

10 ways to bond with your tech-age kids

The complete guide to exercising as a family in the digital age



Technology is helping to create an inactive generation; youngsters that prefer to control a speedy video game character than break a sweat themselves. Have you ever tried, in vain, to get your zombie-like, tv watching, video game playing children outside and exercising? Along with battling to prise your children away from their brightly-lit devices, we're sure you also struggle with how to fit your own exercise in around both family and work commitments?

The popular solution - Get active as a family!

Here are our top 10 tips on how to bond with your tech-age kids through exercising as a family. Enjoy!

1 Limit Screen Time.

As we discussed earlier, it seems like every second a child is awake these days they're (in some odd square eyed zombie state) on some form of electronic device. Like many parents, you're likely

trying to prise your children away from these devices.

You'll need to assess how much they're playing and consider the other things they do with their free time. Most child development experts recommend that a child's 'total screen time', which includes watching TV, surfing the internet, and playing computer or video games, be limited to one to two hours a day.

If your child is playing a favourite game for 45 minutes a day and watching one program on television, and they're getting their homework and chores done and getting some physical play time each day, then you shouldn't be concerned about restricting the screen time.

On the other hand, if they're glued to some form of brightly lit screen for hours on end, it's time to set limits. Here are some suggestions for keeping video-game playing time in check:

1. Set a time limit before the game begins. If you want your child to play for

only 30 minutes, agree on a limit then and set a timer when the playing begins. When the timer goes off, so does the game, no questions asked!

2. Have a solution for the "but I'm in the middle of a game!" protest. Almost every game has a 'save game' function, so your child can pause mid-game without losing any points, clues, weapons etc. You may have to help your child figure out how this function works, but most likely they know they can save their game, and they're just testing to see if you know.

3. Require that homework or chores be completed before playing games or, for that matter, before watching television or surfing the internet. These days there's no better motivator for getting homework and chores done than that brightly lit screen where they can shoot aliens from the latest Apache helicopter.

4. Don't put the console in your child's room where they can play unsupervised, all hours of the day and night.

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2 Be a Role Model.

“Your kids will do what you do, not what you say to do.”

Let them know you like to keep fit and eat healthy. It's important that you lead by example and make time to exercise and eat right yourself. This shows your children that being fit and deriving the mental and physical benefits from exercise and healthy eating is an essential part of how your family chooses to live.

3 Find an Activity.

Finding an activity you can do as a family, and that your children actually enjoy, can be difficult. Going for a 'family run around the block' is guaranteed to get you some unmotivated eye roles.

Consider events as a source for your family bonding sessions. The main reason being that events offer a range of different sporting options, and distances. Something for the whole family, while all taking part together!

The Beach Series events in Takapuna and Orewa offer three disciplines for people to choose from; Run, Ocean Swim and Stand-Up Paddle, with multiple distances within each of these three disciplines.

There are also kids' (under 12 years of age) specific events (2.5km Beach Run or 250m Ocean Swim) that start 40 minutes before adult events. This allows parents to run,

at no cost, with their child to support and encourage them along the way.

4 Set Family Goals & Make a Plan.

When you shift to a more proactive, purposeful parenting mindset, you avoid zooming through life on autopilot.

Wake kids, feed kids, get ready for work, drop kids at school, full work day, pick kids up from school, what are the kids doing on the internet?, make sure kids do homework, make dinner, feed kids, chores time, rush out for milk for breakfasts tomorrow, what are the kids doing on the internet again?, see what's on the cards for tomorrow - THEN REPEAT!

Family goals are a very powerful way to build trust, communication, and cohesiveness, as well as a great way to teach kids how to set and achieve their own personal short-term and long-term goals in life.

Goal setting rules;

1. Every family member should participate in setting the goals.
2. Don't set too many goals at once.
3. Make sure you set SMART goals - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely
4. Next to each goal write down how you're going to achieve it - the action plan!
5. Write the family goals down, when you're finished stick them to the fridge so they don't get put in a draw and forgotten for another year.

Your family goals might include activities such as: volunteering together, becoming more physically active, making new friends, enjoying nature more, upcoming events, spending more time together as a family or saving money for a family vacation. It's up to you as a family.

5 Create a 'Family Night'.

Beyond just sitting down at the table for dinner, it's important to carve out time in your busy week to do something fun together as a family.

The family night should bond you together and be something you look forward to. Try to designate the same night each week as 'Family Night' so that it becomes a habit for both adults and children.

There are plenty of inexpensive family night ideas that you can use at home, here a few to get you started; board games, volunteer night, prepare dinner together, reading part of a novel aloud, crafts, baking, movie night, bike ride, make a fort. Heaps to do!

Signing the family up for an event series like the Beach Series is a great way to tick the weekly family night box as well as everyone getting some fitness and fresh air. The Beach Series in Takapuna runs for 18 Tuesday evenings, in Orewa it runs for 14 Thursday evenings, both from the beginning of November until the end of March each year.

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6 Invite Friends to Join.

Involving your family friends can be a great way to get the kids interested and excited about your new weekly family nights.

Knowing there are other families out there that are setting goals and making healthy changes to their lives will help everyone stick to the plan.

Don't have any family friends living near enough to join? Find an event or group that aligns with your goals and you'll soon have a whole network of like-minded families to help keep your motivation levels high.

The Beach Series events are predominately family events, with a large number of parents with two or three young kids taking part together each Tuesday or Thursday evening over summer.

Having other families that you know taking part in the Beach Series ensures



you're more likely to commit and be at the event each week, because they're also feeling the same - it's always good to have a workout buddy right!?

7 Having the Right Gear.

Getting yourself and the kids the right gear for physical activity is key to preventing an injury.

If swimming is your thing, make sure all family members have the right togs, wetsuit and goggles for the type of swimming. Remember, Ocean Swimming has different requirements to pool swimming. If you need further tips on how to prepare for Ocean Swimming, a 'Complete Guide to Ocean Swimming' can be found at www.beachseries.co.nz

When it comes to shoes it is imperative you purchase the right type of shoe for your chosen sport and shape of foot. Don't know where to begin? Head into Shoe Science Takapuna (take the current running shoes with you) and they will use their video technology to confirm which type of shoe you all should be in. This is a free service, and we highly recommend doing it to avoid injuries, especially injuries that could cause serious damage while in your child's early growth stages.

For an event like the Beach Series your children (under 12) can take part in either the 250m Ocean Swim or the 2.5km Beach Run.

Adults, if the Stand-Up Paddle is on your radar (not available for under 12's), and it definitely should be as it's tonnes of fun and will get your rock-hard, chiselled abs; we recommend reading our 'Complete Guide to Stand-Up Paddling' which can be found at www.beachseries.co.nz. This will answer your main questions about SUPing. There is also board hire (free the first time) at Beach Series events so you can try it out before you look to buy a board!



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8 Healthy Eating.

All children need to eat balanced meals and have a healthy diet - you know it, you hear it all time, so we're not going to get into any great detail on protein, carbs etc.

Two ticks to help on the vege front. When kids pick things out the garden or choose a vegetable at the supermarket that they want for dinner they are more likely to eat them at the dinner table because they grew it or they chose it. Also getting your kids involved in cooking dinner, so they know what goes into food, will increase your chances of them eating it because they've cooked it.

When you're introducing your new 'family fitness regime' we recommend making a healthy eating change at the same time. Another one for the goal list!

9 Healthy Competition.

To some parents, 'competition' can be a dirty word. To us, there are many, many more positives than negatives.

Competition helps kids learn that it is those that work hard and stick with it that see the greatest improvements. It's also a healthy setting for your child to learn how to be team players by providing a setting to encourage other participants, friends and family members to try their hardest also.

When taking part in an event each participant will receive timing transponders. These allow individual performances to be tracked each week through, times, series points and category placements.

Although you'll likely be taking part in different event options, knowing your series points will allow for you to battle it out between family members throughout the series. Woohoo!

10 Encouragement Encouragement.

Last but not least, throughout your new family fitness journey the key

to keeping your kids involved and enjoying themselves is by showing them encouragement, whether they're first or last in their field. Specifically;

1. Encourage persistence
2. Encourage optimism
3. Celebrate effort
4. Make success possible
5. Deal with failure together
6. Foster their interests

If you break it down the main aim here is to remove or reduce the video games and TV without the two words 'I'm bored' coming out of your child's mouth. Good luck!

To support families to get out and take part in the Beach Series together we offer a **30% family discount** on all series and single event passes. Enquire within.

Your Beach Series Team

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