

PHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA, GAMING & ANXIETY

A practical conversation for parents

THE QUESTION PARENTS CARRY

Am I being
too strict?

OR

**Not strict
enough?**

Most parents have felt
both in the same day.

Frequent social media use is now the baseline.

Among U.S. high school students, use at least several times a day is the norm—not the exception.

When exposure is this common, the better question is not “Do they use it?” but “What is it doing in their life?”

77%

**use social media
at least several times a day**

What keeps pulling them back

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|--|
| 01 | Notifications | Something happened |
| 02 | Endless feeds | There is always more |
| 03 | Snap Streaks | Do not break the chain |
| 04 | Game rewards | One more round, but no pause button |
| 05 | Group chats | Do not miss the moment and less intimidating than one on one |

CONNECTION

**Connected to
everyone.**

**Present with
no one.**

Both can happen at the same time.

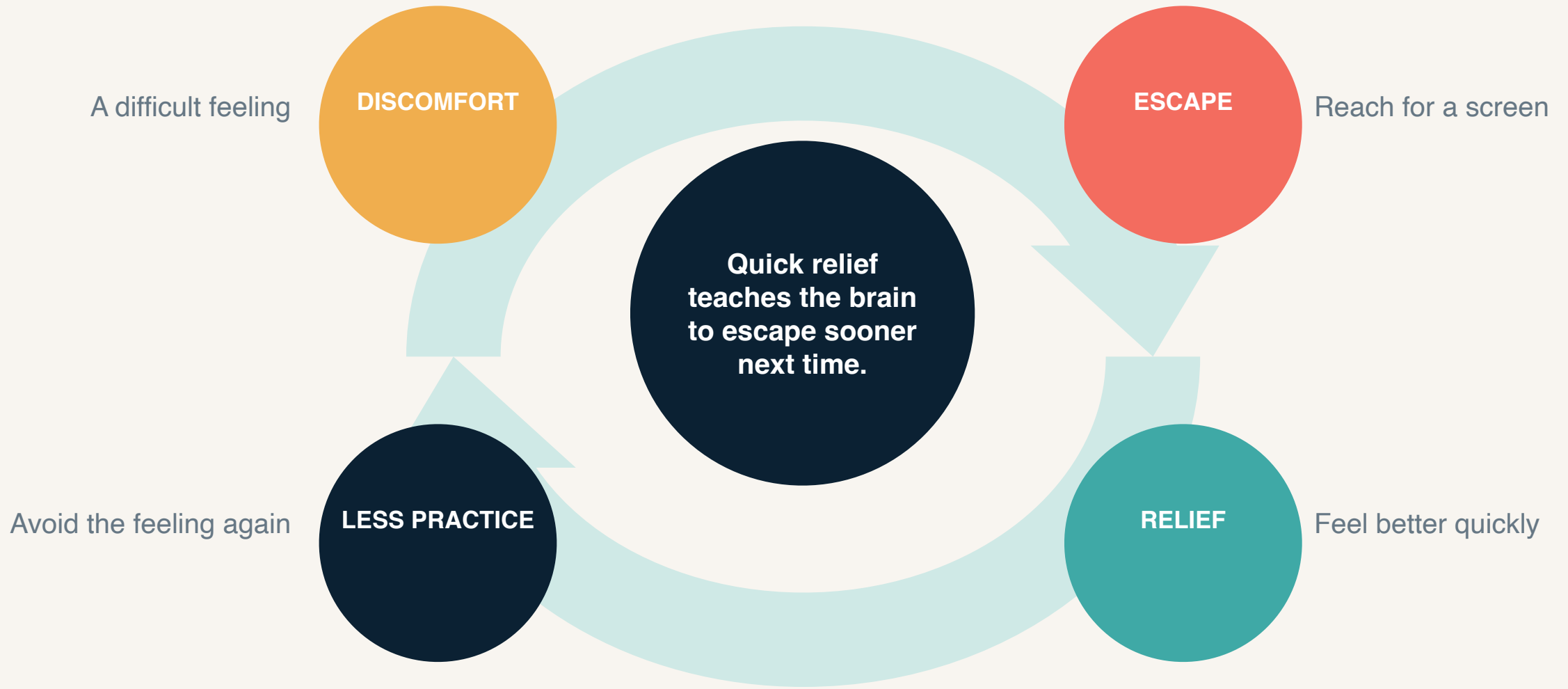




**If technology removes
every
uncomfortable moment...**

**When do our kids
practice
being uncomfortable?**

The anxiety and avoidance loop



Social media changes the comparison

WHAT PEOPLE POST

Wins • Trips • Perfect angles • Best moments

VS

WHAT YOUR CHILD FOCUSES ON

Doubt • Boredom • Rejection • Ordinary moments

Comparison loses context.

Gaming: enthusiasm or interference?

3 HOURS

can describe two very different lives.

HEALTHY HOBBY

Sleep stays intact
Schoolwork gets done
Life remains varied

PROBLEM PATTERN

Sleep disappears
Responsibilities slide
Stopping creates chaos

QUICK PULSE CHECK

Hold up 1–5 fingers: where did this week land?



More than three hours a day is associated with twice the risk.

2x

risk of mental-health problems, including symptoms of depression and anxiety

3+ HOURS / DAY

The signal is about sustained intensity—not one difficult evening.

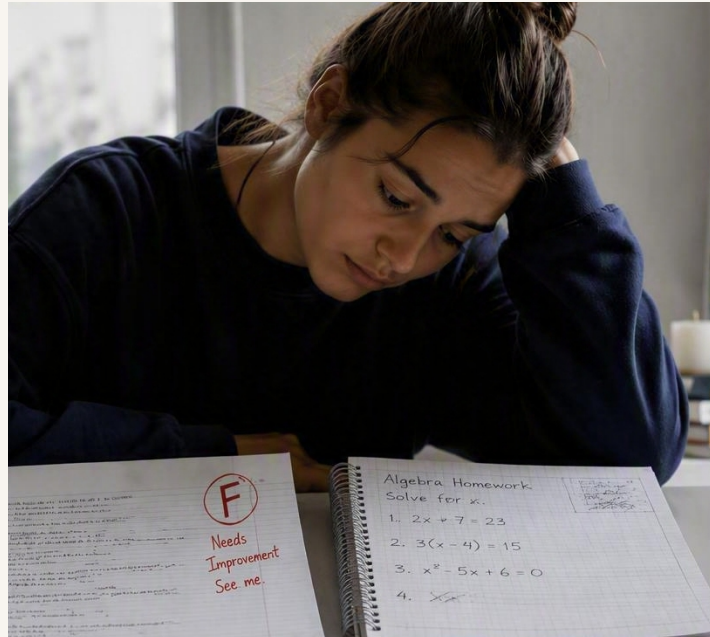
Association does not prove that social media alone caused the outcome; content, context, vulnerability, and displacement all matter.

Look beyond screen time

What is the screen crowding out?



SLEEP • MOOD



SCHOOL



FAMILY • FRIENDS
ACTIVITIES

Look for changes that cluster and persist.

When concern deserves more attention

01

SLEEP

Regular late nights or exhaustion

02

RESPONSIBILITIES

Schoolwork or chores repeatedly ignored

03

RELATIONSHIPS

Withdrawal or constant conflict

04

CONTROL

Repeated failed attempts to cut back

05

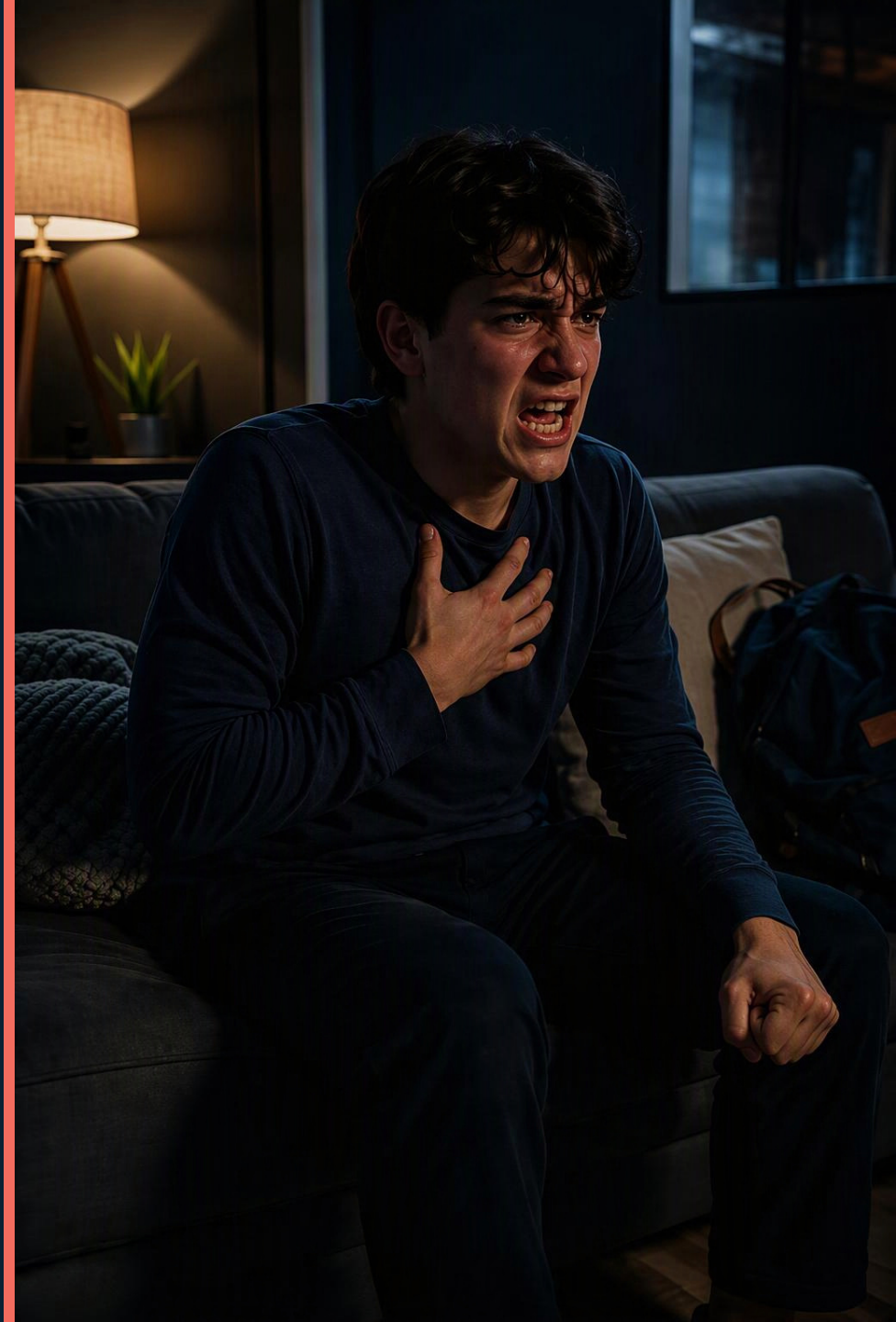
MOOD

Strong distress, irritability, or hopelessness

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN
THE PHONE DISAPPEARS?

Relief or panic?

Can your teen stop, transition, and
recover
without the entire evening collapsing?



Five practices that help

01

Shared tech-free times

Meals and important conversations

02

Protected sleep

A consistent nighttime charging place

03

Curiosity before criticism

Ask what the app or game provides

04

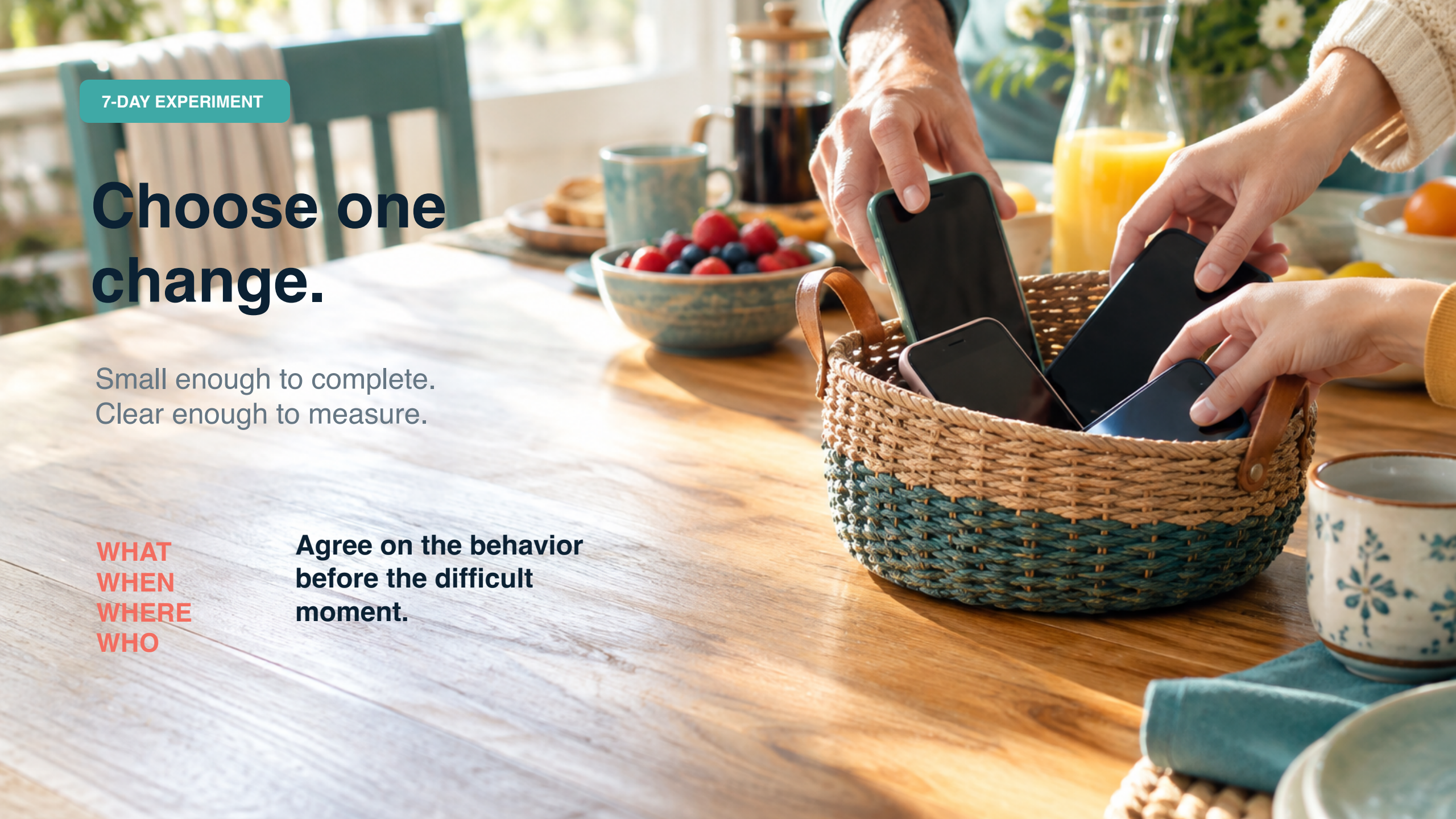
Visible adult modeling

Parents follow the agreement

05

Gradual independence

Freedom follows responsible use

A close-up photograph of a person's hands placing several smartphones into a small, round, woven basket. The basket is placed on a wooden dining table. In the background, there is a bowl of fruit (raspberries and blueberries), a cup of coffee, a pitcher of orange juice, and a vase with flowers. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

7-DAY EXPERIMENT

Choose one change.

Small enough to complete.
Clear enough to measure.

WHAT
WHEN
WHERE
WHO

**Agree on the behavior
before the difficult
moment.**

A simple family agreement

WHEN

**Start and stop
times**

WHERE

**Bedrooms, meals,
car**

WHAT

**Apps, games,
devices**

RESPONSE

**A calm, known
consequence**

Review after seven days.

Keep what works. Adjust what does not.

THE DESTINATION

A young adult who can manage technology

without needing someone else to manage it for them.

Start with one conversation.
Then try one change for seven days.

