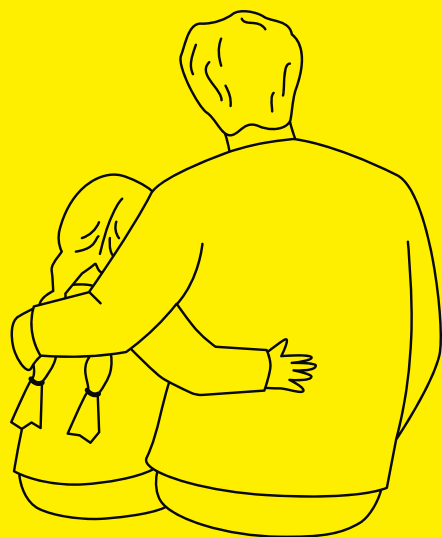




HEALTHY **YOUTUBE** **HABITS**

12 steps to help your family to
use YouTube healthily.

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This short guide is to help you implement healthy YouTube habits within your home. To save you time, if YouTube is a huge problem in your home, and you're noticing it impacts your child's behaviour daily, then the safest and most sensible thing to do would be to remove the use of YouTube altogether. Please remember, this guide isn't to shame screentime, we use screentime, this is to help raise awareness around the use of apps like YouTube that serve our children a continuous and endless stream of content.

Just for clarity, I love YouTube. As a platform, I feel it offers so much, and I've personally developed in so many areas from amazing creators all over the world.

However, this guide is specifically aimed at under-13s having uncontrolled access to YouTube. The aim here isn't to shame YouTube, it's to bring awareness and encourage parents to focus on moderation and consideration.

Before I dive in and share the checklist to help implement healthy YouTube habits, let's take a little look at what I see as the key issues with YouTube. To fully understand the issues, I first need to talk about dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that carries information between brain cells. It plays a role in how we feel pleasure. It's a big part of our unique human ability to think and plan. It helps us strive, focus, and find things interesting.

Let's take an example, if you eat a bag of crisps and enjoy it, you're likely to feel a little dopamine boost, then you're probably going to go back for more. That's because the effects of dopamine are temporary, your dopamine levels get a quick spike before dropping back down, making you crave another spike. This is how dopamine feeds into addiction.

"It's not you versus your child, but rather it's you versus a hijacked neural pathway. It's the dopamine you're fighting. And that's not a fair fight,"

Emily Cherkin, a screen time consultant

The main objective of YouTube is to keep users watching for longer, so it's continually learning

about our viewing habits, so it can serve us an endless stream of videos to keep us engaged. You also have the YouTubers themselves, who know exactly how to film and edit their videos to keep our kids watching. If you've watched any YouTuber you'll notice they're loud, there's rarely a breath taken, camera angles are cut every 3-5 seconds, b-roll footage is added, emojis, background sounds, and that's before even talking about the content of the video itself. None of that is by accident.

Let's explore 3 ways YouTube hijack our kids' brains...

#1 - Continuous stimulation

YouTube has your child's next video ready to watch before their current video is even finished. And the scary thing is, they know what your kid wants to watch before they do. They know how long your child spends watching a single video, they know the optimal video length to serve your child, and they know the type of video that will keep them engaged. So this continuous stimulation will keep spiking that dopamine. Furthermore, the video itself is likely spiking that dopamine too, be it a video of someone opening Pokemon cards, someone playing video games, unwrapping presents, unboxing expensive gifts or pranking friends. Everything is optimized to keep our kids watching for longer.

#2 - Addictive content

Making addictive content aimed at children uses the same science that's behind slot machines. Bright colours, flashing lights, happy cartoon characters, the latest 'trend', constantly changing to something new every 3-5 seconds. Anything that's proven to give a quick dopamine kick, a YouTuber will lean into again and again. The thing is, our kids' brains are still developing - and that continuous dopamine kick is having a serious impact on their developing brains.

We need to remember, that the aim of a YouTuber is watch time. Whether it's MrBeast or a 14yo who plays Minecraft, more watch time equals more views which equals more ad

revenue. The biggest creators are making tens of millions of dollars every year. And to keep that money rolling in, they need to understand the science of creating addictive videos.

“It feels like this is engineered to keep kids watching an endless stream of videos one after another and have them never be over. When you combine that with the algorithm-driven recommendations, which show content that parents have not viewed and have not approved, you can very easily get into situations where kids are watching content meant for older kids, that an individual parent or family finds objectionable.”

Amanda Kloer, a campaign director with the child safety group ParentsTogether

#3 - Fear-inducing content

YouTubers heavily influence the youth of today, and could in turn, negatively affect the behaviour and actions of these young viewers. Fear-inducing videos are popular, they appear fun, and they're addictive. Whether it's prank videos, videos of strangers doing random acts for money, or videos of creators forcing others to do dangerous acts, if your kid has uncontrolled access to YouTube, they'll likely stumble upon these videos.

“Children who repeatedly experience stressful and/or fearful emotions may underdevelop parts of their brain's prefrontal cortex and frontal lobe, the parts of the brain responsible for executive functions, like making conscious

choices and planning ahead. Watching fear-inducing videos causes the brain to receive a small amount of dopamine.”

Donna Volpitta, Ed.D., founder of The Center for Resilient Leadership

“YouTube is an ongoing conversation in my therapy practice, indicating a problem. Over the last five years, I’ve seen a rise in cases of children suffering from anxiety triggered by videos they have watched on YouTube.”

Natasha Daniels, LCSW, Founder of AnxiousToddlers.com, an educational website for parents.

Once I stumbled upon our oldest watching a

video of a YouTuber (with 17,000,000 subscribers) breaking into his friend's house and smashing up everything in his living room “for a laugh”. His friend came home and they joked about it. Banter! I was confused but now I get it. That video had over 20,000,000 views and generated \$150,000 - \$200,000 in ad revenue. Go figure.

When I was a kid if I wanted to watch my favourite show, I'd wait patiently for Kenan and Kel to start, or I'd grab a VHS and kick back with a Squeezelt whilst watching Home Alone for the 100th time. But times have changed, and that's ok. Everything we're surrounded with right now does bring so much good. Unfortunately, it makes our lives as parents even more difficult to navigate.

**Now let's explore 12 ways
you can start to begin to use
YouTube in a health way
within your home...**

☐ **Set Clear Boundaries**

- Establish weekly time limits for YouTube use.
- Communicate these limits clearly and consistently enforce them.

☐ **Use Parental Controls**

- Enable YouTube Kids for younger children, which offers more age-appropriate content.
- Set up the restricted mode to filter out inappropriate content on regular YouTube.

☐ **Sync YouTube from your phone to the TV**

- Select a show with your child on your TV.
- Sync your phone with the TV and put your phone out of reach, your child is then able to watch YouTube content without the need to skip to another show.

☐ **Turn off autoplay**

- You are able to turn off the autoplay feature.
- This prevents the continuous stimulation and the app will stop once a show has finished.

☐ **Monitor Viewing History**

- Regularly check the watch history to understand what your child is watching.
- Discuss any concerning content with your child to explain why it's inappropriate.

☐ **Create a Viewing Schedule**

- Allocate specific times of the day for watching YouTube, such as after homework or chores.
- Stick to the schedule to prevent excessive use.

☐ **Encourage Alternative Activities**

- Promote hobbies and activities that do not involve screens, such as reading, sports, or arts and crafts.
- Spend quality time together as a family engaging in these activities.

☐ **Set a Good Example**

- Be a role model by managing your own screen time effectively.
- Show your child that you also engage in offline activities and limit your own video watching.

☐ **Educate on Content Awareness**

- Teach your child about the nature of YouTube content, including the presence of ads and sponsors.
- Help them to think critically about what they watch.

☐ **Create Screen-Free Zones**

- Designate certain areas of the home, such as the dining room and bedrooms, as screen-free zones.
- Ensure these rules apply to everyone in the household.

☐ **Involve Children in Boundaries**

- Explain the importance of limits and involve your child in creating the rules.
- This helps them understand and respect the boundaries.

☐ **Regularly Review and Adjust**

- Periodically review the effectiveness of your current rules and make adjustments as needed.
- Stay informed about new features or changes in YouTube's policies that can help in managing your child's viewing experience.

THANKYOU