would say when I started practicing, 20 years ago, that was pretty common. People were very like, okay, we're not doing screens. We understand that that is not good for brain development, for social skills, a whole bunch of things.

And now it is not uncommon that I'll see a baby handed the phone. And then when they go to take it away, the baby just has a meltdown and cries. And I see that across all age groups like, oh, I need to examine you, let's take the phone away.

And from infants to toddlers to, elementary age kids like it's a bunch of overwhelm and they really can't handle all of the input that's going into their brains from those screens.

And they just have a total meltdown because they don't know how to deal with it when it's taken away. And then I also find that the the parents don't know how to deal with that.

And so they hand the screen back thinking like, this is soothing. This is calming. But really they don't understand. Like this is very overwhelming. Your child was crying because their brain is overwhelmed, not because they're crying because this was soothing or calming.

Yeah. And I think this this just calls into it calls really for the parents to become, you know, to do that sort of hard stuff sometimes. Right. You're out at a restaurant, right?

And kids moving around, and it's so much easier to hand them a phone or a tablet, right? And say, okay, there we go. Oh, we can eat right. And you put this in every scenario.

Airplanes travel, right or just at home. And so it's it does sort of ask us as parents to like you know, do that, do the harder thing here. Because at the end of the day, what I've noticed is that that might be it's sort of like a quick fix right in the moment.

But over time, we're just going to create more challenges even as parents, right? Not not only for the child, it's going to create more challenges for us down the road.

So again, it just speaks to the the need or the advantage of setting up these sort of good habits across the board. So let's talk about I want to talk about sort of infancy in those early years.

Right. Breastfeeding we know is an a very important thing. And it also comes with challenges. Some women can't breastfeed. Other women have to work. And so, you know, in in in my work. Right.

And the people that I spoke with from all around the world living a more, more indigenous sort of tribal village like society, it wasn't uncommon for for kids to be breastfed until they were six, you know, 50 years ago in Costa Rica type of thing.

Right? And of course, I don't know too many, although it's it's yeah, I say making a comeback in terms of the length. But what is your in an ideal scenario a woman can breastfeed successfully and work is not interfering with this process.

What is kind of like the minimum that you like to see. And then how long do we see benefits after sort of that minimum amount of time. So that's the amazing thing with breastfeeding.

Like there is no maximum like as long as it's working for the mom and the baby, then they can keep breastfeeding is long. Is is is it's working well for them.

So definitely if moms are able to breastfeed for 6 to 12 months, I think that that would be ideal if they can go all the way up until at least two, that would be terrific.

I would say here in the U. S., it's probably pretty uncommon to even go in till two. But if that's a possibility. But like I tell my moms, any breastfeeding is better than no breastfeeding.

So even if you've only got like a week or two, then great, anything is better than nothing. The longer the better. But anything you can do is better. Even if you're going to pump and give it to them in a bottle that's still better than no breast milk at all.

Yeah, I agree, and there's this sort of like there's a lot of guilt and shame, and there's a lot of things that can come into this sort of mix. Right.

But I think that I agree that the approach seems to be whatever you can do. And the more it feels natural and good, then then lean into that, right? I think my wife got to I think we were two and a half, three, something like that.

And then and then she just got sick. I'm kind of done. But, you know, it's just like, I don't want be doing this anymore. He's getting very big, right?

The teeth are coming in and and you know, I think also what I noticed is not just in my household but in others, they're kind of got to this point where it just became a little awkward.

I think the child's development is happening, and it's like having a five year old on you, you know, might just feel a little weird, right? So to me, it's like, I think what I learned in that process was allowing kind of nature to play play itself out and just listening and feeling and like what what feels right.

Right. And and we know at least the I think the, the latest sort of thinking in sort of me, you could say the integrative or natural schooling is, is that the the microbiome of a child doesn't really fully form until about one years old.

So we have major influence. And then from there it's kind of like I wouldn't say it's set in stone, but that's like our that's like our foundation for the microbiota.

Right? So like the actual microbes that are in that, that inhabit a child's gut are really highly influenced by that. And of course, Mother's Milk is is the premier food source, right, in terms of its digestibility and feeding the microbiome and immune factors, and of course, even the signaling, right, that that baby and mother get from the nipple to saliva interaction.

Right. It's just it becomes so fascinating what are some other important things? And those are early developmental

years. First two or 3 or 4 years that you like to focus on and advise the parents.

So definitely eating is a huge one. So I am a proponent of Whole Foods. I have a lot of parents who will tell me, oh, they're not eating meat. It's like, that's okay.

Like, focus on your veggies, focus on your fruits. They can do beans, lentils, mushrooms. Like that's okay.

Breastfeeding and infant development

You really want to focus on whole foods and try to avoid processed foods as much as possible, because that would really set the stage for them to have those foods for the rest of their life.

So as much as you can train their palate to eat what you want them to eat, that's really what you want them to do. Water. Not juice or Kool-Aid or anything like that.

And then herbal teas is great too. So that's important. And then sleep really making sure that sleep is a priority and protecting it. And I would say if you have older siblings then it's really hard that poor baby is like, we have baseball practice, we have dance recital, we're on the road like, you know, 18 hours of the 24 hours.

And so protecting sleep for the entire family is always important. Like we already talked about limiting screens. And then something that we don't really talk about a lot is outside time.

I think we have converted to an indoor society, and kids are really missing out on the sunshine, the touching the earth, the getting natural germs, interacting with nature.

I think that is also a huge one. And especially young kids, they love to be outside and it just is so calming to them as well. So that is also very important.

So I would say those are probably some of my, my top things that I like to talk to parents about. Yeah, I remember in Costa Rica talking to some people when we were filming our documentary series and they were telling me that it was quite, quite common for, well, first of all, the women, it wasn't uncommon for them to dislike, sneak off and have their baby down by the river by themselves, which is a funny thing.

Or with, sort of family midwife type of thing. But they said that oftentimes when they would just after birth, they would take them outside into the sun.

No, they weren't sunbathing for hours, but they would expose them to the natural light, even just for a brief period. And how much they recognized that as beneficial.

Right. And and of course, the way that they think about these is not through a scientific lens. It's through an experiential lens. Right? Things that have worked over and over again, they tend to keep doing right.

And so I thought that was interesting, that that was one of their practices. Essentially very soon after birth, they would just take them up, take the baby outside and expose them to the natural light, which doesn't mean, you know, hold their face to the sun, right?

It just means getting the, the body and, and those early development of the eyes itself. Right. Just that natural light. Right. Like we are. We are children of the sun, right? Like that.

It is so dependent. Our life is so dependent on it. Right? So learning to sort of, I think not fear it is really important in our society, which is kind of a weird thing because we have come to fear.

I mean, you and I have light skin. And so we've been taught our whole life to really avoid that thing in the sky because it's dangerous. Right. And so just unlearning that and just being more comfortable being out in the sun without getting burned is really a fundamental practice.

Yeah, I think that's so important. And then it's interesting that new research is coming out to say, oh, everybody needs like 30 minutes of sunshine within 30 minutes of waking.

And yet we have structured our entire society, the children at school. You got to be a work at 8:00. It's like nobody gets 30 minutes of sunshine within 30 minutes of waking.

And especially in the winter, school age, kids, like, they don't even see the sunshine. And you wonder why they're having all of these issues. It's like, maybe they need some sunshine.

Totally. Yeah. I mean, and I think back when I was a kid, right. Especially as a, a boy who loved sports and whatnot. I mean, there was for the child of the 80s, we were I think there was and there was even advertisements that said, like, it's 10 p.m., you know, do you know where your kids are?

You outside all day. Right. And like, we were just gone. And I remember getting in trouble because I would miss lunch and then I would be late for dinner.

And they're like, you know, I haven't seen you since 9 a.m.. Where have you been? And I'm like, oh, we went out in the woods for seven hours, you know?

And so it's it's definitely a different reality. And, and even with my six year old, like they just here's that, here's the trick. Or here's the tricky part is that in so many communities, it's we are even though we're disconnected in so many ways now, we're still the sort of tribally influenced people.

Right? And so if all kids are inside on screens, why can't I just send my kid out by himself? Right. And so that that becomes sort of the trick. And so setting yourself up in those environments, or if you're lucky enough to just naturally be in one, can be very helpful.

We're we're now living in a again, you know, we just taken a step back. We had this thing called autism that became a thing. And then we had this. Then we sort of changed our language a little bit to say it's a autism spectrum, right?

Because because we all kind of at least sort of knew what autism was. That was, you know, Rainman. Right? It was like that was our sort of idea of what it was and then or even nonverbal.

Right. That was even more classic. Then we had this sort of spectrum, right, that included ADHD and ADHD and perhaps some other things that we couldn't define very well.

And then now we're kind of we broadened it, I think, a little bit more. And, and this new term, neurodivergent came out, which I like in some sense because it kind of sort of dismantles the old labels a little bit, but it still has its own label and own sort of contentions with it.

But I want your take on this idea of neurodivergent, because what I've seen is I can't I still can't tell where does neurodivergent start and stop. And now what's the difference and what's what's quote unquote normal when it comes to brain development and how a child behaves.

Yeah. And I think that is a really tricky one because, you know, to some extent, I think we're all a little bit neurodivergent. Well, it's we all have our own little quirks like, oh my gosh, I have to have things very symmetric or I can't tolerate the tags on the back of my shirt, whereas this other person's like, oh, the loud noises, or I can't eat mushy foods like bananas because they're too slimy or the other one, you know, can't walk barefoot on the sand.

So I think we're all a little bit neurodivergent. And so to say, this one's normal and this one isn't normal, I don't think that's very helpful to anyone, because then it's like just because you might look normal, like, oh, I'm functioning well in school.

Might seem like I'm holding it together. You might actually not be doing as well. You may actually need some skills

in there. Whereas people who are like, I'm having a meltdown in a temper tantrum and can't wear my clothes, and throwing desks like those people are very easy to spot.

But then you're like, something's wrong with my kid, and I want you to treat them with a medicine. I want this fixed fast, whereas like, no, we just like everyone needs the right kind of support.

And I think that's the thing we need to figure out what is the underlying reason for these behaviors and how can we support that. Because most behaviors on their surface, they look like, oh, this child is having a temper tantrum.

This child can't hold it together. This child is having trouble learning how to to do their schoolwork more focusing. But really, is it like, oh, this child's nutrition and microbiome are off?

Nutrition, sleep, and outdoor time

This child's sleep is a little bit weird. This child really is struggling to regulate because they don't have great examples at school. Or maybe they see something at home and they're struggling, or maybe they're having too much screen time and they're not able to bring their brain down.

And so I think it's it is a spectrum, but I think we're all on it. And finding what supports us the best is going to be what's going to be helpful. There's no one thing is going to fix everybody.

Yeah, I think that's important. Right. Because it's it's sort of easy to to try to either diagnose or label because then it's like there's a certain safety in that.

Right? As a, as a parent or a teacher, whomever, to say, okay, this child fits in this box. Therefore, you know, hey, this child's not normal and needs these things because he's in that box or she's in that box.

And to me, it again, that's easier right for it for us. And so I think that's kind of why we lean into that a little bit. But in terms of what I've seen, one of my friend's kids couldn't stand going barefoot in the sand.

And I mean, we live in San Diego, right? So there's lots sand and couldn't stand it yet. My child doesn't like worn socks. Night goes barefoot all the time, even when you wear shoes.

No socks. So there's these peculiarities right. And so and then of course the behavioral stuff. Right. And what I've noticed is that all these kids behave so differently.

And so it's to me it's more like how does that how does that brain work? How does that system work. Right. And what does that system really needing or lacking or what's dysregulated.

Right. Because if we get that right, the child still is going to be unique in the way he or she thinks, the way that they behave. Right. My child is very He doesn't attune very well.

He is kind of aggressive. Right. And so it's not that he's wrong or bad, it's more like that, whatever that is, that energy, that proclivity can be expressed in a healthy way, right?

Like that. That can be the driver of his success in whatever he does. Right? So it's not like this is a bad thing. This is just the way it is. And how do we support that so that it's not disruptive to to him and to an anybody else. Right.

So what are some of these things that you find that, you know, parents come to you and they're struggling with, let's say an emotional challenge, right.

Dysregulation can't it's kind of all over the place with their emotions. What are the things that you like to focus on there? Or at least analyze and figure out where the opportunity is to to provide additional support?

Yeah. So for that, I definitely always go back to basics first. It's like, what are they eating? You know, what are you

feeding them before they go to school?

And if they're eating at home, it's a lot easier to make changes versus, oh, they're having breakfast and lunch at school. That that definitely makes it tricky.

So we focus on okay, let's get rid of the processed cereals, get rid of anything that has a dye or a color. We chat real quick about reading labels. The biggest thing is if you flip it over and you can't read the ingredient label because you're like, I do not know how to pronounce these words.

Don't put that in your body. Like, don't worry about anything else. Just if you can't pronounce the words, that's your first starting point, just put that guy back on the shelf.

So making sure they're eating well, making sure they're having enough water to drink because a lot of kids are mildly dehydrated and that can cause problems.

And then sleep, making sure that they're getting enough sleep because everyone's like, oh, eight hours of sleep. But it's like, that's not enough for most growing children.

You know, that's kind of your average for adults, not really for children. And so a lot of parents don't realize that. And then, of course, we focus on screens in the overwhelm.

And then as parents who are amazing at telling kids what not to do, don't do that. Don't pester your brother. Don't do that. We are not so awesome at telling them what to do, and in part because we don't always know what to do.

Like we don't always know how to take in those big calming box breathing. We don't know how to regulate ourselves, but yet we're expecting our children to do that.

And then we're upset when they're not. But we need to lead by example. So I also teach parents, really fast coping skills like deep breathing, progressive relaxation where you content your whole body and then relax it.

So then they can practice those things and do them at home or school, at the grocery store or wherever they are. So those are probably the main things I focus on.

And then it's like, okay, let's come back in a few weeks and see what has made a difference and then go from there. Yeah. And you mentioned a few, but I'm curious if there's any more on the parent side.

Right. So oftentimes we're looking at my child that's the problem or the issues over there. And but I've certainly seen situations where it's like, well actually the parents are a little dysregulated or not not doing or we're embodying the right things so that the child can template and mirror.

And because they're constantly looking for safety, security and connection through us, right. Like we are, they're sort of main conduit for all the things that we want for them.

And so, so much of it is really a reflection of us not in a bad way, but but the opportunities really can lie here in so many ways are very true. And we're not all of our babies because I'm a mom too.

I have two teenagers, and so definitely it's very easy when they're babies to be like, oh, you're crying, you're fussy. Let me pick you up and I'll take the big compress and we'll sway and we'll both be calm together.

But as they grow you somehow, as parents, we forget that. We forget like, oh, you need hugs and you need to still regulate. To my breathing. Into my heart, into my voice.

And so even now, I've noticed, you know, if I'm on edge, my kids will pick up on that super fast and it will make the whole morning spiral because it's like we're running late.

We've got to get going.

Neurodivergence and behavior support

But if I can keep it together and be calm for them and use my calm mommy voice and be like, okay guys, like, we really need to get those socks on because we're starting to run late.

They're like, okay, I'll go do it, as opposed to yelling at them. And then it all melts down. So I think really focusing on like, yes, as parents were stressed and we try to hide it from our kids, but they know it.

They can still sense it. They're still that attached to us as parents, that they can sense what's going on with us. In a sense, those mood shifts. Most parents I've talked to will admit that they're stressed, and it's like, well, we've got to get your stress under control first before we have any hope of getting your child's stress under control.

And it's not saying that parents are bad and they need to be Zen all the time, but I think dealing with stress, because that is one of the huge factors in early death and heart attacks and everything.

And so dealing with the parents stress is a priority, and they do need to start putting themselves first to deal with that. As parents, we're used to putting ourselves second and focusing on our children all the time.

But sometimes we do need to put ourselves first so we can deal with our stress. So then we're in a good place to help our children learn how to deal with their stressors, too.

Yeah, I think sometimes we forget that it's a it's a dynamic. Right. And we are involved. Right. And I mean, I love Doctor Siobhan's work. I think, Shefali, you know, kind of really, really takes the perspective of like that child.

That's a, that's a separate person. Right? They're their own unique individual. And whenever there's a issue between parent and child or even an issue with the child, it's an opportunity to to look in the mirror, say, okay, what do I need to learn?

What do I actually need to focus on? Right. Because that's really what we can control, even with our children, even though we're their guardians and into some degree, their escorts into adulthood, it's still really all you can do is focus on is to work on you right to it.

They become our greatest teachers if we allow that right, and it shines a light on some of our shortcomings. Dysregulation, you know, lack of awareness, which we all have.

Right? I mean, it's like, I don't I still have yet to meet a perfect parent. I'm sure maybe one's out there, but I haven't met him or her. So it's really just an opportunity.

And there's a dynamic, right? It's like, I know that when I'm dysregulated, when I don't get a good night's sleep and I'm stressed when I'm sick, all that dynamic is, is different than when I'm well-regulated, joyful, rested.

Right. And so again, for me, it's a constant practice is as often as I can become aware to really look in the mirror and say, what's going on here? And, and how can I improve the way I interact and the way I carry myself throughout the day.

You got teenagers? Yes, I have two of them. Two teenagers. I am, I have to admit, I'm a little afraid of getting to that point based off of our culture and our society.

I have a boy, which I think in some ways I'm grateful for as as he grows into a teenager, because there's so many challenges that I see that are brand new with regard to social media, the influencing that's out there.

You know what? What do you seeing in some of, let's say, the broader culture? You know, I think the data on especially young girls is pretty horrendous.

And and the the mental and emotional challenges they're facing, body dysmorphia, suicidal ideation, all these things that, depression. Right. It's it's really going through the roof and becoming a challenge.

How are you navigating that stage of development and what what is your advice to some of the parents that you work with? So I will say that I'm pretty lucky.

So I personally am not a social media user, like I have a business social media presence, but as a personal social media presence like I am not on it and so I think my children got that cue from me as well that they don't see me on Facebook, they don't see me on Instagram.

So they're also not on social media, which is terrific. So I think that was the first hurdle is that they're not normalizing that because of my use. I think the second thing that I see a lot of is parents don't realize, like, you can put some controls on your kid's devices, so you've got to do it kind of I would say two ways.

You have to put those physical controls to limit what they can see and how much time they can be on there. But you also really have to do like the emotional mental controls where you're talking to them all of the time about, yes, this is what's out there, but this is why we're not watching it.

This is why we're not believing that this is what we believe in as a family. These are our values. This is important. And if you just are like, oh, well, we're not on the internet, you're missing a huge opportunity because as soon as they leave your house, their friend is like, check out what I saw.

Or at school, they're like, let me text you this. And so you have to hit it both ways. You need the physical stops because they're their kids. Their brain is still developing.

We all know that social media and everything is targeting them, and they're more susceptible to that. So to ask them to stop looking and to stop doing that on their own, it's very difficult.

It's hard as grown ups to start stop doing that. But as to ask your kids to do that, that's nearly impossible to ask them to do that because a lot of them are addicted.

So they need those those physical stops to be like, you can't go to that website or you've been on your phone for two hours and now it's just turned off until tomorrow.

But they also need parents to explain the why behind it, because children or everybody is more likely to follow through and to do what you want. Would they understand why, when they don't think that you're just being a big meanie and telling me, I can't do this, but when you're like, well, that makes sense.

Like, yeah, I never thought of it that way. And then they're your ally, and when they see something similar, they're much more likely to pull back to be like, that's not part of our values because we talked about that.

So I'm like, just no, that's not for me. Yeah, I remember as a child might mean love my mom. She did a great job. But one of the most frustrating things that I, that I it is conditioned within me was the response of because I said so or because I'm the mother, right?

And I'm just like, oh my God. And I'm and I'm naturally curious. Right. And that information actually helps me understand the world, right. To understand why I might disagree with at the time, but at least I have an understanding of what the reasoning is and what the logic is behind this.

And I still to this day in my practice. Right? I'm instead of, as you mentioned, one of my practices that I have everybody do is get up within 30 minutes and go outside, take a walk.

Right. It's so, so foundational. But it's such a simple thing that if I just say that many people don't do it. So I go into the why, here's why, here's what the science says.

Here's the Nobel Prize that was, you know, given to scientists that were studying chronobiology. Right.

Parent regulation and teen social media

Like, and if you understand of the depth of something so simple of the of why I'm asking you to do this or not do this, it does really land in a different way.

And I think it again, it speaks to the whole reasoning for taking early action, doing the hard thing upfront, because it's going to get so much harder if you try to regulate that after they've been addicted, after they're starting to have some kind of influence, after they're following all these people.

And that's a that's a tough one. You know, I think again, that the the other really important factor here too, is that what your kids are. How old? 13 1415 ooh 13 and almost 18 okay.

Okay. Let's take the 18 year old. So that would have been about 2008 or something. Right? Okay. So social media was still in its infancy. Right. And so even so in those early years, like and as we continue to protest it, my point is if we don't know what's coming, right.

So setting those guardrails and really protecting them in that way and setting that foundation and the ideals and the values and all these things becomes so much more critical because we don't know what the future holds, right?

So that those values become so, so much more important in an ever evolving, fast changing world. Right. And so as, as they've kind of navigated in those, those teen years, what have you noticed as a result of sort of taking those steps as best you can?

And it sounds like they're pretty good kids and they're sort of having an understanding of why there is some regulation around that. What have you noticed comparatively to maybe some of their friends that haven't been given those things?

So I've definitely noticed that they I don't feel like they're as susceptible to peer pressure, so they don't go through as many of those fads. They're not like, yeah, we've got to try this or I have to try that.

And so I'm really noticing that, which is terrific. Like they both love to do games. I will say like during Covid we signed them up for some game camps.

And they do still have some of the same friends that they met during Covid that they've never actually met in person. And so they they do love video games.

I'm not saying that they're never online, but for social media, I would say they're not is influenced, is I see some kids with it. And then when it is time to put down their devices like, yes, you know, like everything, I have to ask them 2 or 3 times, but then they put it down.

They don't really wake up in the middle of the night to sneak in and be on their device. Like, I don't have to worry about those things. They're not sending messages to strangers because we've really talked about that.

Like, that is huge. And we talked about internet safety, and we've watched some of those shows that are out there that you're like, how did these people like, believe all of this stuff?

So we've we've really talked about those things so they can spot a scam really well now. And when I ask them something, they're like, mom, that's a scam.

Don't answer that. Don't open that PDF. And so they're like, who sent you that text message? And they're like, honey, I was the one who taught you internet safety.

Yeah. So like my children have now grown from being the student to the master job about those things. Right. So

that's telling myself I'm like, I pulled that one off totally.

That's, I mean, and that's that's the ideal scenario, right? It's like they're going to become better at the internet than you read. I mean, I remember as a nine year old working a VCR better than my grandparents, right? They didn't know how to do it.

And and I'm like, oh my God, right. This and this is this is the objective, right. What what is your advice or how do you work with parents that may be struggling with that?

You know, maybe they've got early teens or they're kind of on social media a little earlier that for whatever reason, they have these these device challenges and this sort of social media challenges, maybe they're nine, maybe they're eight.

And, you know, this is what's happening younger and younger. You know, obviously better to try to cut that off. The past. But but if we're kind of too deep, what are some ways that parents can go about kind of starting to unwind that a little bit and reduce the effects.

So I think one of the easiest ways is to put those parental controls on there because as parents are like, okay, you have 30 minutes, you have an hour, you have however long on here, and then we get busy and the next thing you know, it's been three hours and they're still watching YouTube shorts.

And so and then when you go to try to take it, they have a meltdown because their brain is overstimulated, their dopamine pathways are doing crazy things.

So the easiest thing and then they argue with you. Right. And then you know, you're like, great. I have five other things I have to do. So just watch another five hours of this will turn it off at bedtime.

So my recommendation is just set those controls and have it turn off automatically. And then when they come whining to you, you're like, sorry, the iPad's tired.

Like, let's go do something else. And then to already know what the your list of something else is are like, we have dishes to wash. We have a walk to go on.

Have you practiced your instrument? You want to go read a book like already have that list of things so you're not coming up with it in the moment. So that is I think, super important.

And then something that someone else had suggested, which I think is a great idea. A lot of kids are also like on their Xboxes or their PlayStations, so it's a lot harder to put those parental controls.

So get yourself a smart outlet like I have a dumb house. I don't believe in smart houses, but a smart outlet for stuff like this is terrific because you'll program it to be like, oh, it, you know, 6 p.m.

you're turning off and you won't turn back on again until whatever time the next day. So that way, same thing. You're not policing it. They're not arguing and whining to you because you're like out of my control.

Like, sorry, red tape of life. And they'll learn very quickly. Like I don't have any control over that. And so you can plug in your TV, you can plug in your Xbox, PlayStation, you can even plug in your internet router.

So everything goes down, which is also great if they're younger and they have a tablet and they're like, oh, now I can't go out to the internet sort of thing if they're not on cellular, of course.

Managing devices and learning issues

So using using technology where appropriate, I think is also very helpful for stuff like that. Totally. So in whatever stage of development, what are some other interventions maybe that that we haven't discussed, you know, maybe

in the even the medical side, not necessarily pharmaceuticals or perhaps, but just what do you evaluate and what are some things that you might bring in or you might, you know, educate parents on something to be mindful of if they have if their children have, you know, kind of behavioral issues as they might classify them, you know, mental health challenges, emotional dysregulation, these type of things.

What are some of the things that you might kind of analyze as a as a doctor? So definitely will look at other things like ADHD or learning issues because sometimes those behaviors are going to mask learning issues of like if the child is embarrassed and they don't really want to have everyone know that they're struggling to read or write, then they'll act out because that's much better to get that attention than them.

Someone's going to think I'm dumb because I can't do this kind of attention. So I think that is big. And a lot of people are starting to learn that, hey, there are a lot of different learning issues as well.

Processing issues. Not everybody processes well, not everybody processes well verbally. And so figuring that out for your child is also important. Like how do they learn as well.

And then really also just kind of cutting down all of the stimulation because it could be hard to process or to learn or to do what you need to do when the TV is on in the background and you've got the music going on over here, plus all this other stuff.

So really, you know, making an environment that is conducive to calming, regulating, learning and learning new skills, I think is also very important as well.

Well, Doctor Rachel, this has been fantastic. I know that you've had mostly kind of a private practice that you've been focusing on, and now you're branching out to the wider world and to help as many people as possible.

So I think that's fantastic. We need more, more doctors doing this. So I'm super excited, especially in this realm. There's not a lot that are and are helping children, and we're helping parents help children.

So definitely a need in my opinion. Where can people find more of your work and what have you got for him? Oh perfect. I am at raising children takes a village because I want parents to know that they're not in this alone, that it does take a village to help and support everybody.

And then pretty much everything we talked about like that is what my online coaching presence is going to be about to support you in all of the different ways of raising your child.

There's no one right answer. And so we know that there's a lot of skills and a lot to be had to raising children. Beautiful doctor Rachel McConnell, thanks for joining me today I appreciate it.

Thank you so much. I was so happy to be here. Awesome.