



Erin Walsh, Spark & Stitch Institute
<https://sparkandstitchinstitute.com/speaking/>

Screen Time Topics:

Status Update: Teens, Social Media, and Mental Health

Every year, young people's relationship with screens continues to intensify as learning and socializing move online. In this interactive and energizing presentation, Erin Walsh will use brain science, stories, and humor to cut through conflicting messages about the impact of screen time on adolescent mental health. Erin will help parents identify the key ingredients for digital wellbeing, identify red flags, and nurture protective skills online and offline.

iBrain: Learning in an Age of Distractions

One of the most precious and valuable resources that students have today is their attention. Explore the brain science of attention, memory and multitasking in the context of a digitally connected world. Learn more about the distraction economy, the seeking brain, and practical strategies for building focus as students shift their attention between homework, YouTube, texting, and each other.

From Apps to Laps: What Young Children Need From Us in the Digital Age

The youngest among us are no strangers to digital technology. Yet families are getting conflicting advice about the impact of these technologies- on one hand companies promise that media can boost their children's intelligence while on the other America's pediatricians urge parents to limit screen time in the early years. In this workshop, Erin explores the latest research on the power and impact of screen time in early childhood and shares the ingredients that young children need to thrive in a world dominated by screens.

Courage Wins: Helping Navigate Online Conflict, Drama, Cruelty

While bullying has long been an unfortunate element of growing up, the barriers today are lower than ever and the stakes are higher. The challenge though is that cyberbullying does not exist in a vacuum and the solution isn't as simple as taking away devices. That's because online behaviors are usually deeply entangled with offline behaviors. Plus, not all mean or insensitive behaviors are bullying. Indeed, learning how to navigate everyday conflict is an essential part of growing up. In this warm and engaging workshop, you will learn how to distinguish between bullying behaviors and typical peer conflict and why this distinction matters. Help kids disrupt bullying and practice emotional courage when they need it most.



Kids and Screens: Why The Shift From Control to Connection is Key to Mental Health

There is escalating concern about the impact of technology on child and adolescent mental health. It's tempting to respond with an ever-growing list of "places you shouldn't go and things you shouldn't do." Yet evidence indicates that this approach is not only insufficient given the complexity of young people's digital lives but that it can amplify risk. Combining science, warmth, and humor, this workshop invites you to consider a relationship-based approach to digital wellbeing that young people need.

Mental Health Topics:

The Many Faces of Stress: Raising Resilient Kids

The list of stressors that kids and parents are facing now is long and varied. The challenge is that children often express stress through challenging behaviors. Learn more about what stress looks like in kids and teens and ways to respond that build your family's resilience instead of eroding it. In this engaging and interactive online session, Erin Walsh will deliver warm insight and practical advice for navigating challenges and strengthening family connection when you need it most.

The Science of Motivation: Getting Going Again

You don't have to go far on the Internet these days to find tips for how to "stay productive" and ideas for how to motivate kids despite changing routines and stress. The reality on the ground though is that productivity and high motivation can be difficult to find during times of stress. Understanding the science of motivation can help us keep our eyes on how to nurture it in our kids - not just for the sake of getting more done but for everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

The Worried Brain: Helping Kids and Teens Build a Worry Toolkit

Worry is one of the brain's superpower. It helps us think ahead, consider possibilities, and plan for our own safety. But when worry takes over, it can take over family life and erode children's mental health. It is essential to help kids distinguish between the kind of worry that keeps us safe and the kind of worry that keeps us from living. The challenge is that the dominant ways parents are told to respond to worry tends to make it stronger. Learn more about how worry show up in kids and teens and ways to respond that build your family's resilience and wellbeing instead of eroding it.



Adolescent Brain Topics:

Why Do They Act That Way? A Compassionate Guide to the Teenage Brain

Based on the best-selling book, Erin explains exactly what happens to the adolescent brain on the path from childhood into adulthood. Revealing the latest scientific findings in easy-to-understand terms, our guest speakers show why moodiness, risk-taking, and miscommunication are so common – all are linked to physical changes and growth in the adolescent brain. Using this information, you will learn three ingredients for working with or parenting adolescents in ways that build on their strengths and gives them the support they need to grow into capable and caring adults.

Want to Raise an Independent Teen? Share Power

Warm and caring connections adults buffer kids from the worst effects of stress. Communicating with our kids that we were on the same team is an essential part of our resilience toolkit. But our role on the team can often feel confusing when our kids hit major bumps in the road. Is it our job to protect our kids? Prepare them? The answer to these questions, like so many things in parenting, is a little frustrating: *both* and *it depends*. Learn why independence is key to resilience and explore a compelling framework that will help you nurture your teen's autonomy and confidence.

Three Common Beliefs About Teenagers That Can Escalate Conflict (And What To Do Instead)

Parenting teenagers is not always easy. The strain and challenge of this stage of parenting makes it easy to fall into cognitive traps that skew our vision and limit our ability to stay connected. Drawing on brain science, Erin Walsh will learn three common traps that get in the way of our capacity to show up for our teens (and ourselves) and three strategies to help get back on track.

Connecting the Dots: The Teenage Brain on Technology

Adolescence has been described as both a “window of opportunity and a window of sensitivity.” This is because the teen brain is primed for transformative learning and is especially sensitive to stress, peers, and rewards. This window also coincides with another big shift: The start of personal device use. In this interactive and energizing session, Erin Walsh will connect the dots between the science of the adolescent brain and the risks and rewards amplified by their digital activities. You will leave with a better understanding of when tech meets the developmental needs of teens, when it doesn't, and what we can do about it.



Additional Topics:

Boundaries Without Battles: How to Be Flexible and Firm When Kids Need It Most

Setting limits is always a challenging part of parenting. It can be especially hard to know when to be flexible and when to hold the line. Learn more about why kids and teens need boundaries and how to be both flexible and firm when your kids need it most. Parents will learn how to clarify their limits and follow through with consistency and care.

Sibling Squabbles: The Art of Intervening

A certain amount of bickering, fighting, and arguments are just a normal part of growing up. We haven't met a parent yet who has found a way to eliminate all sibling rivalry and arguments from family life. The good news is that you wouldn't want to live without any sibling conflict! Not only is it unrealistic, but as your kids negotiate getting along they are gaining skills they will use for the rest of their lives. This workshop is designed to help you think about when and how far you want to step in and when to step away and let siblings work it out.

Why Challenging Rigid Gender Norms Helps All Children Succeed (And How to Get Started)

In many ways, children today are growing up in a world with more expansive understandings of gender than generations before. At the same time, studies show that rigid gender roles continue to be engrained in our expectations, language, and culture. This isn't without consequence for kids, as decades of research link belief in rigid feminine and masculine norms to lower health, education, and economic outcomes. So how can parents tackle rigid gender norms and create a different future for our kids? Erin Walsh translates the latest research in child development to help families see how children "learn gender" and internalize gender bias. Learn concrete strategies for disrupting rigid gender norms in ways that help all kids thrive.

Kids and Conflict: Learning How to Care and Repair

We are born hardwired to connect. But that doesn't mean that navigating relationships is easy. Indeed, skills like empathy, self-management, and conflict resolution are works-in-progress for children as they learn to navigate "me to we" dilemmas at home and in the classroom. While the impulse to step in and protect children from distress and disagreement with peers is strong, these interactions can be critical sites of learning and growth. In this warm and engaging workshop, Erin Walsh will explain the neurological basis of social and relationship skills and share ways to help children practice healthy conflict and repair.