TECHNOFERENCE

Staying connected in a world full of distractions

A practical introduction inspired by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' Office of Resilience

PAUSE THE SCROLL. PRIORITIZE CONNECTION.

What is technoference?

Technoference is when technology interrupts or interferes with our interactions and relationships—especially when a screen pulls attention away from a child who is trying to connect.

This is not about blaming caregivers. It is about noticing patterns and making small, realistic changes.

A familiar moment

A child starts telling you something. Your phone buzzes. Your eyes shift to the screen.

The key idea

The interruption may be brief—but repeated interruptions can add up.

Why it matters

ATTUNEMENT

Children rely on adults to notice cues, listen, respond, and help them feel understood.

DEVELOPMENT

Face-to-face interaction supports language, social learning, and emotional regulation.

BELONGING

Small moments of attention help children feel seen, safe, and valued.

The goal is not perfect attention every minute. It is to protect regular moments of warm, responsive connection.

What the data tells us

72%

of NJ parents surveyed said they feel they use their phones too much around their children.

69%

of NJ parents surveyed said their children sometimes wish they spent less time on their phones.

46%

of teens say a parent is at least sometimes distracted by a phone when they try to talk.

The NJ DCF survey included nearly 2,500 New Jersey parents. The teen statistic is from Pew Research Center (2024).

Use statistics as a conversation starter—not as a reason to shame families.

How technoference can show up

- Checking a notification during a conversation or play
- Scrolling while a child is sharing a story
- Using a phone at meals, bedtime, or during transitions
- Being physically present but mentally pulled into messages or work
- Reacting to a screen before responding to a child

Quick self-check

"If my child could describe this moment, would they say I was available to them?"

Technology is often necessary. The opportunity is to be more intentional about when and how we use it.

TRY ONE CHANGE AT A TIME

Small shifts that strengthen connection

01 CREATE TECH-FREE ZONES

Choose a few moments or places—such as meals or bedtime—to put devices away.

02 PAUSE NOTIFICATIONS

Silence non-urgent alerts during play, conversation, and routines.

03 SCHEDULE UNPLUGGED TIME

Build in a short daily window for reading, play, a walk, or simply talking.

04 MODEL MINDFUL USE

Explain when you need a device, then return your attention when finished.

Try the “pause and reconnect” routine

1

PAUSE

Notice the urge to check the phone.

2

PARK IT

Place the device out of reach or face down.

3

LOOK & LISTEN

Make eye contact when comfortable; listen without multitasking.

4

RESPOND

Reflect what you heard, ask a question, or join the activity.

Even a short moment of full attention can communicate: “You matter to me.”

REFLECT & DISCUSS

What is one moment we can protect?

Think about a daily routine when connection matters: meals, pick-up, play, homework, or bedtime.

Make it specific

“During dinner, we will put phones in a basket for 20 minutes.”

“After work, I’ll take five minutes to reconnect before checking messages.”

Choose one small step. Share it with someone who can encourage you.

Connection over perfection.

KEEP LEARNING

Explore the NJ Office of Resilience resources

Technoference campaign	Overview, tips, family media plan, videos	https://www.nj.gov/dcf/public-information/campaigns/technoference.shtml
Statistics & research findings	Research citations and data points	https://www.nj.gov/dcf/divisions-offices/oor/technoference_findings.shtml
Technoference infographic	Downloadable summary and practical tips	https://www.nj.gov/dcf/OOR-Technoference.pdf
Technoference dictionary	Definitions of terms such as phubbing and attention residue	https://www.nj.gov/dcf/divisions-offices/oor/technoference_dictionary.shtml
Office of Resilience	Mission, programs, and related resources	https://www.nj.gov/dcf/divisions-offices/oor/index.shtml

Campaign led by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Office of Resilience. This presentation summarizes public resources and is not an official NJ DCF publication.

A small pause can make room for a big connection.

Put the phone down. Look up. Be there.

Inspired by the NJ DCF Office of Resilience “Time Out on Tech” campaign

nj.gov/dcf/public-information/campaigns/technoference.shtml