

THE

PARENT

INSIDER

flipside  
student ministry

Winter and  
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## My Son was Addicted to a Smartphone

The patterns I saw in my child's behavior opened my eyes to the damage my phone had done.

By Sabrina McDonald

I bought my first smartphone about a year into my journey as a widow. At the time, it felt like a lifesaver.

I was a stay-at-home, single mom of two toddlers. My son, Ben, was 3 years old, and my daughter, Katherine, was around a year old. I had very little time away from my kids, and my social life consisted mainly of church activities. So my smartphone companion gave me friends to talk to at any moment, a connection to the outside world.

There was another important benefit that my new smartphone gave me: babysitting. It was like a magic pacifier—especially for my little boy, who was very active and high strung.

When Ben screamed in the grocery store, all I had to do was pull out the smartphone. He sat quietly in the buggy, blissfully occupied for as long as I wanted to shop. When I needed some quiet to deal with business, it gave me hours of peace. It was

useful in any situation that required calm—church, doctor's offices, government buildings ... The smartphone provided a guaranteed win over the battle of fits.

I heard all the rhetoric about the dangers of screen usage and how children were turning into zombies. But I reasoned that my child must be exceptional because I saw no signs of problems. All

he did was play child-friendly learning apps and Sonic the Hedgehog. I restricted what he could and could not view, especially after the time he discovered YouTube and came across a hodge-podge Barbie video screaming b\*\*\*\*.

Other than content, though, I didn't understand why people were concerned about kids and smartphones. After all, my brother and I played games like Sonic and Mario Brothers as kids. Our brains didn't turn into mush. What was the big deal?

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## Teen Fast Stats

**Less than 3% of teens get the recommended 8 or 9 hours of sleep a day. ( Pediatrics )**

**28% of teens ages 13-18 have tried some type of medication to help them sleep; including over the counter cold medicine, antihistamines and prescription sleep medicine. (C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health)**

## In the News: XANAX ABUSE

Sadly, we have to report on another teen substance abuse trend. Substance abuse and addiction specialists are warning parents to be aware of a growing trend toward the abuse of anti-anxiety and sedative drugs known as benzodiazepines, or "benzos." This includes drugs with names like Xanax, Valium, Ativan, and Klonopin. One of the most popular drugs being abused right now is Xanax, which teens erroneously believe are a safer alternative to prescription opioids and heroin, but which provide similar effects. Experts are warning that these drugs, oftentimes found in the medicine cabinets of parents and grandparents, can be just as deadly as opioids, especially in combination with other drugs and alcohol. Of course, we need to exert a preventive influence on our kids when it comes to drugs and alcohol. Talk to your kids about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. Teach them to run to Christ, rather than to drugs, as a source of comfort, hope, and healing.

## Latest Research: Sticking with Difficult Kids

Youth workers are often aware that the kids who seem to be the most difficult to work with are typically the kids who need our time and attention the most. You see, kids who have experienced extreme forms of difficulty, brokenness, and trauma at home and in other areas of their lives tend to act out in ways that are inappropriate, disruptive, and horribly annoying. Yet, the behaviors that could easily be interpreted as something intended to push us away, are actually an indicator of a deep need for involvement in their lives. Recently, researchers at the University of Buffalo completed a study of young adults who had experienced difficult circumstances during school-aged years. Subjects consistently indicated that they had wanted adults to stick with them and not give up on them. Isn't that what Jesus does with us as he shows us consistent mercy and grace? All of us can do better at reaching out to troubled kids, sticking with them, and showing them the love of Christ.

# TL;DR

## Trending: New Dictionary Terms

Each and every year, editors of the most popular dictionaries have to make some difficult choices. They decide which words should be removed from the dictionary, and which new words should be added. What makes this task necessary is the rapidly changing nature of our culture. This year's edition of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary has added a host of new food and beverage related words that reflect our culture's growing obsession with carefully curated eating and drinking experiences. Numerous other words relate to all the new technology we've incorporated into our lives. One new word that jumps out is the abbreviation TL;DR, which stands for "too long, didn't read." The addition of TL;DR serves as an indicator that we've filled our lives with so much busyness, that we are always in a hurry. For our kids, a hurried and over-scheduled life adds up and can cause them to crumble. God made us for a rhythm of work and rest. Are you getting your kids to slow down?

## Texting while Driving

As with all things, God's good gift of technology can be used properly, or it can be used improperly. One of the most serious issues related to smartphone use is the issue of texting while driving. Of course, none of us is exempt from engaging in this dangerous and sometimes deadly practice. But teenagers, who are by nature far more impulsive than adults, are especially prone to texting while driving. New research in the Journal of Adolescent Health is telling us that nearly 40% of teen drivers in the United States say they text while driving. And, in an especially deadly combination, those who admitted to drinking and driving were nearly two times more likely to text while driving than those who did not drink and drive. Parents, we must teach our kids that driving is a privilege that must be engaged in with great care. We must teach them that texting while driving is always wrong, and we must practice what we preach. All of us must learn to drive safely to the glory of God.



Source: CPYU

## Teens Dropping Out of Organized Sports

Without a doubt, youth sports can provide many benefits. There's the benefit of good health and improved physical fitness. Sports can teach cooperation and teamwork. Play can be fun. And there are lessons to be learned about life from both winning and losing. But rather than reaping these benefits, too many kids are paying the price that comes from too much parental pressure to win or be the best. Before they're even halfway through elementary school, many of our kids have already chosen one sport to specialize in and play year-round. Times have changed since the days when most "organized" sports were organized by kids who converged on a neighborhood backyard after school. The only shouting done by adults were the shouts summoning kids home for dinner. When it came to play, ten year-old kids couldn't get enough. Today, they say they've had more than enough. Take stock of what you're teaching your kids. Stop the shouting and let your kids have fun.



# Featured Films: Coming this Winter

Opens January 19, 2019



**Cast:** James McAvoy, Bruce Willis, Anya Taylor-Joy, Sarah Paulson, Samuel L. Jackson, Spencer Treat Clark, Charlayne Woodard

**PG-13**– violence including some bloody images, thematic elements, and language.

## Plot Summary

Following the conclusion of *Split*, Glass finds Dunn pursuing Crumb's superhuman figure of The Beast in a series of escalating encounters, while the shadowy presence of Price emerges as an orchestrator who holds secrets critical to both men.

Opens March 29, 2019



**Cast:** Colin Farrell, Michael Keaton, Danny DeVito, Eva Green, Alan Arkin, Nico Parker, Finley Hobbins

**NR**– It has not received a rating yet, but based off other Disney live action remakes, it will probably be PG.

## Plot Summary

A young elephant, whose oversized ears enable him to fly, helps save a struggling circus, but when the circus plans a new venture, *Dumbo* and his friends discover dark secrets beneath its shiny veneer.

Check out [www.pluggedin.com](http://www.pluggedin.com) for more information on new movie releases

Other Movies coming to Theaters This Winter

Title	Rating	Red Flags	Genre	Starring
<b>The Lego Movie 2</b> Opens Feb. 8	NR	N/A	Animated / Family	Chris Pratt, Elizabeth Banks, Tiffany Haddish, Will Arnett, Stephanie Beatriz, Charlie Day, Alison Brie, Nick Offerman
<b>Captain Marvel</b> Opens March 8	NR	N/A	Action / Fantasy	Brie Larson, Samuel L. Jackson, Ben Mendelsohn, Djimon Hounsou, Lee Pace, Lashana Lynch, Gemma Chan, Annette Bening
<b>Shazam!</b> Opens April 5	NR	N/A	Adventure / Comedy	Zachary Levi, Mark Strong, Asher Angel, Jack Dylan Grazer, Djimon Hounsou, Faithe Herman, Grace Fulton, Ian Chen
<b>Under the Silver Lake</b> Opens April 19	R	strong sexual content, graphic nudity, violence, language and drug use	Mystery / Comedy	Andrew Garfield, Riley Keough, Topher Grace, Patrick Fischler, Grace Van Patten, Zosia Mamet, Jeremy Bobb
<b>Avengers: Endgame</b> Opens Nov. 9	NR	N/A	Action / Fantasy	Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Josh Brolin, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Evans

### **Trouble brewing**

I relied on the smartphone throughout my son's preschool years. My daughter enjoyed it, too, but not to the same degree. (Even though she could work the phone as easily as I could by the time she was 18 months old.) My son almost couldn't live without it.

Each day, we fought over when and how long he could use the smartphone. It was a good bargaining tool, though, because he would do almost anything to get the chance to play with it.

It wasn't until he started school that I began to see the effects of prolonged device usage in my little boy. The fits he used to throw to get phone time as a toddler turned into violent rage. When I picked him up after school, his first question was, "Can I use the phone?" and the begging didn't stop all evening. If I didn't let him have the phone as much as he wanted when he wanted, he would kick, scream, and sometimes even threaten to hit me.

For so long I had excused similar behavior. I thought he was still grieving from his father's death, or maybe it was an issue of "boys will be boys." But I started to worry. Instead of maturing and showing signs of developing self-control, he seemed to be getting worse.

The teachers at school noticed his lack of self-control. Even though he reined in the rage at school, he received pink slips almost every day for everything from not keeping his hands to himself to talking while the teacher talked.

One of his teachers told me to talk to my pediatrician, insinuating I needed to put him on meds for ADD or ADHD. But he was so young. I didn't think it was fair to medicate him when I hadn't tried anything else.

### **Noticing a pattern**

I put him on supplements, vitamins, and tried other diet restrictions. I started looking into therapy. In the meantime, I spanked him and lectured him, took away toys and privileges in order to get him to pay attention and behave. Nothing seemed to get his attention ... except losing phone privileges.

His reaction to taking the phone away was like I had declared I was going to chop off one of his fingers. He begged, pleaded, cried, made a zillion promises, and when the nice stuff didn't work, he started threatening to hurt me, his sister, or break my things.

It scared me. Such violence from a child was mind boggling to me. But I pushed through and stood my ground.

Then I began to notice a pattern. On the days when I gave him phone time, he was unreasonable and out of control. But when he lost phone privileges and went 24 hours without access, he became a different child—calm, loving,

forgiving. He paid better attention and did what he was told without lashing out. We were able to have rational conversations.

So I experimented a little. I would take away the phone for three or four days and then give it back to him. Without fail, his actions and attitudes matched his phone usage. I couldn't even give it to him for 10 minutes—just that bit of stimulus was enough to ruin his attitude for the entire day.

It was clear. My son had to go cold turkey. No more games of any kind.

### **Life without games**

I sat Ben down, looked him in the eyes, and lovingly explained that his screen games had to go away. He was crushed, of course; indignant, even. I asked him if he believed I loved him more than anything in the world. He said yes. I asked him if he knew I only do what's best for him. He said yes.

And then I told him he was losing his phone privileges. He begged, pleaded, and promised a zillion promises, as usual. But this time, I was resolved. There was no more begging, no more chances. I explained he wasn't being punished. I was doing this because the phone was hurting him.

It took about two weeks for my little boy to recover from his addiction. Like a junkie, he experienced withdrawals that resulted in outbursts, tears, and anything else that would get that phone back.

It wasn't long, however, until he got into the car after school, and instead of asking for the phone, he told me about his day. The pink slips stopped coming home almost immediately. The rage and violence faded away, and my little boy was lighter, freer.

It has been about four years since I took games away. I have begun to give him access to a smartphone, but he only has the ability to play music and take pictures. The rest of the apps and internet access have been removed (with the exception of the weather app, which is a recent addition).

Since I took the gaming away, Ben has excelled in school and learned to control his compulsivity. He's one of the teachers' favorite students. Sometimes I can't believe he's the same child, but mostly, I can't believe I didn't see it when he was struggling.

### **My advice, for what it's worth**

I am not a technology expert by any means. I'm not a child psychiatrist. But I can recognize a pattern when I see one.

In the last six months or so, I have talked to a handful of



moms who have confided in me that their sons and/or daughters are out of control. A couple of the kids are on all kinds of medication that has done little to no good. Another child was asked not to come back to church functions because she's not able to control her outbursts. One child is young like Ben was, and he's struggling in school and the teachers are suggesting medication.

Each time I talk to a mom at the end of her wits, I ask, "Does your child like to play video games on a console, smartphone, or tablet?" Without fail, mom gives a resounding yes.

As we talk about the issue, each mom begins to see the similarities in my child and hers. Her eyes open to the possibility that her child might have a game addiction. It's hard to believe something seemingly so innocent—so helpful, even—could do so much damage to a child's mind and emotions.

There is more research coming out daily about the dangers of excessive screentime for kids, particularly young children. The Center for Parenting Education reports children and teenagers who are on technology for more than two hours a day "may develop a stimulus addiction" and may display hyperactivity, aggression, fear, insensitivity, and an appetite for violence.

Here's a quote from *Psychology Today*:

*When every finger swipe brings about a response of colors and shapes and sounds, a child's brain responds gleefully with the neurotransmitter dopamine, the key component in our reward system that is associated with feelings of pleasure. Dopamine hits in the brain can feel almost addictive, and when a child gets too used to an immediate stimuli response, he will learn to always prefer smartphone-style interaction—that is, immediate gratification and response—over real-world connection.*

I can certainly vouch for both of these findings.

Interestingly, not long ago, Ben went to a friend's house for the first time after school one day. When I picked him up, I could tell something was wrong with him. I saw the same frustration and aggression from phone use. Turns out, he and his friend were playing racing games most of his visit. Not all kids struggle like my son and these other kids. My daughter could play video games to her heart's content, and she wouldn't care to pick it up again for a month. But, in my opinion, the potential for bad outweighs the good. So, neither of my kids are allowed to play games on the smartphone or anywhere else. For what it's worth, here's

my best advice to moms about screen usage:

**1. If your child is struggling, take devices away permanently.**

Before you try drugs or therapy, take away all devices. It never crossed my mind that the problem with my child could be outside stimuli. Give your child's brain a chance to heal naturally. Stand your ground, and take it away for your child's own good. Wait two weeks for improvement. If you don't see progress by that time, then consider other forms of help.

**2. Don't worry about computer illiteracy.**

Children get healthy, monitored screen time at school. They will probably get better computer literacy skills with educational programs than what they learn with video games at home.

**3. Find out what your child likes to do (other than games) and indulge it!**

I have discovered that kids with device addictions are usually above-average smart. The games are appealing because they can keep up with the child's fast-paced thinking. The problem is that when the screen goes away, the world seems to slow down. It's boring and under-stimulating. So, your child needs something to occupy his or her hungry brain.

My son has developed all sorts of hobbies that are far outside of my capacity for thinking. He has conquered about 10 different types of Rubik's cubes. He builds complicated marble runs and elaborate domino towers. At one time, he was creating intricate mazes that filled an entire page, and another time he got on a map-making kick. Once, he taped six pieces of paper together and drew a detailed highway map with on and off ramps and figure eight interchanges. If you channel your child's mind onto something other than video games, you may be surprised at what he or she can do that you never thought possible.

**4. Restrict, restrict, restrict.**

If your child must have a device (schools may require them, for example), use the restrictions built in to the operating system. Remove apps from the smartphone (It's easy to Google, "How to take YouTube app off smartphone.")

Your child won't like restrictions. That's okay. They don't like it when we make them eat their vegetables, or make them go to bed on time, or force them to do their homework, either. But we do it because it's good for them. We do it because we love them.

And one day, they will be thankful we did.

Article found at [www.familylife.com](http://www.familylife.com)

# FlipSide Events this Winter and Spring

## January

**5th- Perfect North Slopes-** We will be going to Perfect North. Meet at FFC at 5 pm. Bring \$20 for tubing and additional money for dinner. Will return at 10 pm. Sign up in the youth room!

**20th-21st- FlipSide Lockin-** Our annual lockin will begin at 6 pm and go to 6 am. Cost is \$10. We will have inflatable race courses, food, games and more! Sign up in the youth room!

## February

**8th- Movie Night-** We will have a movie night. Movie, time and place are yet to be determined. More info to come.

**17th- After Glow-** With no school on Monday, we will be having an earlier youth night followed by an "After Glow", which is just hanging out, playing games, eating food...all the important stuff! If your teen will need a ride home, let us know!

## March

**8th-10th - Disciple Now Retreat-** Our annual winter retreat takes place in the homes of FFC members who host our leaders and students. Cost is \$35. theme for the weekend- Empowered to Change the World. We will have bible study, worship, games and more. Pick up a registration form in the youth room starting January 6th.

**10th- No FlipSide-** There will be no FlipSide due to the DNow Retreat.

## April

**13th- The Web Extreme-** We will be heading to the The Web in West Chester for Go Karts, Laser Tag, Mini Golf, Arcade games and more! More info to come.

**21st- No FlipSide-** There will be no FlipSide due to Easter.

\*Pick up a full Winter/Spring schedule in the youth room.

### NEWS FLASH!

We will be doing outreach activities every time a 5th Sunday comes around. This means we will leave FFC and go do some type of service. What we will be doing will be announced the week prior.

### Coming in 2019

Disciple Now- March 8-10  
Mission Trip- Aug. 3-10

### What are we learning at FlipSide?

**Jan. 6-** Life in 6 Words- GOD

**Jan. 13-** Life in 6 Words- OUR

**Jan. 20-** New Creation- Colossians 1:15-23

**Jan. 27-** Life in 6 Words- SINS

**Feb. 3-** Life in 6 Words- PAYING

**Feb. 10-** Life in 6 Words- EVERYONE

**Feb. 17-** Life in 6 Words- LIFE

**Feb. 24-** Ask the Leader Night

**March 3-** Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 1:1-11

**March 17-** Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 1:12-21

**March 24-** Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 2:1-22

**March 31-** Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 3:1-13

**April 7-** Study of 2 Peter- 2 Peter 3:14-18

**April 14-** Easter Lesson- Empty is a Good thing

**April 28-** Study of 2 John- 2 John 1:1-13

# JANUARY 2019

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
		1	2	3	4	5 Perfect North @ 5pm
6 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide Lockin @ 6pm	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	28	29	30	31		

# FEBRUARY 2019

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
					1	2
3 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6pm	4	5	6	7	8 Movie Night	9
10 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6— Afterglow after	18 No School	19	20	21	22	23
24 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	25	26	27	28		

# MARCH 2019

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
					1	2
3 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6	4	5	6	7	8 Disciple Now	9 Disciple Now
10 Disciple Now No FlipSide	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 FlipSide @ 6 / 31 FlipSide @ 6	25	26	27	28	29	30

# APRIL 2019

S U N	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	8	9	10	11	12	13 The Web Extreme
14 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 SS @ 9:30 am No FlipSide- Easter	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 SS @ 9:30 am FlipSide @ 6 pm	29	30				