Parent 1:

[inaudible 00:01:54].

Administrator:

Hi. Good afternoon.

Parent 1:

Hi. How are you?

Administrator:

I'm good and you?

Parent 1:

I'm good. Thanks.

Administrator:

Awesome.

Parent 1:

Yeah.

Moderator 2:

Okay. Moderator 2 didn't respond to me. Just knock on the door.

Moderator 2:

Do you want me to knock or?

Moderator 2:

Hi. Good afternoon. I can't hear anyone.

Administrator:

Everyone's on mute. That's why.

Moderator 2:

Okay. Yeah. We'll give people another moment or two to join.

Hi. All right, I guess we'll get started and if anyone else joins we'll take them at that point. Administrator, you're muted. Administrator, you're muted. Administrator? Administrator, you're muted.

Parent 1:

[inaudible 00:06:29].

Administrator:

All right.

Administrator:

Okay. Thank you so much.

Moderator 2:

Sorry, I couldn't hear you, Administrator, you were muted.

Administrator:

All right. Sorry, Moderator 2, we just have one mom that just forgot, so she's just going to fill out the consent form really, really quickly and then hop on the call.

Moderator 2:

Okay, so should we wait?

Administrator:

So sorry, I had my audio off as well.

Moderator 2:

Okay. It's alright. We couldn't hear you because you were muted.

Administrator:

Yeah. Sorry. So I'm not sure if you want to wait, we just-

Moderator 2:

[crosstalk 00:07:25] we'll get started because I want to make sure we can have time to get through everything. So I just want to introduce myself. My name is Moderator 2. I'm the Director of the Healthy Brain Network, the Project Director of the Healthy Brain Network, and we're here talking about your children's use of electronics, technology during COVID, pre-COVID, and your concerns post-COVID and the return to school.

You filled out the crisis survey, and that's why you were selected to be a part of this study. I think what I like to do and the way I like to start these is a little bit of an ice-breaker and how we get to know each other. So if you want to introduce yourself, tell me your children's names, ages and, I don't know, your favorite TV show at the moment on Netflix that you've been binging.

Parent 1:

I can start. My name's Parent 1. My son is named Parent 1, Child 1 and he is eight. [inaudible 00:08:41] forgive me, but I'm not watching any TV right now. I just-

Moderator 2:

A good book?

Parent 1:

[inaudible 00:08:50] and then when I do, when I have free time I just sort of collapse and [inaudible 00:08:56].

Moderator 2:

I mean, I think a lot of us do that. Parent 2?

Parent 2:

Yes. Hi, I'm Parent 2. My daughter's Parent 2, Child 1 and she's eight. Weirdly, I'm actually watching a show with my kids that I actually enjoy and I wouldn't let them watch it while I was away. It's Sulfur Springs on Disney Plus. Apparently, it's one of their movies. I don't know, it's like a creepy mystery show. I think my kids are actually kind of scared maybe that's why I'm... I think it's a good show on TV. But it's a cute show. So that's currently what I'm watching.

Moderator 2:

That's good. I have three kids. My daughter is 13 today actually, and I have two boys that are almost 10 and almost seven... Eight, sorry. One is turning eight in a few weeks. I've been watching a show called Good Girls. I don't know why I love it. It's about three seemingly suburban housewives who get into some sort of money laundering scam. It's kind of funny.

Parent 2:

It's so good. Even though there's actually some really criminal terrible things that happen in it, it's a fun show.

Moderator 2:

[inaudible 00:10:18] love Christina Hendricks, and I thought she was great in Mad Men.

All right, if we can get started. I like doing this individual exercise where you can put down on a piece of paper two or three things that were positive in the ways technology affected your child's life over the past year and two or three of the worst ways technology has impacted your child over the past year, and then choose the one that was most important to each of you and then overall. So for example, mine would be that overall, the use of technology has given my kids better tech skills. They used it a lot to keep in touch with family that they kept in touch with less previous to COVID. And when they use technology, whether it's for Zoom, YouTube, or something else, it lets me work, which would be the most important part. The negatives are that they're constantly playing games, it's a struggle with bedtime and whining when I don't let them use it. Overall, I think it's more positive than negative.

Parent 2:

All right, I can go. This was a fast one for me.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 2:

Some positives are really voice to text, being able to do some additional classes on out school, because her school was a joke in Newark, and being able to stay in touch with friends. But all the bad sort of roll in together, she's addicted, she's a monster when she has to get off, and she can't focus with school because she has no interest in doing the online classes. All she wants to do is play games. So every second I turn around, she's trying to run away with the iPad or she's doing class, but really she's really secretly playing Roblox while she's supposed to be on class. I actually see it way more as a negative than a positive. It's changed who she is. She [inaudible 00:12:29] interesting child. She has no interest in going outside, she has no interest in seeing human beings, it's allowed her anxiety to fester, I could go on and on. I like, hate it. I could send her to a wilderness school at eight years old for a year and have to disconnect from technology, and she wouldn't miss her mother, I would send her off.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 1:

[inaudible 00:13:00]. So Parent 1, Child 1 has really been able to text his friends and have playtime with his best friend so he doesn't feel [inaudible 00:13:11] because of Roblox [inaudible 00:13:14]. And my family also, he Zooms with his cousins and [inaudible 00:13:26] before. And he's really developed an interest in the way his [inaudible 00:13:28] works and so he's like, "Look, I can see the [inaudible 00:13:31]. I can hack it." So just that interest in figuring stuff out and solve them. But similarly on the negative side, it's constant, it's all he wants to do. He has no other interests. It's always something we have to go over and it just becomes a big part of our relationship and [inaudible 00:13:57]. [inaudible 00:14:01] if it's a overall positive or negative. I think [inaudible 00:14:04].

Moderator 2:

Okay. All right. Well, I wanted to dig into the questions a little bit and you can just call out your answer as I'd like to hear from everyone. And I love differing view points, so we don't all have to agree on one person's views. But in terms of technology use for school, how did your child or children use technology for school purposes before the pandemic? Did you think it was beneficial? What were your concerns? Or, was it problematic?

Parent 1:

Parent 1, Child 1 didn't have any technology use [inaudible 00:14:51].

Parent 2:

Parent 2, Child 1 did not have any technology prior other than... Yeah, no, she had none. She was really not on it. It really wasn't a part of our life.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 3:

Hi. My name is Parent 3. I showed up a little late, sorry everyone. So I have two sons, ages 7 and 10. They had very little interaction with electronics before the pandemic and now this is all... I mean, I'm sitting across from my child who's supposed to be doing math work, and he's on Friday Night Funkin' or whatever it is. I don't know what it is, Roblox, whatever. I just see him over there jamming, and that's not math. He's not jamming to math. But this is what I deal with daily. I think they felt they were on vacation. This whole time they've just been on a never-ending vacation and [crosstalk 00:16:04]

Moderator 2:

... similar, they used to wait until I was on work meetings... Mine are back in school now, but they used to wait until I was in work meetings and then I would hear YouTube and I knew they were supposed to be in class. I could stare at them but I couldn't scream at them because I was on with everyone at work.

Parent 3:

Yes, exactly. Same.

Moderator 2:

As Administrator can testify [crosstalk 00:16:24] been on meetings where I've had to yell at my kids in the middle of a meeting and forget to mute myself.

Parent 3:

That happened to me once.

Moderator 2:

It's happened more than once to me. We have this repeat meeting with everyone every day, and there have been countless times where I thought I muted and I didn't.

Administrator:

And then we think that Moderator 2 is yelling at us.

Moderator 2:

Yes. I'm always like, "Put down that iPad," and then people are like, "Wait, I'm sorry. I'm sorry." And I was like, "No, I don't care what you... You work." It's very funny.

So it sounds like prior to the pandemic your children weren't really using technology for school purposes, how were they using it during the pandemic? Were they on Zoom school the whole time? What were the struggles you found? Obviously, you've mentioned not doing schoolwork when they were supposed to, but what were some of the other issues you encountered?

Parent 2:

I mean, I feel like my kids are watching a lot of inappropriate YouTube stuff too, stuff that I definitely don't really want them exposed to that much, and I just am working and they know that they're over there on YouTube. And it's just one video, and then it brings up 50 other videos that you can click on. I feel like they just get progressively worse. I mean, sometimes I'll overhear it and I'll be like, "Change that."

Also, with the Chromebook, I feel like I don't really like the Chromebooks. I wish we had done a real laptop because I've heard you can put a lot more restrictions on them. So one of our Chromebooks died, I don't know, it just won't take a charge, and Parent 2, Child 1's is on its way out, so I think I'm going to switch her over to a laptop where I can put in a lot more restrictions.

We're also working with a cognitive behavioral therapist for her and we will be putting time restrictions on the iPad using, not the timer one because my kids just ignore limit. That one's like, no. He sent us another one where you can actually like... This thing's going off. So yeah, I mean, it's a time thing. I feel like she's constantly... That's the only goal. Even if she does something, it's solely to get the iPad. Even if she's nice to someone, it's solely to get the iPad. It's like the focus of her life now. I just feel like it's made her into a less interesting kid. Like I said, it's disappointing. She was always outside and wanting to play with kids in the beginning of the pandemic, when it was just Zoom school and she really hadn't been introduced to Minecraft or Roblox or any of that stuff yet. She actually just did the class and then went outside and played. But when she discovered that over the summer, the decline was so fast into addiction, I was like, "Wow."

Moderator 2:

Okay. In terms of returning to in-person school, have your children started to return to school yet?

Parent 1:

My son is pretty much back at school [inaudible 00:19:33] school's open when [inaudible 00:19:35]. He generally [inaudible 00:19:42].

Moderator 2:

Okay. How has the return been in terms of their technology use?

Parent 1:

He still wants to be on Roblox all the time [inaudible 00:19:53]. So he doesn't have any assignments from school that are [inaudible 00:20:00].

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 3:

So I have one at home still with me, and the other one, the older one, I sent back to school. He has autism and ADHD. The one that's here has ADHD. So he is getting speech and OT and all of that, and it was better to just send him back. As soon as they opened up, I was like, "Okay, you got to go back." Well, actually I waited a little while because the numbers had gone back up for a little while and so I was concerned but there were only two other kids in his classroom, so I said let's do it. He needs the structure and there's just... Like you said, Moderator 2, I have work meetings, I mean I'm answering emails through the night practically, so I just felt like it was just better for him to be in school. But he uses an iPad for school, they use the iPad in school, which I don't love but he loves it, and then when he comes home, he wants to play on the iPad. So it's like iPad, 24/7. So it's a lot.

Parent 2:

Yeah, we are back. So I didn't mention I had two other kids, I guess I should, so we've sort of taken an approach that we had the ability... Because my parents live in Connecticut, so I moved the middle child, the first-grader, Parent 2, Child 2, to a school in Connecticut. They're full-time. It is amazing. If they do close, which is very rarely, they do live synchronous learning so I don't have to be their teacher, I don't have to step away from my work day. The teacher actually answers questions. My little guy's two, so he is in pretend school/daycare.

But Parent 2, Child 1, her school, she's still virtual for her school in Manhattan. They actually are back full-time, every grade now except for the pre-K, but I chose... She had been hybrid, and I chose to mover her to all virtual when they decided to go back full-time. The reason I did that was because of the six-foot rule, and even if it was the three-foot rule, which the UFT hasn't adopted yet, the entire second grade is in the cafeteria. So my dyslexic, ADHD kid, which is just the tip of the iceberg of her issues, is supposed to be in a cafeteria with every single second grader, no partitions, teachers using microphones, the specials are all still via computer.

So whereas, Parent 2, Child 2 in Connecticut is getting live special... She gets to go on a real playground all day, she has a first best friend, a second best friend, a third best friend. And Parent 2, Child 1 just would get to go sit six feet apart from a kid and have a teacher use a microphone while three other teachers are using microphones. It was just ridiculous. And with her issues and being further behind, we just figured... And she's not doing school at home obviously, but we're hiring tutors. So we're educating her, not our school currently.

I have said this morning I'm actually trying to get Parent 2, Child 1 into a private school for next year, so soon I'll be taking this call on the road because they called me this morning that they want her in for a math evaluation this afternoon. So it's really frustrating.

So our school is back, but I'm tired of hearing people say things are back because I think it's back in such a way that's so terrible that for some kids, especially ones with... The way that they're setup, it's not back for her. I feel like even for the best students in that school, it's not a great situation, not when you compare it to what my other daughter has here in Connecticut. It's really disappointing in my opinion.

I obviously have a lot of opinions on this. I'm on our school leadership team too and I'm a very vocal member of it, so... Yeah. I don't know, it's been frustrating.

Moderator 2:

Okay. In terms of challenges in returning to school, what do you expect in the future your children will struggle with in terms of being back in the classroom full-time?

Parent 3:

I know for me, my biggest concern is I've seen his ADHD spike, I guess, since he's been home. Maybe it's always been there, it's just that I have my eye on it now. He's in front of me so I could really tell that it's escalating or whatever, and I'm just really nervous that when he goes back into the classroom they won't be able to control him or they won't be able to teach him. I just think he's going to be out of hand. He's going to be off schedule. Just not used to being regimented in any way, and I think it's a ... I'm nervous about him going back, I'll put it like that.

Parent 2:

But to also play on that, I agree, I have a lot of the same concerns. But I also anticipate there being so many kids like that that it's just a disaster in that classroom. I feel like so many kids are going to be such hot messes with various issues, maybe ADHD, maybe they're super behind in writing now or [crosstalk 00:25:52] issues and they're struggling. I mean, I feel like so many kids have regressed and the social anxiety and there's just so many things. I just feel like how can the teachers... And that's one of the reason I'm trying to take this show over to private for my one with all the issues, is because they're so small, and those kids have been in full-time [inaudible 00:26:13] my kid that's a problem kid. But I mean, how can these teachers deal with this? Especially some of the schools that are really big with only one teacher that don't even have TAs and that sort of help. My kid's always been in an ICT classroom with two teachers, but in general those classes have been very big. There are still usually at least 27 kids and half of them have an IEP, and I would imagine that if my kid with her IEP is struggling, she's probably not the only one. So I would think that it's going to be a bit of a disaster. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe that's just the pessimist in me.

Moderator 2:

I wanted to ask a couple of other questions in terms of gaming and your children because a lot of you have mentioned Roblox, which is something that my kids play as well, how did your children's use of gaming... What was it like before the pandemic? Was it beneficial to you or to them? Or did it cause a problem?

Parent 4:

I'm sorry, I joined late, I do have an answer to this if you'd like it. My name's Parent 4. My daughter's name is Parent 4, Child 1. She was not a player of video games. We had a pandemic birthday last year, we're coming on the same... It's the same time from last year, but we were desperate to save the day and try to make some happiness out of something terrible and we bought her a Nintendo Switch, which has been great and terrible at the exact same time. She has been able to foster really good relationships with friends that she already knew and deepen those relationships.

There was a friend of mine that... I was in a moms group, and she was like six months old, and that kid somehow found... The mom said, "I have a kid your age, please can we connect them on Animal Crossing?" And they played Animal Crossing, they became really good friends. And then she played this other game called BlockStar with another friend of hers from Hebrew school. And since she went back to school she's been best friends with another kid in her class and they play Fortnight and a bunch of other games.

So she wasn't really playing many video games. She played solitary video games, she would play by herself, but now she plays with other people. The thing is now she wants to do it all the time. She doesn't really want to do other stuff.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 2:

I mean, I have said before we really didn't do games before the pandemic, but sort of a good and bad thing. I mean, now that she's obsessed and addicted, and we've started cognitive behavioral therapy for her, we're about three weeks in, but guess what we're using to bribe her behavior, that she can earn? It's Roblox. I'm basically feeding the addiction to get the behavior change I want but it is a... Right now, we started small with some of the behavioral changes. But next week, or even really starting tomorrow, we're going to a little bigger with the iPad restriction, which we hadn't incorporated yet. He wanted to do a couple weeks of just go small before we go big, but it's still using Roblox as basically a bribery tool/reward on the cognitive behavioral reward chart. So I feel like as much as I'm hating it, I'm also feeding it.

Parent 1:

So my son was [inaudible 00:30:38] before the pandemic started [inaudible 00:30:38] and I always had a problem with it. Personally, I wasn't a gamer and so I didn't get it and [inaudible 00:30:50]. But I guess sort of in the pandemic, [inaudible 00:30:59] video game addiction webinar that I listened to, and it was really helpful because it just sort of laid [inaudible 00:31:11] there re positives and there are negatives, and you should worry if it gets to the point where they're not eating, [inaudible 00:31:19] interested in other things. And I think the interest in other things was [inaudible 00:31:24].

But the other thing they can [inaudible 00:31:32] focusing on positives and, "You should do this" [inaudible 00:31:35]video games, but I've also sort of come to accept it more because I'm seeing how they help kids [inaudible 00:31:51]. And there are definitely positives that [inaudible 00:31:58]. So yeah, I'm still guilty of it. It really works though [inaudible 00:32:13] in school performance stuff because he just wouldn't even try to do the assignments and now he's [inaudible 00:32:26] and he's actually working [inaudible 00:32:27] all of that [inaudible 00:32:33]. I can't [inaudible 00:32:38] myself from this whole thing now. It's a part of our lives and [inaudible 00:32:41].

Parent 4:

It allowed my daughter to spend time with friends when everything was locked down. It was a way for her to actually be with other kids. On New Year's Eve, she spent a lot of time with her friend in Animal Crossing, that's like the coolest thing I've ever heard of. I mean, New Year's Eve with your friend, all night in Animal... I mean, it wasn't real but they were hanging out and they also video chat at the same time. It's not like hanging out with a real person, I mean it is a real person but it's not like in the same room, but it was something when she had nothing, and there's something for that.

Moderator 2:

It definitely is. But it sounds like a lot of your share the same experience of pre-pandemic your children didn't have a lot to do with gaming and being online often and during the pandemic that shifted to being partially a large problem, partially something that you've depended on to give them some socialization and some sort of sense of normalcy. Is that correct?

Parent 3:

I would say so. Also me though, my boys did play games before the pandemic, it's just it's magnified now. It's more games now. We also got them both Switchs I think in the last year or so, the Switchs add to it. They each have an iPad now. It's too much. Plus the school iPads.

I haven't used the Roblox as an incentive, but I feel like that's a good idea. I know we're supposed to be trying to steer away from it but I actually like that idea. But I have started doing this where they get iPad privileges. So if you finish your homework, if you cleanup, if you whatever it is, put your plate in the sink after you eat, all of that will give you iPad privileges. And your privileges will get taken away if you are fighting with your brother or whatever it is. I've had to put that in place.

I've tried to do the time restraint thing, but if I don't set a timer I will forget and then they'll be on for five hours because I'm on my own, doing my own thing. I'll check in with them, everybody's fine, nobody's killing each other, okay, but if I don't set an alarm then I'll forget. So the timer thing has not been easy. They also obviously push back when the time is up, so it hasn't been easy.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 4:

I'm going to say I've experienced the same thing. It works too well, all of a sudden they're gone. You know what I mean? And it could be a long time. Uninterrupted time as a parent is so valuable and awesome that when it comes along, you're just doing stuff. You're just doing stuff, work, whatever it is you need to do, and then all of a sudden it's been a long time and you're like, "I haven't seen my child all day, what have they been doing?" That I know is not right, but it's not like... And the whole them doing school at home thing, we suck. I work at a school, I'm a school social worker, I'm great at school, I know school, but with my own child's school, I don't know what it. They're just like, "Make sure to go in the classroom" and blah, blah, blah. They didn't really give us really adequate instructions and stuff, and there was a whole bunch of stuff. And we'd get bad report cards every fricking day from the teachers like, "Oh by the way, your child didn't do their homework," and it's a lot to keep track of and it's not easy to do that. I don't know just having her quiet, it's just so nice, but it's terrible.

Moderator 2:

I can completely relate to that.

Parent 1:

It was the hardest part [inaudible 00:37:31] whole month of November and the month in March, all the months that we had to just [inaudible 00:37:51] unless we were [crosstalk 00:37:52].

Moderator 2:

I can't hear... There was an-

Administrator:

[crosstalk 00:37:52] need you to mute. Awesome.

Parent 1:

But yeah, if we gave him any slack, any space, he would be on either Roblox or he would be watching [inaudible 00:38:15] so I had to be on top of it [inaudible 00:38:19] and he wasn't even... They had an hour and 45 minutes where they were [inaudible 00:38:37] and they were asked to just [inaudible 00:38:54].

Moderator 2:

Okay. In terms of looking at the full return to school, how do you think you will be impacted and how do you think your child will be impacted in terms of their use of gaming? Because I think part of the common problem I'm hearing from all of you is you've gotten used to using gaming to your benefit, your child has gotten used to gaming and it's turned into a problem, but while they were home it seems like there was not much else to depend on. Now that they're going back to school they won't have that time availability. So how do you think that's going to be a challenge for you or for them?

Parent 1:

I can say from experience [inaudible 00:39:41] pretty much [inaudible 00:39:42]-

Moderator 2:

I can't hear you, sorry?

Parent 1:

Since I feel like there's already full-time back in school, that transition was... We definitely had to start getting feedback from his teacher, we are using Roblox as an incentive for him to be engaged in school, so we had to sort of support [inaudible 00:40:06] to do. And he still complains about, "Oh, I only have two hours to play" when he gets home after school, and we're like, "You [inaudible 00:40:21]." So he complains about it and we have to sort of incentivize [inaudible 00:40:24] school to help him [inaudible 00:40:27].

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 2:

For my one kid that's already back at school she basically plays it until the moment she steps into that school or out of my car. And the moment she gets off the bus and I get her home, she's back on it again until she goes to bed. I mean, I guess it's better in the sense that she has several hours that's she's not on it, but it's all about that from the moment she wakes up till the moment she goes to bed. I mean, it's still an issue in terms of, I think, just socialization and stuff.

Parent 3:

I know for me it's an issue just because they don't want to do anything else. Socialization is not even a problem. They just want to eat and play video games. My 10-year-old will actually say, "I just want to play," that's it. I have to fight with them to do school work.

As a matter of fact, the other day, he came in, he did... Let's say there's a vocabulary assignment, he does the vocabulary assignment and he's like, "I'm done. Can I have the iPad now?" So I say, "You finished all your homework?" "Yeah, I'm done." "No, math today?" "No, no math." And of course, now I'm like, "Okay, fine, go play the iPad." So now it's like two hours later, and I check the folder, and we're eating dinner and then he's going to get washed up and go to bed, there's really a math worksheet that needed to be done. So they have no clue about priorities. Their only priority is to whatever build their city in Minecraft and beat whatever, I don't know, creeper or whatever. I don't know. Bless you.

Moderator 2:

Thank you.

Parent 3:

But that's been our biggest issue. So the one that has already gone back to school, when he comes home, it's just tunnel vision to get to playing the iPad. Whatever he has to do or whatever he has to not to do to get to the iPad. So that's where we are with that.

Moderator 2:

Okay. What other feedback do you want to talk about in terms of your child and their use of gaming? We have a few minutes left.

Parent 2:

I'm mostly curious of how would we get them off it, the best way to transition them back into society, I feel like, instead of their virtual world. I mean, that's, I think, my biggest concern at this point is doing that. I'm hoping summer camp will help, we're definitely sending ours to summer camp, two weeks of sleep-away camp with no technology and then six weeks at day camp. Can't send a two-year-old, but I'm sending the six and eight-year-old. So I'm just curious any good resources, books, I don't know, tools, detox program from it.

Moderator 2:

Well, we are certainly going to invite you to our town hall where we will discuss the feedback from these sessions and maybe make some suggestions for interventions you can use.

Parent 4:

I just think that there are some things about video games. I think that's there's problem-solving, if there's reading involved, there's... I can't believe how much she's been able to learn about Minecraft. It's amazing. There are skills involved in this. It's not entirely useless. It's just, how do we capitalize on the good and mitigate the bad? And I think that that's really hard. I mean, I just wish that my kid would be as interested in doing her homework to the extent that she's interested in... I don't know. I can't believe what she's acquired in Animal Crossing. She's not even interested in it anymore, but her island got three or four stars or whatever. There's merit to it, I guess, is where I'm coming from. I would hate that the only answer would be to never do it again or to not do it at all, or to do it so little that whatever good would... I don't know.

I have a brother who's a year younger than me, and he was an OG gamer. He's a lost child, he doesn't work, he plays video games every day. I know that this has some really terrible consequences, but there are good parts also.

Moderator 2:

I could definitely see that.

Parent 1:

Yeah. I have to say that my son has actually been great [inaudible 00:46:07]-

Moderator 2:

I can't hear you, Parent 1.

Parent 1:

I'm sorry, I guess my audio's not very good. Is this better if I'm closer?

Moderator 2:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

Okay. Sorry about that. I have to say that my son has been able to have some really successful social interactions. When we say it's time to go out, time to go and do something, and we sort of force the issue, he has a lot of fun and he usually really gets engaged in things. That's something that we were... A huge challenge to do before, like we would go to the park and he'd be like, "I just want to go home." He'd be uncomfortable or insecure about social interaction. And I feel like he's gotten so much more confident by not having that [inaudible 00:46:53] social interaction but actually this virtual version of it. It feels like he's gotten more confidence. So there is good things about this, but we have to really force him to have those in-person experiences. So that's where I've been trying to just focus on like, "What are we going to do? What are we going to do do instead of video games?" [inaudible 00:47:19] swimming every week now, just figuring out what we can offer to him that [inaudible 00:47:27].

Moderator 2:

Okay. Does anyone else have anything they'd like to add before we wrap up?

Parent 4:

Just that it's nice to see that there are other people in a similar situation. I live in a town where everybody like, "You know what I do, I make sure my child never has video games." There's no shortage of people trying to rub it in your face how great they are, and I'm sick of that. Don't want it.

Moderator 2:

Administrator is laughing because during work meetings I have shared my experiences, and I'm like, "I'm so tired of scrolling through Facebook and reading about people who are like, 'Today, I planned a scavenger hunt around my town,'" and I'm like, "I live in Riverdale, in the Bronx, I don't have time to plan a scavenger hunt. I have a job." I'm like, "Can you come pick up my kids because it seems like you have a lot of time?" I felt parent-shamed because... But I think it's a very common experience.

It's funny because there are focus groups about children and their use of social media, gaming and things like that, and I find that parent use is impacted as well, and how we shame each other and how we feel it, and we feel like, "Oh my God, does this make me a terrible parent?" In the past six weeks, I've managed to go do one thing with my kids, I'm talking about during the pandemic, I'm like, "There's nowhere to go, there's nothing to do," and I just think it's a funny reaction to have when you look at it and you look at someone posting pictures of a scavenger hunt they did that involved 17 parks and things they... And I'm like, "Would you go out at 2:00 o'clock in the morning and hide things? Who are these people and why do they have so much time?"

Parent 2:

That's making me laugh. I can't even imagine that. But I agree too, it makes me feel better that there's other people out there who aren't planning scavenger hunts and taking their kid on farm field trips during the workday and their kids are also watching YouTube and playing Roblox.

Moderator 2:

My ex and I kept calling each other during the pandemic, and we're just like, "Are other people working? Is [inaudible 00:49:53] happens? Where do these people find time to plan events like this?" Even during the summer, I send my kids to day camp and sleep-away camp, and my hope's that they'll be kept busy, but during the pandemic there was no option. And I think it's good for parents to talk to each other in an honest way and not worry about the judgment piece of exactly those things like, "Did we plan 17 events this week?"

I'm not running a children's activity program, I do my best, but I think you all are doing your best. I think it's very hard when we become dependent on... This transition, I think, was challenging for people in a sense of if you are working and if you have a normal life prior to the pandemic and then suddenly you are now dealing with your child at home all the time instead of being at school so you could do your job. So a lot of people relied on things like technology and devices to give themselves the time to get their jobs done instead of just being on top of their children all day. So it's an adjustment.

I don't know exactly what it's going to look like once kids are back in school full-time, because mine are, but I still struggle with their use of technology on weekends. Now they don't want to do anything. I don't fight with them because there's not that much to do, like when we're going to go to the park and then they don't want to go, and I'm like, "Well, I don't want you sitting on your device all day." It's just an argument.

Parent 4:

But it is a bummer, I'll tell you because the other day we wanted to go to Costco, and my husband and I were so excited. We were like, "Oh my gosh, Costco. It's like the bast date in the world. Oh yeah, Costco," and we added on Duck Donuts because we were like, "Hey, if you come, after we'll go to the... " It's not enough. Not enough. So, I don't know. But thank you for your honesty, all of you. This was like a bomb for my soul. I didn't have to hear, "Well, we don't allow social media in our house."

Moderator 2:

So I have this joke with my ex and with one of my friends where we constantly screenshot things on Instagram or Facebook, and then we send it to each other with liar, liar, liar underneath, because I think they are. I'm sorry, I'm just going to go right out and say it. I don't think it's true.

Parent 3:

A lot of people are lying about their activities.

Moderator 2:

[crosstalk 00:52:43] friends with who are parents who are, if we're honest with each other, we're all experiencing the same thing. I think just a takeaway for you is if your honest with your friends, close friends about this, and you're just like, "I'm really struggling," the second you say it, they're going to be like, "Yeah, me too." Instead of everybody pretending that, "Oh my God, this was glorious. I became so close to my children." And I'm like, "I've screamed more than I have my whole life."

Parent 3:

Prior to the pandemic, I remember saying... I worked at least 50, 60 hours a week, so before this I was like, "I need to spend more time with my kids. I need to spend more time with my kids." Now I'm like, "I'm spending way too much time with my kids." So yeah, it has been a challenge. The other day, my son's doctor, we took him to see a ADHD specialist, and she told me that he should be outside in the park for three hours a day. Who has the kind of time-

Parent 4:

Three hours?

Parent 3:

Three hours a day. I was like, "I'm going to have to pay somebody to do that because I certainly cannot do it." I can't do it. And I still haven't done it. Some days, we don't even leave the house, and I feel bad because I'm so busy I just don't have the time to leave the house with him. And it's not like I have a house where he can go in the backyard and run around, I'm in an apartment in Brooklyn so he definitely cannot go outside without me.

Parent 2:

Well, if it makes you feel better, our CBT therapist has us only doing 20 minutes outside a day, and there's a couple days a week we don't even meet that. So I'm like, "Three hours?" That's blown my mind.

Parent 3:

I can't even do 20 minutes. No, I could try to do... That's more of a realistic goal though, 20 minutes a day. Three hours a day, not happening. On the weekends maybe. And even that, I don't want to be in a park for three hours.

Moderator 2:

What are you going to do in a park for three hours?

Parent 3:

Right, I can't [inaudible 00:54:51]. No way. I can't even put my head down and scroll through Instagram or whatever for that long. That means kids will disappearing, no way.

Moderator 2:

Yeah. My running joke has been, I understand that this is parenting and parenting doesn't always come with a handbook, but this is not what I signed up for. I thought I had to do diapers and everything else for a couple of years and then they go to school and life is somewhat normal for a lot of years, and then they graduate and et cetera. I did not know that there was going to be a time period of them being home 24 hours a day, seven days a week for a year.

Parent 4:

But you know what? I don't think we're going to remember the bad parts.

Moderator 2:

No, I know. I think it'll be fine in the end and children will adapt, it's just going to take some time.

Parent 4:

For reals. And whoever said they're sending their kid to camp for two weeks, God bless you. I'm sending my kid for as long as I can.

Parent 2:

No, it's two weeks of sleep-away but then six weeks of day camp, so it's eight weeks total. That's the max I can manage to find.

Parent 4:

Well, I'm doing two sessions of I think it's six weeks of sleep-away. It's like, bye.

Moderator 2:

[crosstalk 00:56:08] I'm trying to convince her to do the second four-week session in equestrian camp [inaudible 00:56:16] only agreed to one. I'm coaching her to agree to a second four weeks.

Parent 4:

Too much togetherness.

Parent 1:

I was wondering, because my son is... He was diagnosed with ADHD this last summer and we haven't started the cognitive behavioral therapy [inaudible 00:56:41] that's recommended, can I just take a second to ask you guys, does it help? What's the experience like? Is it a fixed amount of time that you have to commit or is it just open-ended therapy?

Parent 2:

Well, we're about three weeks in and I'm already seeing a significant improvement in some of the struggles that we had on a daily basis that have already just now become of the routine, and it is time commitment on mine and my husband's part. We also have to meet with the therapist every week for 45 minutes. Luckily, that's virtual. So I mean, from the perspective of time, it's more on the parent's time than the kid's time. And we've been lucky that the initial jump into it has been okay, but as you go along we are increasing the demands on her. So we do anticipate more struggle for the ODD to come out a little bit more in the coming weeks because it's supposed to get worse before it gets better. But I've seen a significant improvement in things we could not just get her to work on. She's dyslexic and didn't want to write at all because it was frustrating, and now everyday she writes two sentences in a journal. No problem. Just the playing outside and... We started small, but I've seen a big difference and it's only been three weeks.

Parent 4:

You should have a podcast, man. You should totally have a podcast, like the pandemic truth.

Moderator 2:

All right, well thank you guys so much for participating today. The information you've shared has been really helpful. If you have any questions, you can always email us. Administrator, do you want to explain reimbursement for a bit and then we'll wrap up?

Administrator:

Yeah, absolutely. So as Moderator 2 said, thank you guys so much for participating today. I just also want to let you guys know that the information that you gave us today is very consistent with the information that we've gotten with our other groups, so please don't feel alone in your struggles that you've been facing with the pandemic. That just speaks to the importance of pursuing these focus groups and having these town hall meetings and getting this information to you guys. So thank you for that.

In regards to compensation, you should receive it by end of day tomorrow, no later than Monday. So as soon as this group is done, I'm going to send this information over to our administrator who deals with compensation stuff. If you don't receive compensation by Monday, please feel free to reach out to me via email or to give me a call at [inaudible 00:59:27] multitude of emails that I've sent you guys and just let me know. Once again, just thank you guys so much for your time.

Parent 4:

I love your glasses, Administrator.

Administrator:

Thank you so much.

Parent 4:

Thanks for having us.

Moderator 2:

Thanks everyone.

Parent 2:

Thank you.

Parent 3:

Thank you.

Moderator 2:

Bye-bye.

Parent 4:

Hang in there everyone.

Moderator 2:

Goodbye.

Parent 3:

[inaudible 00:59:55].