



MAMA TENDO

DON'T LET SCREENS STEAL YOUR CHILD'S ATTENTION

It has been an interesting week visiting schools and giving talks to children on how they can spend their holidays – with fun, but responsibly. I told them to beware of people who may want to abuse them sexually and exploit them. I also spoke about the importance of dressing appropriately, being obedient to parents and skill and talent development.

To parents, how can we manage screen time with our children this holiday and what alternatives can we provide? We may not be able to ban technology, but we can take steps to prevent it from becoming harmful or addictive.

To begin with, setting clear and consistent screen-time rules is important. Children respond well to structure, and when they know what to expect, they are more likely to follow the guidelines we set. Establishing reasonable daily limits depending on age helps children understand that screen time is only one part of their day and not the centre of it.

Children need physical exercise, creativity, reading time and social interaction. Outdoor play, chores, reading, or creative work should come before any screen use. When children discover the joy of hobbies, such as drawing, dancing, riding a bicycle, or playing with friends, they naturally spend less time on devices.

Parents themselves must model healthy behaviour, because children learn more from what we do than what we say. When they see us scrolling during meals, staring at phones while talking to them or constantly online, they assume this is normal.

Creating device-free zones in the home is another helpful step. Areas, such as the dining table, children's bedrooms, prayer or quiet-time spaces and homework areas can be kept screen-free. This helps reduce distraction, improves sleep, encourages family connection and protects children from unnecessary or unsafe online exposure.

Even without technical expertise, parents can use simple parental controls to keep children safe. Blocking harmful websites, approving apps before download and monitoring online interactions can prevent misuse and reduce risks. Many children turn to screens when they are bored or seeking attention. Offering them boardgames, cooking together, walking, chatting about their day, or giving them small responsibilities can meet the emotional needs that screens often fill. The goal is to turn children into individuals who can use technology responsibly.