

A Letter to My Boys - The Real Reason I Say No to Electronics

Dear Boys,

Do you remember the day we went to the drugstore and the lady said, “Wow, you are the first kids I’ve seen all day with nothing in your hands.” Remember how she marveled at how you didn’t need an electronic device to carry through the store? I know how her words made you feel. I know how it reminded you that you are different because your mom limits your electronic usage. I know it was yet another reminder.

The same reminder you receive when we are out to eat and you notice all the kids playing their phones and iPads instead of talking to their parents. I know it was a reminder of all the sporting events where you feel you are the only kids whose parents are making them cheer on their siblings rather than burying themselves in a phone. I know it was another reminder to you that you feel different in this electronic age we live in.

Well, boys, it’s not you. It’s me. Me being selfish maybe. You see I can’t bear to miss a moment with you. Let me explain.

I want to talk to you when we are out to eat. I want to listen to your questions. I want to have training opportunities. I want to allow space for conversation that can take us deeper. And if you are always distracted with electronics, well... I might miss those moments. I could give you all the statistics about how damaging it is to your development, your attention span, your ability to learn. While all of those are valid reasons to keep electronics away, that is not my primary reason why I say no to you so much. It’s more than that. Much more. I need you to understand this.

When we are together, I want all of you. The fullness of you. I want to experience you. Truly experience you. And I can’t do that with you when there is an electronic device between us. You see it acts as a barrier. I want to see what brings life to those eyes. I want to watch the wonder and magic dance across your face as you discover the wonders of this world. I want to watch you as you figure things out. I want to watch you process life, develop your thoughts. I want to know you. I want to know your passions. I want to watch you as you discover your God-given talents and gifts. And when you hide behind a screen, I miss out on all of that. And my time with you....well it will be over in the blink of an eye.

THE FATHER KNOWS BEST

I want to guide you into an understanding of life and who you are. Boys, kids today are starved for attention, true connection and relationship. I don't want you to feel starved. That is why I say no. I know that feeding the desire to play in your device is like giving you candy. It satisfies for a moment but provides no long term nutrition. It does more harm than good.

I don't want to look back when I'm out of the trenches of child training and regret a second I had with you. I don't want to merely survive. I want to thrive in this life with you. We are in it together. We are a family.

Yes, when we are waiting at a doctor's office for an hour, it would be easier to quiet you with my phone. But if I did that, I fear I would send you a message that says I'd rather hush you than hear those precious words falling from your lips.

I can't bear the thought of allowing you to miss out on the wonders and mysteries of this world. When you are transfixed on a screen, the beauty of this world will be lost to you. In every moment beauty is waiting to be discovered. I don't want you to miss it.

I want you to be comfortable with yourself. I want you not to feel a constant need to be entertained and distracted. If you stay behind a screen, you never have to experience just being you, alone with your thoughts. I want you to learn to think, to ponder life, to make discoveries, to create. You have been gifted by God in unique ways. I want those to bloom. They can't bloom in the glow of a screen. They need life, real life, to bring them to light.

I want you to be confident in who you are. I want you to be able to look people in the eyes and speak life into them. If I allow you to live behind a screen, you get little practice relating eye to eye. To truly know someone you have to look into their eyes. It's a window into their heart. You see what can't be seen in cyberspace.

When I tell you no to devices, I'm giving you a gift. And I'm giving me a gift. It's a gift of relationship. True human connection. It's precious and a treasure. And you mean so much to me that I don't want to miss a second of it.

I love how God created your mind. I love to hear the way you think and process life. I love to see what makes you laugh. I love to watch those eyes widen when a new discovery is made. And when your head is behind a screen, I miss all of that. And so do you. In this life we have few cheerleaders. In this family we will cheer each other on. I know it is boring to sit at swim lessons and watch your brother learn to swim. I know it is boring to sit through a 2 hour baseball practice. And in all honesty, it would be easy for me to give you the iPad and keep you quiet and occupied. But we all lose out when we do that. You will miss out on watching your brother's new accomplishments. You will deprive him of the joy of his moment to shine for you. You will miss out on what it means to encourage each other.

THE FATHER KNOWS BEST

I want you to grow up knowing the world doesn't revolve around you. (One day your wife will thank me) I want you to learn to give selflessly of yourself....to give away your time, your talents, your treasures. If I distract you with electronics when you should be cheering for your brother, well, I'm simply telling you that your happiness is more important than giving your time to someone other than yourself.

This world needs more selflessness. This world needs more connection. This world needs more love. We can't learn these behind a screen.

I want to raise sons that know how to look deeply into the eyes of the ones they love. I want my future daughters in law to know what it's like to have a husband that looks deeply into her eyes because he knows the value of human relationships and the treasure of love. And that is best communicated eye to eye.

I want to watch your face illuminated by the majesty of life - not the glow of a screen. I want all of you. Because I only have you for a short while. When you pack up and leave for college, I want to look back with no regrets over the time I spent with you. I want to look back and remember how your eyes sparkled when we talked. I want to look back and remember how I actually knew those little quirky details of your life because we had time enough to be bored together.

It's ok to be bored. We can be bored together. And we can discover new things together.

I love you. I love you too much to quiet you with an iPhone or an iPad or a DS. And I can't even apologize, because I'm really not sorry. I'm doing this so that I won't be sorry one day.

With all my love,

Mom

Renee Robinson