



Media Release

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Charity encourages parents to put the phone down for Children's Day

Think you spend too much time on the phone? How about going on a digital diet.

Save the Children's New Zealand are encouraging parents and caregivers to put the phone down on Children's Day, Sunday 3 March.

Children's Day – Te rā o ngā Tamariki, provides New Zealanders with an opportunity to celebrate and give time to children. It is a day of national awareness, annually recognised on the first Sunday of March. It was introduced by the first Children's Commissioner in 2000.

Save the Children's CEO Heidi Coetzee says: "The best thing we can give our kids is time. Everyone is busy these days and we spend a lot of time on our phones and devices. But kids need our attention too. On Children's Day, we'd like to see parents and caregivers turn off the technology, put the phone down and interact with the kids."

Ms Coetzee says, "Please don't get me wrong, we don't aim to make people feel bad but we want to draw attention to this growing problem. I love my phone as much as the next person but kids need our attention more than our phones. We need to put our kids first."

"Our obsession with our screens is a worldwide issue. Last year in Germany seven-year-old Emil Rustige organised a protest to encourage parents to pay attention to kids not their phones. And recently some swimming pools in Australia have put up signs reminding parents to "watch your child, not your mobile", while the kids are in the water.

Research shows that when parents put their phones down (or turn off the TV or shut down their computer) and talk to their kids seriously about what they are doing, their skills grow and their self-confidence blossoms.

"Responding with enthusiasm to a child's attempts to master new things ensures they will keep trying," Ms Coetzee says. "The "look at me's" you hear on the playground and in the kitchen, are your kids asking for your approval and encouragement. When you do look, and I mean really look, and smile and wave, the kids soak it up. They try again. They push themselves to the next level.

“Babies need our attention too. Their faces light up when you make eye contact and talk directly to them. Babies listen to the rhythm and sounds of our voices. They are learning the words for the things and people of their world. They are learning how those words get strung together.

“Some things parents could try is a ban on technology during dinner times, turning off notifications so you’re not distracted every time you hear a ping, or setting up some times when you won’t touch your phone like when eating dinner or tucking the kids in and lengthen the time a frequency gradually.

Ms Coetzee says, “Please give it a go on Children’s Day – make a start by putting the phone down for a day and have some fun with the kids, your kids will benefit in lots of ways.”

ENDS

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children’s unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

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