

'POSITIVE APPROACHES TO BEHAVIOUR'

ADHD & SCREENS

WHEN SCREENS FEEL LIKE THE ONLY CALM THING

For many young people with ADHD, screens offer something their brain rarely gets in day-to-day life: focus without friction. The digital world is predictable, rewarding and easier to manage than the constant demands of the real one. What looks like “obsession” is often a genuine moment of nervous system relief.

WHEN DOPAMINE DRIVES THE PULL

ADHD brains typically have lower baseline dopamine and fewer dopamine receptors. Screens deliver rapid, consistent dopamine hits through novelty, achievement and instant feedback. It's not that a child prefers screens over you — it's that their brain finally feels balanced, engaged and regulated.

WHEN HYPERFOCUS TAKES OVER

Hyperfocus isn't intentional. It's a state the ADHD brain slips into when something offers enough stimulation to “lock in”. During screen use, transitions become genuinely harder because the brain is chemically and cognitively absorbed.

This isn't defiance — it's neurology.



WHEN EXECUTIVE FUNCTION MAKES STOPPING DIFFICULT

ADHD isn't a lack of willpower. It's difficulty with task-shifting, time awareness and impulse control. Turning a screen off requires multiple executive skills in quick succession, which can feel overwhelming. Without structure and support, the child's system tips into dysregulation.

WHEN THE DIGITAL WORLD FEELS SAFER

Screens reduce social pressure, minimise unpredictability and offer clear rules. For many ADHD children, this lowers anxiety and reduces the emotional load of the day.

What adults often call “avoidance” is sometimes the child seeking safety and recovery.

WHEN UNDERSTANDING CHANGES EVERYTHING

Recognising the brain-based reasons behind screen struggles helps parents move from conflict to connection. With predictable routines, sensory bridges, clear cues and co-regulation, children can manage screens in healthier, calmer ways — without shame, punishment or fear.

©2025 The Contented Child. All rights reserved.