

# **Parents across the UK agree that technology is damaging their children and would like to go back to the 'old days' and pledge their support for the UK's National Unplugging Day.**

Submitted by: My Family Club

Thursday, 5 May 2016

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Parents across the UK agree that technology is taking over their lives and is damaging their children. Individuals are being urged to unplug on Sunday 26 June 2016 in celebration of the second annual National Unplugging Day in the UK.

National Unplugging Day is asking all individuals and families to put down their smartphones, tablets and computers for 24 hours to experience life unplugged.

Parenting experts warn that digital devices are harming relationships, stopping the young from developing face to face communication skills and teaching children that disappearing into digital devices for hours is a healthy activity.

The leading parenting website MyFamilyClub have carried out a study with over 2000 parents from across the UK which had some striking statistics and found that the average parent spends up to 5 hours per day on a smartphone. Typically their children are spending similar times using screens with 80% of children spending 4-5 hours per day on digital devices and with 15% of children spending in excess of 6 hours of screen time across various devices.

Nearly all the parents surveyed (87%) agreed that technology is damaging to their children's childhood and nearly all the parents surveyed (94%) wanted the tech industry to help educate them and offer guidelines for safe usage. The statistics also show that more than half of parents (51%) would like to go back to the days of no technology or smartphones and a life less complicated.

The survey also discovered that 41% of parents agreed that family times are ruined from digital distractions and 42% of parents said they use technology to calm their children down or to stop family arguments.

Parenting expert Gemma Johnson CEO and Founder of MyFamilyClub.co.uk says "As a parent I experience the struggle trying to juggle work and family life and the additional demands of existing in a digital world.

We all lead busy lives but it is so important to lead by example with our device usage, boundaries are set by the parents first We want to encourage the nation to put away their digital devices, unplug and pledge to spend time doing something different with their children such as going out for a bike ride, going the park, learning a new activity or taking a walk in the woods."

Johnson adds: We are encouraging people to unplug and engage in life without a digital connection and be present for our children. I'm urging all individuals to check how much they are using technology and look at the impact it is having on those around you. I certainly didn't realise how much time I was spending on my smart phone until my oldest son pointed it out, this is why this campaign is so important to me."

The statistics also revealed that more than a third of parents (37%) agree that communication with their

children is being harmed by today's technology.

As smartphones and advances in technology invade our daily activities, parents are increasingly less present and available for their children and mental health officials are very worried on the long term effects this may have on our children.

Dr Mark Silvert, Medical Director & Consultant Psychiatrist said: "With the evolution of the internet and smart phones, families can now often be found in the room together but not actually spending any real time bonding or sharing experiences. With modern families comprising of two full time working parents, it can be common to find both parents glued to their laptops or phones and despite wanting to spend more time with their children they are pulled in the direction of work via technology. Work does not end when you leave your office anymore. I fully support National Unplugging day for the health and wellbeing of families throughout the UK."

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The National Day of Unplugging recognises the value and importance of technology in today's society whilst trying to encourage people, especially families and young children and the connected generations who have grown up with ever-present technology, to be more mindful of their digital usage. This day is not intended to be a one-off, but rather a starting point to encourage people of all ages to embrace a healthy lifestyle by regularly setting aside time away from their digital devices.

To set families up for success during the National Unplugging Day on Sunday 26 June MyFamilyClub is offering tips and advice to families who want to enjoy technology free family time. Individuals and families are invited to get involved with the campaign sharing what they plan to do when not using technology by uploading a photo to MyFamilyClub's social media platforms using the following hashtag #GoGadgetFree #Unplug2016

Facebook: MyFamilyClub

Twitter: @MyFamilyClub

-Ends-

## NOTES TO EDITOR

2217 parents were surveyed during April and resulted in the statistics above.

## Interviews

Gemma Johnson, mum of three and Creator of National Unplugging Day is available for interview.

Dr Mark Silvert is available for interviews.

## National Unplugging Day

National Unplugging Day happens for the second time in the UK on Sunday 26 June where families will unplug from their devices to spend time with their loved ones without using technology. The National Day of Unplugging recognises the value and importance of technology in today's society whilst trying to encourage people (especially families and young children, the connected generations who have grown up with ever-present technology), to be more mindful of their digital usage. This day is not intended to be a one-off, but rather a starting point to encourage people of all ages to embrace a healthy lifestyle by regularly setting aside time away from their digital devices. [www.nationalunpluggingday.co.uk](http://www.nationalunpluggingday.co.uk)

## MyFamilyClub

<http://www.MyFamilyClub.co.uk> helps parents make, save & manage their money. We're here for parents with children of all ages, from birth until the day they leave home. On the site you'll find tips and guides on money-saving, money making and budgeting, as well as tools to help you manage your family finances. MyFamilyClub also rounds up the best vouchers, offers, deals and discounts, and tells you where to find your household essentials at the best prices every week.

## Gemma Johnson

Gemma is the go-to media spokesperson regarding family finance with recent media credits that include ITV Daybreak, BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio Five Live, The Independent, The Observer, Woman's Own, Woman, Prima and many more. Gemma has also been a guest speaker at the Baby Show and Women Outside the Box, the first female festival of entrepreneurship and for the Government's agency Love Food Hate Waste. Gemma's accolades include winner of the WOW Woman in Finance 2010, and Mum Entrepreneur of the Year 2009.

## Dr Mark Silvert

### Medical Director & Consultant Psychiatrist (MBBS MSc MRCPsych)

Mark is a GMC registered General Adult Psychiatrist in London working both in the NHS and the Private Sector. He holds a Consultant position in the NHS having worked at The Royal Free, Chelsea and Westminster and Hillingdon Hospitals. He qualified from St Bartholomew's and the Royal London Hospitals having won the British Medical Journal's scholarship. He then went on to become a Clinical Fellow at Harvard Medical School in Boston, USA publishing research into Emergency Psychiatry.

He also works in the media, advising and writing about mental health for journals around the world including his own column on the Huffington Post. He is a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

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