

## ARTICLE

**Digital Detox: Kiran and Anjali's Screen-Time Reduction Strategies for their Child**

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AIF

This interview explores the experiences of Kiran and Anjali, parents residing in Bengaluru, India, as they navigate the challenges and strategies associated with reducing their child's screen time. The couple, both well-educated, with Kiran employed in the software industry and Anjali as a homemaker, undertook a digital detox for their two-year-old son, Hari, after observing developmental delays. This qualitative inquiry explores their motivations, methods, and the outcomes of their efforts, providing valuable insights into the role of parental involvement and the impact of digital media on early childhood development.

Akhilesh: Could you please introduce yourselves?

Kiran: I am Kiran, a software employee based in Bengaluru.

Anjali: I am Anjali, a homemaker. I left my job after the birth of our first child, a girl who is now eight years old.

Akhilesh: Could you describe the initial concerns you had regarding Hari's development?

Anjali: Initially, we noticed that Hari was not responding to us. He seemed disengaged and his speech development was noticeably delayed compared to other children his age.

Kiran: Yes, we realized that his screen time might be affecting his development. He was spending a lot of time on mobile phones and watching TV, which we thought might be contributing to his lack of responsiveness and poor speech.

Akhilesh: What steps did you take to address these concerns?

Anjali: The first step we took was to reduce his screen time. Initially, we limited it, and eventually, we stopped it completely. We also made a conscious effort to stop using devices in his presence to set a good example.

Kiran: We started paying more attention to him, and engaging him in various activities. We took him outside more often, played with him, and introduced



new toys that could stimulate his cognitive abilities. We also enrolled him in a daycare facility to help him interact with other children and develop social skills.

Akhilesh: How did you ensure that these changes were effective?

Anjali: We made sure to spend quality time with him every day. We focused on activities that required interaction, such as playing ball games, doing puzzles, and reading books together. We also encouraged him to imitate our actions and words, believing that this would help him develop his speech.

Kiran: We were consistent in our efforts. We made it a point to talk to him frequently, using simple words and phrases, and encouraged him to repeat them. We also praised him for his efforts, no matter how small, to boost his confidence.

Akhilesh: What changes did you observe after implementing these measures?

Anjali: After a couple of months, we noticed significant improvements. Hari started uttering simple words like "Amma" and "Bava." He also began imitating our actions, such as clapping hands or waving goodbye.

Kiran: We observed an increase in his cognitive skills and memory capacity. He became more interested in playing with toys, doing puzzles, and engaging in various activities. He also started enjoying outdoor activities like playing with sand and going to the park.

Akhilesh: What insights have you gained from this experience?

Anjali: It is crucial for parents to invest time and effort in nurturing their children, even with a busy lifestyle. Consistent efforts can lead to significant improvements in a child's development.

Kiran: Now, Hari is more interested in playing and exploring than in using mobile phones or watching TV. He enjoys playing with toys, doing puzzles, and engaging in outdoor activities. This experience has taught us the importance of being present and actively involved in our children's lives.

Akhilesh: What are the challenges you faced during this process?

Anjali: One of the main challenges was balancing our time and responsibilities. As a homemaker, I already had a lot of household duties, and dedicating additional time to focus on Hari's development required significant effort and adjustment. Another challenge was consistency. It was crucial to maintain a routine and consistently engage with Hari without reverting to the convenience of screen time, especially on days when we were particularly tired or busy. Additionally, finding the right activities that would stimulate his cognitive abilities and keep him engaged was a trial-and-error process. We had to experiment with different toys and activities to see what worked best for him. Despite these challenges, we remained committed to our goal. Seeing the positive changes in Hari's behavior and development made all the effort worthwhile.

Kiran: For me, managing work commitments while ensuring I spent quality time with Hari was challenging. Being a software employee, my job demands a lot of my time and attention, so finding a balance was difficult. We also faced some initial resistance from Hari. He was accustomed to spending time with screens, so transitioning him to more interactive and engaging activities took time and patience. Enrolling him in a daycare facility was another challenge.

We had to ensure that the environment was conducive to his development and that he was comfortable and happy there. It was a learning experience for us as parents. We realized the importance of being actively involved in our child's development and the impact of our actions on his growth.

Akhilesh: If you have to suggest some other parents regarding digital detox, what would you suggest?

Anjali: I would suggest starting gradually. Reducing screen time doesn't have to happen overnight. Begin by setting specific times when screens are not allowed, such as during meals or before bedtime. Gradually increase these screen-free periods. Find alternative activities that can capture your child's interest. Introduce them to toys, puzzles, books, and outdoor activities that stimulate their cognitive and physical development. The key is to make these activities enjoyable so that they don't miss the screens. Engage with your child during screen-free times. Spend quality time talking, playing, and doing activities together. This not only helps in reducing screen time but also strengthens the bond between you and your child.

Kiran: It's important to lead by example. Children often imitate their parents, so if they see us using devices less, they are more likely to follow suit. We made a conscious effort to reduce our own screen time and engage in more interactive activities with Hari. Consistency is crucial. Stick to the rules you set and be patient. There might be resistance initially, but with time, children will adapt to the new routine. It's also helpful to explain to them why reducing screen time is beneficial for their health and development. Lastly, be patient and persistent. Changes won't happen overnight, but with consistent effort, you will see positive results. It's about creating a balanced environment where children can thrive without relying heavily on digital devices.

Akhilesh: Thank you so much for your valuable insights.

