

# UNIT 3: LIVING HEALTHY LIVES WITH TECHNOLOGY

GRADE LEVEL 9-12

## Introduction Themes & Ideas

Mental Wellness  
Relationships  
Balance

## What Students Will Uncover

Students will strategize for how to live a more balanced life with technology through using advice from the movie, independently researching and working from their own ideas.

## Lesson Overview

This lesson takes a deeper look at one of the main themes from the film: **achieving balance with tech**. It works well for educators to run...

1. As a follow up to the Screening and Class Discussion Lesson Plan

OR

2. Independently, if you already know this is a subject you want to explore in particular.

We recommend that students watch the film prior to (or as part of) this lesson, but relevant clips are embedded throughout the guide if students do not have time to watch the whole film, or if they need a refresher on its content.

The lesson is organized around activities that can be completed during a class period. Educators are encouraged to review the lesson activities beforehand to assess suitability for class timing and teaching style. Educators can select and arrange the

activities in a way that suits them, which can include choosing to run activities over multiple periods or setting activities as homework assignments.

## Lesson Objectives

- Understand the research around how technology impacts their attention span and brain development
- Consider the ways that technology impacts how we relate to friends, family and peers
- Develop an understanding of what good digital citizenship looks like
- Take strategies and advice from the movie and come up with their own
- Compare their own experiences with those of the subjects in the film, utilizing empathy and understanding

## Vocabulary

*Digital citizenship* — using technology and the internet in a responsible and respectful way.

*Digital literacy* — the ability to use digital media tools like social media and the internet to learn, create, communicate and work.

*Media literacy* — the ability to analyze, create and evaluate media in a variety of forms, from movies to the internet to books.

## Lesson

### Lesson Introduction

#### Opening Discussion

- Ask students to recall the film they recently watched (*Screenagers: Growing Up In The Digital Age*).
- Prompt student recall by asking some general questions to ensure they remember.
  - ⇒ How do you balance the technology in your own life?
  - ⇒ Did watching the film give you any new ideas for how to balance tech?

- Explain that in today's lesson, you will be taking a closer look at one of the main themes of the film: **achieving balance with technology** and completing a number of activities together.

## Lesson Activities

### ACTIVITY 1

### Screen Time Interviews (homework)

*Students work individually.*

Interview 10 people in your life—friends, family or peers—about the amount of time they think they spend on screens a day. Have them choose from these categories: none, under three hours or over three hours.

**Calculate:** what percentage of the people you interviewed don't use social media at all? What percentage use less than 3 hours a day and what percentage use more?

**Reflect:** did the data you collect surprise you? Are people in your life on social media more or less than you thought?

**Key Learning:** Students collect data and use the information they find to make new assumptions about the world they live in.

### ***More discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Screen Time Interviews":***

#### **Screen frustrations**

Delaney uses her own family as an example of the struggle many parents and children face when it comes to balancing screen use. [In this clip](#), when she tries to have a conversation with her daughter, Tessa, about what her screen time limits should be, Tessa tells her that she doesn't need any screen time rules.

[In this clip](#), Delaney talks to a mother who explains how her frustrations have boiled over the edge in the past when it comes to her daughter's use of screens.

- ⇒ Do you agree with Tessa that there are no downsides to screen addiction? Why or why not?
- ⇒ If you were responsible for younger kids, would you have any screen time rules for them?

## ACTIVITY 2

### Teaching Self-control (15 mins)

*Students work individually and then discuss with classmates.*

If you were tasked to provide a child with a self-control exercise, what would it look like? Write out 3-5 exercises that might help a child develop self-control.

**Discuss** with the class. Did anyone have similar ideas? Why would these exercises impact self-control?

**Key Learning:** Students think deeply about emotion regulation and self-awareness by taking the time to develop ideas to further develop these qualities.

***More topics, discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Teaching Self-control":***

#### **Self-control**

Self-control is a hugely important skill which is crucial for finding balance in any situation.

In the film, [Delaney is surprised to learn that self-control is something that a child can develop over time.](#)

Psychologists have observed in studies that parents can help children strengthen their self-control "muscle" through practice. Children benefit from having consistent adult support in learning self-control.

It takes a lot of self-control to be able to turn off a video game or stop a streaming service from auto playing the next episode in a series.

And because they are in the process of developing their self-control, kids have a much harder time of resisting tech temptations than adults do.

#### **Kids on self-control**

Delaney [speaks to some kids](#) about their own struggles with finding tech balance.

After a 1:1 program was implemented at her school, Excel began to struggle with regulating how she used her device. [In this clip](#), she explains how she saw her grades saw a decline.

⇒ Where and when do you think you learned self-control?

⇒ How would you assess your own self-control?

### **Experts on self-control**

Research psychologist and educator [Larry Rosen explains that the young, undeveloped brain is highly impulsive and often distracted](#). A lot of work has to be done in order to develop adequate self-control, but once it is developed, it is hugely helpful in all aspects of life.

⇒ Do you agree that kids are "constantly distracted," as Larry Rosen put it?

Leading adolescent researcher [Laurence Steinberg, PhD asserts that self-control helps people function](#) better academically, socially and emotionally.

He even goes so far to assert that it can be a better predictor of academic success than anything else.

### **ACTIVITY 3**

## **Emotion Exercise (20 mins)**

*Students work individually.*

Create a visible representation of the emotion you are feeling right now. Draw it out on paper, create it using your device, etc.

**Reflect:** what do your classmates' visual representations look like? Students should share their representations if they feel comfortable doing so.

### ***More topics, discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Emotion Exercise":***

#### **Avoiding with screens**

Clinical psychologist Laura Kastner, PhD, [notes in the film](#) that screens can provide a refuge during adolescence, when social situations are often awkward.

Unfortunately, screens also make it easier for teens to miss opportunities for personal growth.

⇒ Do you notice peers using screens to avoid socially awkward situations? Do you ever use your screen to avoid awkwardness?

It is through social interaction and challenges that we develop our self-esteem and our sense of self.

## ACTIVITY 4

### Tech Tools for Balance (15 mins)

*Students work individually.*

Research a few apps and platforms that are intended to help people limit their screen time. Make a list of some that you feel like could help you or your classmates. We do have some on the Screenagers website on [this page](#).

**Reflect:** students should share why they chose the apps/platforms on their list.

**Key Learning:** Students explore resources that might be helpful for balancing the time they spend online.

***More topics, discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Tech Tools for Balance":***

#### **Setting limits**

Chris's grandma is concerned that he spends too much of his time playing video games, and she struggles to get him to reduce his playing time. She consults a counselor and learns that it is actually helpful to set limits and boundaries for kids. We all live with boundaries as adults and it's important to learn about boundaries early on.

The counselor also encourages Chris' grandma to help Chris explore other activities and interests, which they do together. Here is an [excerpt](#) from Chris's story.

#### **Students' "screens-off" strategies**

⇒ Do you have strategies or apps you use to keep yourself from being distracted by screen entertainment when you need to focus on homework?

The student in [this clip](#) shares some of her go-to techniques for keeping herself off screens while trying to get her homework done.

The student in [this clip](#) explains his friend group's rules about phones when they're out together.

#### **Not enough afterschool activities**

According to the Afterschool Alliance, [50% of children in the U.S. do not have access to after school activities](#). This number has gone up by about 10% in the last six years, creating a discrepancy where kids who do not have access might end up spending a lot more time on their devices. Meanwhile, extracurricular activities are associated with

better academic performance, better behavior and improved self-esteem. This lack of access disproportionately affects poorer Black and Latinx families.

- ⇒ Are you involved in afterschool activities? If so, how do you think they've shaped your life and learning?

### **Screen time balance**

The [Screenagers' website](#) contains many resources for making a plan to balance screen time in our lives.

- ⇒ Do you think you balance your screen time in a healthy way?
- ⇒ What have you observed about the way the adults in your life use their technology?

Ultimately, Delaney and her family implement multiple strategies, including creating a Screen Time Contract with Tessa's input, keeping violent video games out of the house, and making sure both children spend time on interests outside of their devices. They also resolve to meet weekly for short conversations about how technology fits into their lives, discussing both its positive and negative aspects.

### **ACTIVITY 5**

## **Digital Citizenship Guide (20 mins in class, project completed as a homework assignment)**

*Students work collaboratively.*

1. Stand at the board and ask your students what proper digital etiquette looks like.
2. Write down their answers, adding some of your own if they aren't mentioned.
3. Have your students divide themselves into a few small groups.
4. In their groups, students will be responsible for coming up with their own digital citizenship guide. These guides can take a variety of forms: a physical poster, a social media account, digital slides, etc. However, they must be able to explain why they chose the format they did for their guide.
5. Give them about half an hour or make this a homework assignment that they will share in class the next day.
6. Have each group present their guide.

**Key Learning:** Students collect data and decide how to present that data in a way that will be most effective with their audience.

***More discussion questions relating to "Digital Citizenship Guide":***

Digital citizenship programs at schools teach students strategies around the safe and ethical use of technology. Find links to digital citizenship curriculum programs in the [Resources](#) section of the Screenagers website.

⇒ Does your school teach digital citizenship? How would you describe responsible digital citizenship?

## Lesson Conclusion

Ask students to make a healthy screen time plan for themselves. It can look however they want it to look and be created on whichever medium they prefer. They might have big changes they'd like to make to their tech habits, or no changes at all.

Direct your students:

1. Write out your plan. Make sure you include goals that will keep you on track.
2. These can be shared or kept private.

## Frameworks

### CASEL® SEL Competencies

Our Curriculum & Lesson Plans are independently aligned by the Screenagers Team to the [CASEL® SEL Competencies Framework](#).

- **Social Awareness:** Understanding influences of organizations and systems of behavior.  
Understanding and expressing gratitude.  
Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones.  
Demonstrating empathy and compassion.
- **Self-management:** Self-discipline and self-motivation.
- **Relationship Skills:** Showing leadership in groups.
- **Self-awareness:** Integrating personal and social identities.



# AASL Standards Framework for Learners

Our Curriculum & Lesson Plans are also informed by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) *Standards Framework for Learners*. For additional information and resources, including a downloadable format for the *Learners Standards Framework*, for AASL's National Standards visit [standards.aasl.org](https://standards.aasl.org).

## Engage:

- **A. THINK** — Understanding the ethical use of information, technology, and media.  
Responsibly applying information, technology, and media to learning.
- **C. SHARE** — Sharing information resources in accordance with modification, reuse, and remix policies.  
Disseminating new knowledge through means appropriate for the intended audience.
- **D. GROW** — Inspiring others to engage in safe, responsible, ethical, and legal information behaviors.  
Personalizing their use of information and information technologies.

## Collaborate:

- **A. THINK** — Developing new understandings through engagement in a learning group.
- **D. GROW** — Actively contributing to group discussions.

## Include:

- **D. GROW** — Reflecting on their own place within the global learning community.

## Inquire:

- **B. CREATE** — Generating products that illustrate learning.