

Erin

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Peaceful Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, Sarah Rosen, sweet mom of three young people, peaceful parenting coach, and your cheerleader and guide on all things parenting. Each week we'll cover the tools, strategies, and support you need to end the yelling and power struggles and encourage your kids to listen and cooperate so that you can enjoy your family time.

I'm happy to say we have a great relationship with our three kids. The teen years have been easy and joyful. Not because we're special unicorns, but because my kids were raised with peaceful parenting. I've also helped so many parents just like you, stop struggling and enjoy their kids. Again, I'm excited to be here with you today and bring you the insight and information you need to make your parenting journey a little more peaceful.

Let's dive into this week's conversation.

Hey everyone. Welcome back to another episode of the Peaceful Parenting Podcast. Today's episode is an interview with Erin Lochner, who is the author of the Opt-Out Family, how to Give Your Kids What Technology Can't, and Our [00:01:00] Conversation is centered around. Being a low to no tech family, meaning that we don't have smart phones, we don't have tablets.

We might not have laptops or you know, anything unless it's like you really need them for work kind of thing.

But really trying to be intentional about what kind of technology comes into your house and who has it, and not just assuming that every kid is gonna get a phone and that you're gonna have a smartphone, and that everyone's gonna have tablets. And really about the challenges that come with living a low tech or no tech lifestyle, and also the benefits and the gifts.

I thought this was a really great conversation. I personally have been concerned that we are part of this massive experiment on what screen time does to us and our families and our kids, and what having smartphones does to us and our families and our kids.

And it was really great to be able to talk about this and talk about some other options. And Erin actually said that parenting gets a lot easier when you don't have all of this tech stuff. So it was a really great [00:02:00] conversation again

inspiring. And you know, there are ways that you can. Take what's, take some of what she says and leave some of what she says.

But I really think that we do need to rethink the inevitability of when your child gets a phone and maybe think about if your child is gonna get a phone or when they get a tablet to, if they're gonna get a tablet. And also thinking about how screen time affects us and how our smartphone use affects us.

And really just this as an invitation. To think about, do we wanna live in a different, more intentional way? And I hope that you got as much out of it as I did. And let's meet Erin.

Okay, I lied. Before we meet Erin, I have to say one more thing, and I'm actually putting this into the podcast after Corey listened to the podcast because she always reviews them before we put them out, as published. So Corey and I just had a long conversation about this podcast and, she felt that it was important that I come on here and say that this podcast might not resonate for you.

It might not feel right for your family, [00:03:00] and that we wanna make sure that. You all know that. We know that everyone makes the choices for their family that are right for them. And you might be a family where you wouldn't even consider opting out of technology because it serves you and it serves the needs of your children.

And that's okay too. So what we really wanna do with this podcast is we want it to be a thought provoking conversation, and we want everyone to still feel though that if you come away ultimately feeling this wasn't for you, that's fine too.

And that I wanted to call out that Erin our guest is coming from a very specific place as a homeschooler, as somebody with financial privilege. And what works for her and what she's recommending might not be what works for you. So. Take everything with a grain of salt. Take what works for you, take leave, what doesn't work for you.

I still do think that this question of, it's not when do we get our child a personal device, but if, and also the question of how much do we want technology to be present in our family [00:04:00] lives are still good questions to ask. This is just a little bit of a, I don't wanna say warning, but it's a little bit of an acknowledgement that for some of you, this.

Podcast could actually rub you the wrong way because you completely, fundamentally disagree with the idea that technology doesn't have a huge role and shouldn't have a huge role in family life. Peaceful parenting, I just, Corey and I were talking about this. Peaceful parenting does not have a stance on screens.

It's always how does it work for you? What's the balance? Does it help your child? Feel regulated or is it dysregulating? There's nothing in peaceful parenting that says screens are good or screens are bad. It's such an individual conversation and so here's some more of some more fodder for conversation and for thought, and let's really meet Erin this time.

Sarah: Hi Erin. Welcome to the podcast. Thanks me. I'm so excited to talk about being an opt-out family. I actually heard about your book because one of my members in my Peaceful Parenting [00:05:00] membership was reading it and said we're trying some things from this book.

And so then I had to look it up and it's fantastic. So tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do. Then we'll talk about what is an opt-out family?

Erin: Of course. My name's Erin Lochner. I'm an author and my husband and my three kids, they're 12, eight, and four. We live in the Midwest and also the west in the summer.

And we just, we homeschool, we just really kind of frame our days in a, from a place of learning learning a lot about the world and each other, and it's a wonderful time.

Sarah: Great. And so what is an Optout family and what are

we opting out of?

Erin: Yes. My definition on opt out family would simply be anyone that is, is kind of parenting from a place of of the recognition and awareness that every time you opt into a form of technology, whether it's an app, a platform, a personal device, you are kind of, joining this sort of assembly line, if you will, of whatever tech will require of you next, whether [00:06:00] that's an update in terms and conditions or any sort of change of the algorithm. You are a bit at the mercy of Silicon Valley at that point. And so, for us, we define, opt that family as someone that questions the idea that, yes, technology might be the future, but is it the future that we want and operating from that place.

And do we want it in our daily lives? Yeah. Right, right. Yeah. It looks very different from many different households. A lot of those setups or strategies are in the book, but for us it means no personal devices. I have a dumb phone. My husband has a smartphone that we use for travel. But pretty much in the daily rhythms of our home, they're just not present.

Sarah: Yeah. And so what did, you mentioned that it could look different for other families. What are, do you wanna give, do you mind giving a few examples of what, how it could look different for some families and some other families?

Erin: Yeah. Some families just simply set limits on social media. That's a big one that I think a lot of people have had probably the greatest success in setting that limit.

Some people don't use [00:07:00] email at all. You know, that's one, like one side of the spectrum. Other people just realize we don't want. Personal devices. You know, we might have a shared family iPad that's docked somewhere, that everyone shares. We might have a desktop computer that's open for internet access for older kids.

There might be, you know, screen time, parental controls, all of that. A lot of the people that I spoke with really. Just recognized at some point that setting these screen time regulations we're providing a barrier in the parent child relationship. So

I would

say the thing that we all have in common, in terms of the way that we are utilizing tech is we are not saying no to devices.

We're saying yes to something better. So we're not kind of acting as tech lords or digital managers, we're just saying, what if we don't, right? What if we don't operate from the screen time regulation and we just work on the relationship on the other end, and we're not working from coercion, but we're cooperating with our kids to say, okay, well [00:08:00] what is it that's drawing you to this device and how can we create something better together?

Sarah: One one person that was on my podcast last year, Dr. K, the Healthy Gamer. I don't know if you know him at all. But he talked about when you have a kid who has a, he works with teens, so screen gaming addictions, and he said that the only way that you can really address it is address. What is it taking the.

What, what deed is it filling, right? Yeah. Like what if you have a kid who's addicted to video games, it, there's a reason, right? Like they're looking for connection community fun. And it sounds like you're sort of, saying one of the, one of the big features of, or a big factor and opting out is not just like opting out and then nothing but like filling your time with fun family stuff and activities.

Erin: Yeah, it's you know, our family motto is be more engaging than the algorithm, and that stemmed from a very personal place as a former social media influencer. And so I just knew from the get go you know, this platform, Instagram, TikTok, whatever it may be, is [00:09:00] filling that need for adults as well as kids.

You know, we're not, the kids are, it's not a kid problem, it's an ever problem. And I wanted to know from these tech companies. How do you create the most engaging atmosphere that really draws us in and wants to leave us there? How are you doing it? I was curious about that. And so I interviewed 250 resources in and out of Silicon Valley, and I wanted to know from TikTok, how do you create an inviting environment?

I wanted to know from Minecraft, how do you introduce a challenge that is so? Exciting and enriching, but not demotivating. Right. Because there's a lot of beauty to be learned from these things that that our kids love. And I wanted to know how do we create those things in our own home while still setting the limits that our kids need.

Right. So

Sarah: you just mentioned that you were a former, that you're a former social media influencer. How did you make the journey from social media influencer to Optout family slash parent?

Erin: Yeah, it's a big shift. I fell into social media influencing in the early days [00:10:00] because I was @hgtv.com host, and so at that time, you know, this was pre-social media and my editor was, once Instagram came out, was kinda like, you know, people wanna know more from you and they wanna see your personal life and what your background is, and they want pictures of your lunch.

Right? And so I joined, with the recognition that as a public person, my kids weren't also signing up for this. And so it all coincided with the birth of my first child. And I recognize I don't I'm not gonna be sharing her face online. I'm not

gonna be sharing her name online. She I just, I wanted to give her agency over any of any sort of presence that she has on the internet going.

And so I was always very boundaried in my usage. And yet, like algorithms do and these apps tend to do. There was just, it required more from me than what I was willing to give. And so I think I recognized when my younger, or when my oldest was two, maybe three, that if I was to [00:11:00] continue the path, the career path of an influencer and be sort of have this be my main career.

I was gonna be parenting with my phone in my hand a lot more than I wanted to. And there is no amount of, you know, narration of, you know, right now I'm responding to this text or this comment that I, that would make up for the fact that I was going to be on my phone and my child wouldn't see my eyes.

And, I wasn't willing to do that. I also recognized my husband had worked for Apple Ad Agency and we kind of knew how the sausage was made. We knew that things were probably going to get a little bit more prevalent and that the algorithms were going to be changing in a bit of a downward spiral.

And now all that research is here and we have it and I'm great. I'm grateful for that. So we sort of we're looking ahead and thinking. We don't know that social media is a place we're ever gonna be able to encourage our kids to go. You know, it's at a playground we wanted them to be playing in.

And so I think at some point every parent has to reconcile how am I gonna navigate that? And I didn't want [00:12:00] to move forward from a place of hypocrisy and say, well, it's fine for me. It's not fine for you. It's fine for me to have this as a, as my job, but it's not okay for you to be curious about what happens in that place.

So I wanted to just see, okay, well, well, what if I go first? What if I recognize my, these are all tension points my child is going to experience too. You know, and what if I start asking these questions for myself and I start experiencing some of these answers for myself so that I can work from a place of experience and say, gosh, yeah, it is really hard when you're not part of the group text thread.

Here's what I do. It is really hard when you go to the restaurant and there's just a menu that's a QR code. Here's what I've done, and they've get, they've gotten to see, and now my oldest is 12, and she's gotta see the whole gamut of all of these things that we experience just not having a smartphone.

And it's a really beautiful way to walk it out with her. Rather than against her.

Sarah: Do you get a lot, I mean, if you don't mind sharing, do you get a lot of pushback from your 12-year-old about No.

Erin: No. Okay. Her [00:13:00] kids, her friends all have phones. They do, yeah. And but this has been the, an ongoing narrative since I remember, you know, we took them, all of our kids out on a date.

And we still do this really, and we just say, what do you notice? Let's look around. What do you see? Every one of them, as toddlers said, why isn't anybody talking to each other? You know, why is everybody on their phone? And like in the, in this like individualized world. They all thought it odd as toddlers.

And so I think, you know, I think very often if the quote that says you know, it is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a sick society. And I think children feel that often and yet don't kind of have the words to explain it. And so without projecting what we think at all, we we do ask them a lot of questions and we do talk about this all the time.

And it's interesting how many kids and young teens that I interviewed that said. You know, this isn't the world that we wanted. This isn't the world that we asked for. It's the world that we got. And oftentimes we don't, our parents think we're [00:14:00] addicted to our phones, but we're not. We just, we're on their, our phone 'cause they're on their phone or 'cause our friends are on our phone.

We don't know any different. And so. One of our solutions was really to open our home as a low tech hangout zone. So we have, you know, a little poster on our door that's pretty tongue in cheek about the fact that, you know, you come into this home, you're not gonna be tracked, you're not gonna be asked to perform for TikTok.

You're not gonna have a camera in your face, you're not gonna be interrupted by texts or phone calls or anything. This is your safe. This is free. This is a free space. Safe space. The parents in the neighborhood will send their kids over. They love it. That's kind of the trade off. You know, that's our version of being more engaging.

That's our version of saying yes to something better than devices. So our 12-year-old would far prefer that than what she sees happening in the homes of her friends, which is that everybody's in the same room. But yeah.

Sarah: Not engaging. Yeah, they're not engaging with each other. My in where I live in Ontario, they recently passed the thing that kids aren't allowed [00:15:00] to have cell phones in schools or in the classroom.

Just started in September. And I think like they can, they have to leave them in their bags or the, you know, the teacher collects them or whatever. And my daughter is in grade 12, she's a senior and she came home after like a couple days into the school year and she's like, mom, you know, the new cell phone van?

And I was kind of expecting her to say something negative, but she said it's so great. And she just really appreciated. She said, kids are talking to each other. They're like doodling on their papers if they don't have anything to do. And and I think you're right, like just that's one example of kids that they wish that there were.

Not everybody was on their phones all the time.

Erin: Yeah. They have permission to talk to each other. And yeah. Every single child that I asked a lot of kids, you know, what would you change about your school? And they all said, well, we have a phone free policy, but it's not enforced. And I would really like it to be enforced.

I would like to see what happens if nobody's allowed to have their phone at the lunch table?

Sarah: Yeah, it's tricky. I mean, this is a little bit off the topic of the family, but it's tricky with schools [00:16:00] because so many parents want their kids to have phones, so they can call them at any time, you know?

And I'm like, well, remember in our day when we just called the school administrator and then they did the PA to the classroom? If you need to talk to somebody. But I mean, that's part of it too. I bet that you come across as parents saying, but wait a minute. I want my kid to have a phone so that I can always know where they are or I can, you know, get in touch with 'em all the time.

Yeah. What do you tell parents who are I wanna get a little bit more act afterwards, back to kid objections, but what do you tell parents who are wary of giving up that perceived, I'm gonna say perceived level of control and safety because I think it's a false sense of control and safety a lot of times

Erin: false and we have to take away the false sense of.

Safety to experience. You know, it's life. Life is not always comfortable. And I think I think we have in our head that trusting our kids and tracking our kids is the same thing. And it's not. And so we have to just practice trusting them. And the only way to do that is not to [00:17:00] track them and not to know their whereabouts at all times.

And that just part of independence and natural that movement of child to adulthood requires that we not know their whereabouts at all times. That we not be so closely intertwined with their spheres of agency and authority and independence. And so. I actually interviewed a lot of security experts and, you know, people in law enforcement just saying, okay, well, well, is it safer?

You know, it, I think of something like Live 360, is it actually safer? Do you have a lot of evidence about what happens in case of emergency? If they do or do not have it turned on. And the fact is just by, by having a device, you're pinged everywhere at all times. So in, in case of emergency, your whereabouts.

Could be found by law enforcement, but all of them said in, in case of a school situation, it is far safer. If there is some sort of emergency scenario, to not be the phone is the last thing you wanna have on [00:18:00] hand because you need to be. Available and present and undistracted to be able to listen to the people that are attempting to direct traffic or whatever's happening in the moment. And so, there is a lot of evidence to the contrary that actually your child, even having a phone outside of your home makes them safer. It introduces a whole different amount of harms. So a lot of that is in the book, a lot of the pushback of what we think in terms of conventional safety and trust.

I just really wanted to kind of poke some holes in that and get curious about is it, are we actually safer with cell phones or are we just, is it false? Is it a false sense of security?

Sarah: And I also think that if parents think, oh, well, if my kid gets into trouble, they'll just call me and I'll, you know, get them outta this jam.

Doesn't give kids the skills that they need or the scaffolding that they need to know what to, like. You always need to know what to do if you get lost or you know, you need some help from somebody, who do you ask? So I think that it's, you know, without the crutch of the phone, you have to teach your kid, the kids, those things.

Erin: You do. And there's a [00:19:00] difference between being available to your children and accessible to your children and then, you know, omnipresent

to your children. And I just, I want rather than to teach them that I am their only out, I want them to teach them that they have a lot of those skills inherently themselves and all in this wide village that they can rely on.

I want them to point to many people rather than just me, that they can trust and that will help them and that they can put their faith in. Yeah, I love

Sarah: that. So I mentioned before the pushback from kids of not having a personal device because I so many parents that I work with, even starting from like 7, 8, 9, the kid's like, I need an iPhone.

I need my own, I need a smartphone. Everybody else has one. How do you, like, what do you. Suggest that parents, like, how do they support kids in their, this decision that they're not gonna get a smartphone? Or maybe part of opting out is you don't get one until high school or something like that.

You know, even delaying I think is better than early devices. But how do you support kids, [00:20:00] support parents when their kids are pressuring them? Like, what do you, what would you say?

Erin: I we always ask our kids questions, you know, we are just, we're constantly talking this through, but you know, one thing that we ask kind of proactively, you know, when their friend, because of course they'll come home and they'll say, oh, our friend get a phone.

And she's obsessed with it or whatever. And so now, like she's taking pictures of everything and, um, they'll say it not in. In this it's not instantly negative, it's generally like there's been a change here, you know, something off, something feels different. And so we just sort of explore that with them and from a very neutral third party perspective.

Because they sense the change themselves and it really takes just a couple weeks. I interviewed a mom in the book who's 13-year-old, coined the phrase, he's a phone person now. I was gonna say that. Yeah. Phone person now. And so one thing that she did that I really loved is she would just point to all of the ways in which his lack of [00:21:00] device has helped him excel in the areas that he truly cares about.

So he says, think of, she said, think about your jump shot. You know, look at your jump shot, not in comparison to the other kids, but look at all of those hours that you have put into your jump shot and that you're continuing to

practice. Why do you think you're the one that can do it best on the team? You know?

Why do you think that is? And inevitably he is like, okay, mom, because, you know, like, because I'm not on my phone and they are, and. So, so kind of establishing some of those goals that your child has. You know, what do you wanna do with your, what do you wanna do with your childhood?

What do you wanna do with your time? Your free time is so precious and what do you wanna explore and how can I support that? Really no, nothing is off the table. You know, we've got a library card and we've got access to the outdoors and, and many things that we can explore together and being willing to do that which is often the harder, you know, commitment.

It truly is. But I would just really explore a lot of that with your child before the phone conversation [00:22:00] comes up. And then once it does, I think it's really okay to just set those limits and say, you know what that's not something that our family's gonna be doing. How can we work together?

What's our solution? Not it's not a no, it's a yes. How, you know, how can we make your love or connection if you're feeling left out? How do we just solve that? If you are, what is the reason? And a lot of times. It is just because, well, everybody else has one. I don't wanna be the different one.

And so one of the we often in our family are reading memoirs about people that went against the grain in history and that did things differently. And we like exploring that together and looking at the benefits of that.

Sarah: Yeah.

Erin: And

Sarah: you mentioned feeling left out, and that's the one thing that I think as a parent, it would be hard to, how do you facilitate okay.

Say I was, had younger kids and we're like, we're not getting cell phones. And how, and I think it would be hard to have them feel socially still connected when everybody else that they're friends with connects via. You know, apps or, you [00:23:00] know, texting or whatever, like how can you help a kid stay socially connected when most kids these days are connecting through their personal devices?

Erin: Yeah. One thing that we recommend at, we have a. Chapters all over the world called co-op out. And it, the idea is it's not just a social circle for your kids, it's multi-generational. So, so the idea is just going a couple generations ahead and a couple generations behind and getting together weekly.

Whether it's just, you know, a pickup ball game in the park or a book club or just some common interest, but getting together weekly to surround yourself with all of those people who are aligned in this idea that, do we actually need. A personal smartphone device in our pocket to be socially connected.

I do not believe that's true. And so can we have this vibrant, wide social circle without the ability to be reached 24 7? Yeah, I think we can. And so I think for us, we have just chosen, okay, well let's make [00:24:00] sure that we've got regular, weekly and daily rhythms to support our kids' social lives. So it looks like tee time every Wednesday.

We have weekends at the park every week. It's open to whoever wants to come. We work really hard on making sure that there are our. You know, our inner circle is diverse and varied in terms of age, and one of the benefits of that is the kids coming up behind. Your kids are gonna be seeing how you parent and seeing that your kids are doing things a little differently and they're going to value seeing what the richness of that looks like.

And then having, you know, kids a little bit further. So we've, we have teens in our home often. So our 12-year-old had, has people to look up to and says, well, gosh, they're not socially isolated. They're not total weirdos. And they don't have a phone. And gosh, I think they're pretty cool and I like this about them.

So just. Just, I think being aware and mindful that there are a lot of different people to introduce your children to to invite into your [00:25:00] own home. That, and it's not the most convenient things in term of, in terms of time or miss or, you know, food budgets, but it's a, it's choosing your heart, you know, and that's kind of what we have opted to do instead of.

Of just going with the, okay. Yeah. Everybody else has one. And so here's the phone. But that's not to say, you know, you can't have a landline. You can't have you know. I always think like an eighties parent, well, what did we do? I think for the younger set, walkie talkies are a great solution. I think for the older set, you can do many things with a flip phone and the glove compartment of the car, so, yeah I just think it's about finding what you want to do as a family and just constantly questioning is this is this worth it to me, is the cost. Actually something that I'm willing to pay in terms of emotional and financial cost.

Sarah: Yeah, I like how you said choose your heart. And maybe for people listening who are, have younger kids, you can find some people now who are willing to [00:26:00] go down this road road with them, right?

Like, let's all band together and, 'cause it sounds like you do have a community of people who are on this path with you. But for anyone listening who doesn't, maybe trying to find that community and see if you can, you know. I try and find. Peers for your kid who is also gonna be in the same boat.

And I was gonna ask you if you have a landline 'cause that's another objection that I hear. Well, how would I, you know, if there was an emergency, how would my kids get in touch with me or how would I get in touch with them? I heard a really funny thing. Well, on social media. I heard this woman talking about how she was a nanny for a family with.

Three kids, I think, and that she was out with one of the children taking them to a lesson and she was trying to get in touch with the other kid who was at home. And they weren't answering their, I dunno, something, she couldn't get in touch with them and she finally got in touch with them and they're like, wouldn't it be great if there was a phone that was at home that just anybody could answer?

And she said, yeah, we used

Erin: to have those called landlines. Oh my gosh. I had a kid [00:27:00] say they, because there was a parent that couldn't ever find their phone or whatever, and he was like, they should just put them on the wall. Right. That's.

Sarah: That's right. Yeah. That is funny. We still have a landline because cell service isn't great where I live.

But people are always like, you have a landline still? I'm like, yeah, it's great. It's nice to have, it's great. And there are a lot of, there are a lot of options to turn, you know, an old device into a landline. There's a magic jack. There's and in a lot of states and here in the us you can just, you know, put any working phone into you know, like an old like wall phone into a.

Erin: A chat and it can be used to call 9 1 1. Okay. So even if you need an without having, you know, the cable service or whatever. Right. So if you just have a, just a phone from the thrift store that you wanna plug in, it should be able to reach 9 1 1 without the service of, you know. Okay. That's good to know.

Yeah. So it's worth researching in your state for sure.

Sarah: Yeah. What are some of the [00:28:00] benefits that, that you've seen from being an opt-out family or you've seen others experience that we haven't covered yet?

Erin: Yeah, I think a big one is there tended to be from a lot of the parents that I talked to, just an. A wide uptick in creativity. There was a lot of independence and problem solving. And you know, when we think of kids that have kind of the skills that they would need to interact on a level of EQ rather than iq, right?

Like the just a high levels of empathy and personal skills and. All of that does come out in a lot of the way that these families speak and to and about their kids. And I have not delved into the research of why that is, but I do know watching them interact with one another, there's just a really a mutual respect.

There's not this barrier between them where, you know, kids are feeling like. Their parents are overstepping their boundaries in terms of their social life. [00:29:00] Which I think often happens when we give our child a phone and then we say, we're gonna monitor every interaction on that phone. The child feels like, do you not trust me?

Why then give me the phone if you don't trust me? And it's an, that's an adequate response. You know? It's like a fake trust and. So a lot of the kids, I think even if begrudgingly, they're not loving this limit initially, they look at their friends and say, well, I think I'd rather that than rather be tracked all the time.

You know, at least my parents are inviting my kids over and a lot of the times the kids would say. I love coming to your house because there's lots of things to do, you know, and there's always action happening around, there's, there are things available to do and explore that aren't just on my phone or just with a device.

So the home feels different. A lot of people will comment on, maybe just the maturity level of these [00:30:00] kids. There's a lot of eye contact, there's a lot of reading, social cues, reading the room that maybe isn't there if the child has been overusing a device. Which I think just even, you know, when we look at a p standards and a lot of the.

The general narrative about screen time usage. It's that less is more, but we don't have any adequate standards. What does less mean? Is it an hour? Is it two hours? Is all screen time created equal? The more you get into the nitty gritty,

the more it feels really impossible to regulate. And so it's one of those things where maybe moderation isn't the answer.

Maybe just make a decision for what you're willing to introduce in the daily rhythm of your home and have your home feel different and see what happens.

Sarah: Yeah, I I often worry that we're in the middle of this really like. Big social experiment, that's not gonna end well with, especially when I see little kids and I don't want anyone to feel judged or thrown under the bus who's listening here.

'cause I know sometimes parents are just doing the best they can. But I do see like those toddlers in the [00:31:00] wagon, I. You know, I live right next to a really big public park and I see, you know, families out for the day and like the toddlers in the stroller in the park, just looking at their, the parents' phone or an iPad or something.

And I'm like, look at the birds, look at the trees, like play. And, you know, I really worry about that. Just about the ubiquitousness of kids, like small kids with iPads that I see these days.

Erin: Yeah. Yeah. I agree. I do. And I love it's, this is absolutely a conversation where I think there is this lot, a lot of perceived judgment around it.

And I think just speaking plainly about some of the harms and that it's not, you know, um, it's an interesting thing that we're blaming parents for something in which. We have absolutely. We have integrated technology into our society as a whole, right? It's in our schools, it's in our churches, it's in our homes.

Kind of the benefit of what we would call [00:32:00] progress. And we were sold something. That we. We're convinced would help our kids, right? Think of the steam skills and the stem skills and the betterment of technology. And we're gonna be creating programmers and AI is coming. So we gotta prepare the kids for ai.

So we were sold something that did not deliver. And so why are we blaming ourselves? You know, just get the thing out of the home. That's what just try that and see what happens. But don't, you know, cozy up. To Silicon Valley as if they're your friend because they're not your friend.

So that, that is what I would tell to, it's almost like, let this, don't turn this conviction n word and make it into a guilt. Use it to fuel some of those everyday

decisions that you have the agency to make as a parent. And a lot of times I'm asked, you know, well, how do you find those other people?

Who can rally around this idea with you? How do you find your social circle When the whole world has seemingly adopted tech, and really the best way is to push back in those areas, you know, go to [00:33:00] your school and say, Hey, is there any way that we can have you know, attendance record where they're not signing in through an app or a tech platform?

Is there any way that we can have these clubs? In a way that doesn't require Snapchat, is there a listserv, an old phone tree? Is there something that we can do for the opt out kits for the kids that don't want or have a smartphone? Can we just find a way to communicate with one another in a way that we used to, I understand, you know, from the teachers and the coaches and the principal's perspective, a lot of times we adapt this tech because it streamlines the process. It streamlines communication. And so be the one, be the parent to offer, to streamline it for them. Be the parent to say, I am so willing to step up in this fight because it's so worth it to me to protect these children.

To give them a different future and to give them a skillset that they're not getting, it's worth it to me. And so I will be the one to sign up for the, to moderate the email list serve, and [00:34:00] to send out the weekly reminders. And I will be the one to get everybody together and do all the administrative tasks.

And I know that's a big ask for working parents, you know? And so a lot of parents I talked to gave it to their kid to do, you know, if their kids 14, 15 said, Hey let's teach you how to manage an email list and send out these reminders and can you find a way to make it fun? And soon enough, the kids, now were in charge of getting the club together rather than the administrators, which is an even better skill.

So, that lot, lots and lots of alternatives that don't involve. Introducing something that will be more addictive than perhaps a wagon stroll, looking at the birds and looking at the flowers and being in nature. So it's, it is a win-win overall. I.

Sarah: When I was when, so I mentioned my membership before and we have a monthly theme every month, something that we dive into.

And one month we did screen time and like looking at just, you know, setting our intentions around that and limits. [00:35:00] And the next month we did

parental burnout. And I realized I should have done them in the other way around. Uhhuh, you should have done them the other way around. Right? Because I think a lot of parents default to letting their kids have screens or more screen time than they actually feel comfortable with because they're burned out.

And I. One of the objections, you know, quote objections that I had to ask you about was, this sounds like a lot more work. I mean, I'm, to be clear, I'm I think what you're doing is great and I, you know, would probably do the same thing if I had it to do over again. But my kids are grown up now.

But it's more work for parents. Like, it is like just straight up. Like, I don't think there's any way around. Around that. Like the thing you just mentioned about having to, I hadn't even thought about all of the school stuff that is on tech, but what do you say when parents are like, I don't, you know, I've got enough on my plate.

Like I don't know how I could do this.

Erin: Yeah. Well, honestly an overwhelming. Pattern that came up in some of these opt out families that I interviewed and researched and looked [00:36:00] through. I is that it's easier to parent, it is easier to parent when you do not have, you know, kind of the monster of tag rearing its head or kind of the dereg, like the dysregulation that happens with technology with a lot of screen time, with iPads, video games, all of it.

There is a real. Neurobiological response is happening when you are shutting off that stream of dopamine and adrenaline. And so without it, you're there is kind of, and this happens with adults too. There is a natural rhythm and pattern that slows and you become just kind of, you're keeping in time with your own heartbeat rather than keeping in time with this hard stop and start over and over again.

And so. I do truly believe that it is easier to parent from a place of of the, of no tech, and then you pop it in collectively. So as I would say, you know, if the no tech thing feels overwhelming, moving to at least [00:37:00] shared tech where you know, if you're gonna put on, you know, a an hour of your child's favorite show.

Just sit next to 'em and do it with them and get what you need to get done there. If you need to have 30 minutes of Daniel Tiger to put on dinner or on the table, that's fine. Do it in a stationary space where it's open. Don't do the headphones

or the, you know, the personal, I'm in my own world and I'm not to the outer world.

Those are some kind of great compromises, but. I think it is easier to parent without tech than with tech. I for many reasons, a lot of 'em in their book. But yeah. That is not to say that I don't recognize burnout. And I would just say if you I trust every parent to make the best decision they can't for their home.

But I think that there is a necessary awareness to what you're dealing with here and you're not, just look at our own screen time usage. If we can't seem to regulate or moderate if we're using tech in a way that we wouldn't want our kids to be using tech then let's start with [00:38:00] us.

And that alone is the recognition that we are handing our children something that is by definition, addictive. And we don't do that with anything else. And so let's really collectively figure out. Some better solutions I think for the school issue. There are some great school tech coalitions.

I can send you any of them that are really fighting for. Why do we have iPads in every child's backpack anyway? Yeah. And let's kind of unplug some of this and so you're not alone and do we all can agree that the research has stated otherwise this is not a healthy solution. So, let's not tiptoe around that and let's just get to work.

Sarah: Yeah, I feel like that tide is changing. Like maybe it's my imagination, but I feel like your your book and your message is something that is gathering steam. And like even a few years ago, the conversation was more about like, how can we get everyone to have their own personal device every, you know, kid to have their own personal.

A device. And now so many parents were like, I can't stand the Chromebook [00:39:00] that is coming home with my kid every day. And, you know, I don't want them to have a phone until they're in high school. And so I'm really hoping that it is that this is something that's building momentum. Even my, my 20-year-old.

This past year, he has really, he got rid of all his social media and he he has like a little, like a sign on his phone that's a snake to remind himself that the phone is like a snake of his time. And he says that whenever his friends are together, he always is telling everybody, put your phones down, like put your phones away.

So I feel like there is some things are changing, I think. I

Erin: hope. Absolutely agree. I think that, yeah, 20 seems to be the age when there's a, there's an awakening to why are we doing this? Yeah. Fun. I don't like how this makes me feel nobody's having fun anymore. Why? And I think you're right.

I think a couple years ago, you know, certainly when I made my own decision to leave social media, delete all of my accounts, there was a lot of why are you, why, you know? And now the question is just how are you living like that? Tell me what it looks like in your house and how does it [00:40:00] feel and what are the benefits?

And I think you're right. There are a lot of shifting conversations around this and rightfully so.

Sarah: Yeah, and I think also the research even a few years ago wasn't as clear as it is now as to the harms of of, you know, certain forms of social media and the device time and screen time.

So hopefully it's a beginning of a tide of rebellion.

Erin: Yeah. Yeah, rebellion. I like looking at it that way, like we do have the agency and we can be bold and we can reclaim this.

Sarah: Yeah. I love it. So, question that I ask all my guests, which is, if you could go back in time to your younger parent self, what advice would you give yourself?

Ooh, I

Erin: like that question. I. You know what? I would I would say that to get comfortable with waste get comfortable with wasted what I consider to be wasted time wasted wasted craft supplies, you know, wasted sort of, talents even. I know that sounds a little bit [00:41:00] counterproductive, but I think my younger mother self felt like everything needed to be, every investment needed to pay off, you know? There needed to be an ROI with everything. It was very much especially as a homeschooler, you know, I'm thinking if we're going to do Chinese lessons, well then every child needs to be fluent. If we are going to do violin practice, every child needs to be a musician.

And that's not really how learning works and that's not really how, and so I think I would just be, I would just encourage myself to. Know that nothing is really ever wasted. And so in a sense, you know, be comfortable with everything that

you think is like, gosh, you put so much money into the whittling kit and then there it lays unused.

That's okay. That's okay. That was a moment that was worth exploring. That has been put aside and maybe it will come back around. So I think that is probably the encouragement of a gift.

Sarah: I love that. It sounds like you're talking about backing away from achievement culture.

Erin: It probably. Yes.

Yeah. Yeah. That makes a lot of sense to me. Yeah. So just letting everyone [00:42:00] be, you know, letting them, yeah. Because in

Sarah: achievement culture, everything has to have its reason for doing it, right? Like the, to fill up the res, the child's resume to get into the Ilea Ivy League school and you can't have anything just because I, so I think you're saying like, the opposite of waste is just, you know, there doesn't have to be a, just because like you, you can just do it 'cause you're doing it.

'cause you wanna do it. That's right. Yeah. Yeah. It sounds interesting. It's not wasted. It's not wasted. It's not wasted. That's right. Yeah. Where's the best place, since you don't have social media, I, what's your website or the best place to go for people to find out more about

Erin: you and what you do? Yeah, we do have a website.

It's called opt out family.com, and it's just really there to put every resource that was in the book where for people who wanna find more or if you just wanna know how to do this. Why then all of those resources are there. They're all free. There's no sales funnel or any, there's, I, there's a program to buy.

It's just all free as like a landing pad. So if parents have questions and they want to know, what [00:43:00] would you do in this scenario or whatever, I always just encourage 'em to email me. And if there's a resource that's not there then we'll make it, you know, we're pretty committed to this, to making sure it's accessible for as many people as possible.

That's

Sarah: awesome and

Erin: we'll link

Sarah: to all of that in the show notes. Thank you so much. It's really great conversation and I encourage everyone to get your book and get more details and you've got, one thing I liked about your book is it's filled with examples and stories and things for people to try and things for people to relate to.

So thanks.

Erin: Thank you.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode. I hope you found this conversation insightful and exactly what you needed in this moment. Be sure to subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast platform and leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. Remember that I'm rooting for you. I see you out there showing up for your kids and doing the best you can.

Sending hugs over the airwaves today. Hang in there. You've got this.