

# Sharpening Our Focus to Deepen Our Impact



HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL  
TEACHING HOSPITAL



Boston Children's Hospital

## WELCOME

The world in which young people are growing up today is dramatically different from the world of just a generation ago. Screens are integrated into our daily lives — they are in our pockets, atop classroom desks, on our wrists, inside our cars, and in the hands of even the youngest children.

According to recent research, adolescents report being in front of screens an average of 8.5 hours per day and 84% report that they check their phones at least hourly — even during the school day. These elevated levels of screen use aren't unique to teens: 80% of parents of children ages 5-11 say their child uses a tablet computer and 63% say the same about a smartphone; 60% of children 11 or under who use a smartphone regularly began to use one before age 5.

**The negative effects of technology and digital media are well-publicized. Interactivity demands our attention and immersion in another world can make us lose track of time, place, and priorities.**

For some young people, the effects can be physical, mental, and social. In more extreme cases, can harm their ability to succeed in school, to build and maintain meaningful relationships with friends and family, and to fully experience the world around them.

**However, we have learned from our research involving young people that technology and interactive media can also enable positive experiences.** Online games and communication were particularly instrumental in maintaining adolescent friendships during the pandemic lockdowns and 64% of parents reported that their kids' time online the summer after lockdown led to stronger friendships. Interactive media can also enable young people to try on new identities, form relationships across boundaries, and become engaged in social and political issues important to them.

**We believe that kids' use of technology and interactive media and their healthy development don't have to be mutually exclusive.**

In our increasingly immersive digital environment, it's of the utmost importance that digital "power tools" are designed with the wellness of their youngest and most vulnerable users in mind. It is also crucial that the support systems surrounding our youth — their parents, teachers, and doctors — are engaged in supporting them to learn to use technology and media in healthy, respectful, and kind ways.

**The Digital Wellness Lab's expertise in rigorous child health and development science enables the application of our research to both the design and use of technology and interactive media. We look forward to playing an active role in what comes next.**

To learn more about our work, visit [DigitalWellnessLab.org](https://DigitalWellnessLab.org)

To join us on our mission, please contact Cori Stott, Administrative Director, at [dwl@childrens.harvard.edu](mailto:dwl@childrens.harvard.edu)

## HOW WE DEFINE DIGITAL WELLNESS

Digital wellness is a positive state of mental, physical, and social-emotional health pursued through intentional, authentic, and balanced engagement with technology and interactive media.

## THE CHALLENGE

Kids today live in a digitally-saturated world, but we are only just beginning to understand how technology and interactive media affect their mental, physical, and social-emotional health and development and their ability to thrive. As technology is further embedded within our daily lives, it becomes increasingly important that we use science, rather than emotion, to make decisions about the design — and use — of interactive media.

---

## OUR VISION

**We believe that by following the science, we can create an empathetic and respectful world in which our kids can grow up healthy, smart, and kind.**

---

## OUR MISSION

**The Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School seeks to understand and promote positive and healthy digital media experiences for young people, from birth through young adulthood.**

---

## OUR CORE VALUES

We are **ambitious & optimistic**. We believe we can change the paradigm for how young people use technology and interactive media.

We follow the data and base our guidance on a foundation of **scientific evidence**.

We are **open-minded & nimble**. We are willing to change our approach based on research outcomes, innovations in technology, and needs voiced by young people and their families.

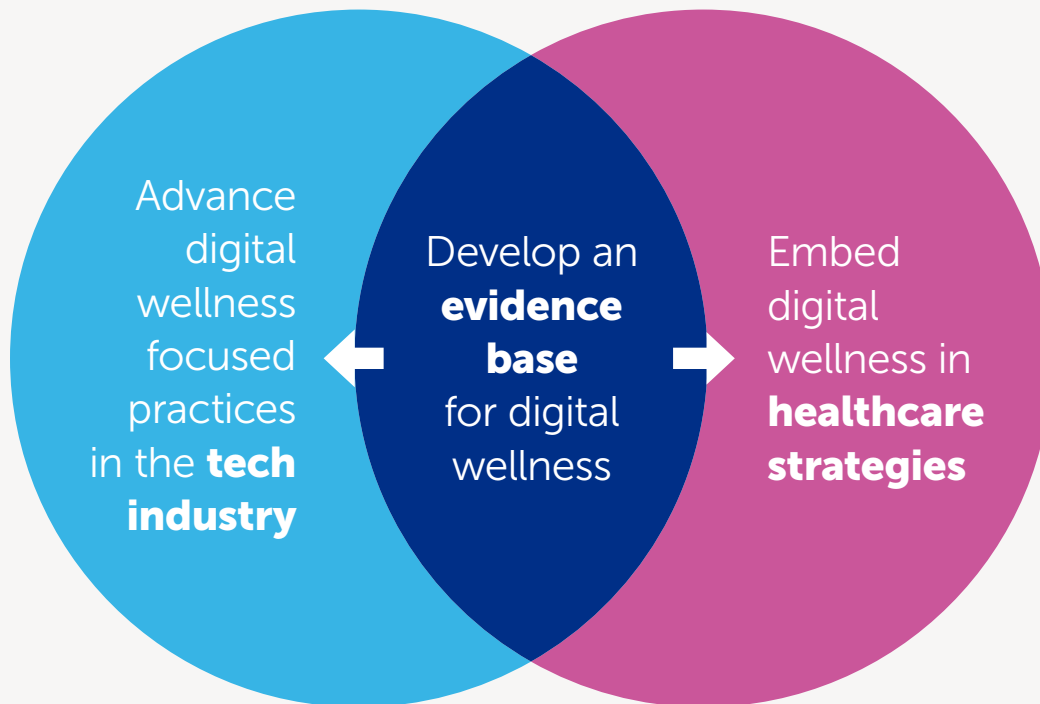
We rely on the diverse experiences and expertise of our team, colleagues, and collaborators and strive to make our work **inclusive** of, and **relevant** for, all young people.

We are **relentlessly focused** on identifying and following the most impactful paths for change.

We are **introspective & empathetic**. We learn from our mistakes and show up for each other without judgment.

To learn more about our work, visit [DigitalWellnessLab.org](https://DigitalWellnessLab.org)

To join us on our mission, please contact Cori Stott, Administrative Director, at [dwl@childrens.harvard.edu](mailto:dwl@childrens.harvard.edu)



## HOW WE CREATE IMPACT

**Develop an evidence base for digital wellness** by conducting, translating, and distributing, rigorous research on the positive and negative effects of technology and interactive media use on young people to inform our progress towards positive health and development for every child, teen, and young adult.



**Advance digital wellness focused design, delivery, and marketing practices in the tech industry** by working to understand their current and future challenges and to translate our research outcomes into actionable insights to share with company decision-makers to enable healthy interactive media experiences for youth.



**Embed digital wellness in healthcare strategies** by providing evidence-based knowledge and tools designed to move towards a more standardized understanding of, and approach to digital wellbeing, and to empower clinicians in their ability to help young people and their families build and maintain healthy behaviors.

To learn more about our work, visit [DigitalWellnessLab.org](https://DigitalWellnessLab.org)

To join us on our mission, please contact Cori Stott, Administrative Director, at [dwl@childrens.harvard.edu](mailto:dwl@childrens.harvard.edu)