Parent 1:

(silence).

Hi.

Parent 2:

Hello?

Parent 1:

Hi. I'm like, "Why don't I see someone else?"

Parent 2:

Hi, I'm [Parent 2 00:09:11].

Parent 1:

Hi, I'm Parent 1.

Parent 2:

Hi.

Parent 1:

I guess we're the only two here.

Parent 2:

Well, [Parent 3 00:09:19], I know now...

Parent 1:

Oh, right, right, right.

Parent 2:

There's Parent 3.

Parent 1:

Hi.

Parent 3:

Hey.

Parent 2:

Anyone help you with the courses?

Parent 3:

Hi, everyone.

Parent 1:

Hello.

Parent 3:

Hi. I was just running up and down with the kids.

Parent 1:

I'm going to get something to put the phone in. Hi.

Administrator:

[crosstalk 00:10:51]. Hi, everyone. My name is [Administrator 00:11:00]. I'm going to be... The research assistant that's been contacting you all. We're just waiting, oh, gosh. We're just waiting for our clinician to hop on the call and then we'll get started.

Parent 2:

Sure.

(silence).

Moderator 2:

Hi. Good afternoon, everyone.

Parent 2:

Good afternoon.

Moderator 2:

Hi, I'm Moderator 2. Administrator, do we have everyone on?

Administrator:

Sorry, I'm also on the phone, as well. We're supposed to have a group of six.

Moderator 2:

We're short two.

Administrator:

It should be, yeah. We should be give it like another minute or two.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

(silence).

I think we're going to go ahead and get started, Administrator. Hi, my name is Moderator 2. I am the project director for Healthy Brain Network. You have all been invited to participate in this focus group to talk about your children's use of technology before and after or during, and yes, for after the pandemic. I always like to start with a just quick go around the room, tell me a little bit about yourself. If we could get your name, your child's name, age and the most recent TV show you've binged. Does anyone want to get us started?

Parent 4:

I don't mind starting. Yeah, my name is Parent 4, my son is Parent 4, Child 1, he's 11. And he's at Riverdale Country School and I am a guidance counselor for the DOE. What else am I supposed to say? Anything else?

Moderator 2:

Just if you want to share the most recent show you've binged.

Parent 4:

Wait, say that, oh, wow. Oh, my goodness. Them.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 4:

The show Them, I watched that recently. That was a lot.

Moderator 2:

All right, anyone want to go next?

Parent 3:

Yeah, I'll go next. Hi, I'm Parent 3, Parent 3, Child 1’s mom. That's what everybody calls me in the neighborhood, Parent 3, Child 1’s mom. My son is eight and I'm the Manhattan Borough Planner for New York City Transportation. What else? It so happens the last show I just binged, too, was Them, so that was in common. And that's it, that's all there is about me. I don't know if there was some else I missed.

Moderator 2:

Nope, nothing at all. Anybody want to go next?

Parent 1:

Hi, my name is Parent 1. I am the mom of three. I have my oldest son is 26. I have a 24 year old girl and then my youngest one is 16, Parent 1, Child 1. Parent 1, Child 1’s mom. We live in Secaucus and I'm a retired police officer. Thank God I retired five years ago.

Parent 2:

I'm Parent 2. I have two kids. I have a son who's 18 and then the daughter that I guess we're talking about today, who is 13. I am a marketing consultant and I've not seen Them, but I just finished Serpent on Netflix. It was very good, based on a true story about a gem dealer internationally who murdered...

Moderator 2:

Hello? What happened? You got interrupted. Anyone like to continue?

Parent 5:

I guess I'll go. Can you hear me? Can people hear me? I don't know.

Moderator 2:

Yes, we can.

Parent 5:

Okay, I'm sorry. I'm on my phone because I can't figure out my daughter's password on the computer, she changed it again and she's not home, so I apologize. My name is Parent 5, I'm a mom of three. I have, my daughter is 15, my son is 13, and my little one is 10, my second son is 10. I'm a para for the Department of Education in Staten Island and I don't know. But I'm going to check out Serpent on Netflix.

Moderator 2:

Sounds good.

Parent 5:

Yeah, so, was there anything else I need to say?

Moderator 2:

Nope.

Parent 5:

Because I missed the beginning. Okay.

Moderator 2:

Well, Parent 2, did we hear from you? Oh, okay. All right, so getting started.

Parent 3:

Wait. I didn't know we had to... I have three kids, by the way. I'm not only Parent 3, Child 1’s mom, but Parent 3, Child 1 is my last child. I have two others, a 14 year old, a 10 year old. Two girls and Parent 3, Child 1 is the only boy, and he's the last.

Moderator 2:

Got it. All right, so if we can go around, I like to do this exercise just thinking about your children's use of technology during the pandemic. Can you write down three good qualities, three bad qualities and circle the most important of each? And then, we'll just shared the most important ones.

Parent 1:

We have to write it. I have to get up for a second, get a pen.

Moderator 2:

You can just say it if you want. For me, if I had to think about the... I would probably choose, that it give my kids better skills, they called family a lot and they were quiet so I could do work. On the negative end, there were a lot of endless games, bedtime became challenging and there was a lot of whining around times they weren't allowed to use their iPads. Of those, I would probably say the most annoying was the whining and the best part was letting me work. Overall, I would say it was a positive.

Parent 4:

I have to apologize, my camera's been acting up all day today. I'll just say the positives for Parent 4, Child 1 has been that he's been able to communicate with his friends, he's made new friends with gaming. And he's learned to navigate multiple, new programs. Especially, through school, which I think has been good. And just how to use whether it's the Schoolology or the music programs or the... In that sense, it's been great and I think that's something he can take, as well as other kids, too, be able to take with him moving forward.

The negative though, yeah, is the constant gaming. And the I'm going to stay up while I know you're sleeping at 2:00, 3:00 in the morning and get online. That has been a negative. And then, just the constant screen time I think is not that great for their eyes, in general. Those are my two main negatives. I don't think I have, I don't know if I have a third one. But the gaming and just the how it affects their eye.

Moderator 2:

Okay, did anybody else want to share theirs?

Parent 3:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

Okay, I'll go.

Parent 3:

Oh, go ahead.

Parent 1:

Oh, I'm sorry. I think.

Parent 3:

You could go, Parent 1, it's okay.

Parent 1:

All right, so for my 16 year old, before the pandemic, we had a set sleeping schedule. His grades were good, but there was a set sleeping schedule. During the pandemic and after the pandemic, that basically was interrupted and I was trying to over compensate for the amount of time being in the house and the lack of socialization with his friends, so the sleeping time was interrupted and it has continued. At this point, basically he goes to sleep whenever he's really tired.

One thing, that was one of the negative things that I, negative changes that we're going through since the pandemic. I would say he became more introverted than before. One of the positive things has been his grades. Even though there hasn't been a lot of interaction or he still remains at school from home, so home schooling. The grades have actually improved. He's a high honors, though we did have the option to go back last week, five days a week. I chose to keep it the way it is to finish the year only because he has improved his grades and I want him to end the year with the grades that he has now.

Overall, the sleeping is like he's sleeping less, the grades are higher. There's less time spent with the friends but they do interact every day over text or over the games. And more online time. But overall, it's okay.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 3:

Okay, so my positive was, no, my negatives were bedtime issues, sneakiness, of course, with of the iPad, like he would just be in certain areas and just trying to control the games that he's on and if he's meeting strangers. Those took a lot of, a little the work with me to manage that. But the positive is he started reading more and to help me with him not meeting strangers, my daughter started playing Roblox with him, so that was a plus. That kind of would help me to understand what game he's playing and so forth.

And it helped me to see what was his struggles in school, because right before the pandemic, he was having these issues and so it's through him being home and seeing how he worked with the computer is how I was able to finally learn how he learns and what he likes. Because he tends to keep things to himself. That was the positive. That's it.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 2:

For me, the positive is that she's able to connect with her friends. Especially, because she wasn't allowed to see them for a lot of the pandemic. I thought online school, they did a good job. And by being online, I think she learned a lot of stuff. Negatively, as everyone said, she's up to all hours of the night talking with her friends. And then, of course, I'm the bad mom because I'm the only one at midnight who's like, "Get off the device."

And the other part is she gets very sucked in to one, Roblox. Tiktok and videos and literally, it's like she's a zombie and when I ask her to do something, and she doesn't respond and it's annoying. And also, because she's with her friends online and doing everything, she's been spending a lot of time in her room, so she'll rush through dinner so she can get back to being on the devices. But yet, this is her only interactions, so it's hard to say no.

Moderator 2:

I completely understand that.

Parent 1:

My son is going through the same thing. The time spent in the room, it has come to the point that he's basically having all meals in the room because either he only has a certain amount of minutes, like three minutes, according to him, to have breakfast before he starts class. Lunch, they have different times every day, so by the time I ask him what's today's time for lunch? I'm preparing lunch, so basically he has to eat in his room. And dinner, just like what's your name? Parent 2 said, it's either very rushed to go back to the room or just bring it to the room because now there's homework, they have to do more interaction, so that to me is one of the negative things, the time spent in the room away from everyone in the house. Then that to me it's also and the times staying up at night to...

Parent 5:

I agree with the time in the room. My 15 year old, my oldest, she was struggling with it and we call her in her cave, like you need to get out of your cave, you need to get out of your cave. The good thing is we started watching some TV shows at night making every like certain nights of the week we'll watch something together as a family and at least we get to socialize with them, because if not, I forget that she's even home sometimes.

I don't even know she's there because she does not leave her room. Socialization has been a tremendous thing. My boys are in junior high, they finally went back full-time and yes, I sent them back full-time because I couldn't wait for them to go back, remote didn't work for them. And being a stay at home mom, being a working full-time at... is not the most convenient thing with three children. I became dependent on the Internet, like, "Just take your iPad, go do something on your iPad." My little one, I was doing work at 11:00 at night with him and I was telling the teachers, "You can't mark him late, I work all day, I work after school jobs and I'm on the computer all day, I can't maintain him and he has an IEP with needs and they're not being met."

He would get work done at 11:30 at night, so bedtime was a joke. It was like he could sleep all day because he's out of my hair. And his academics, we'll do at night with him. And my middle one didn't do any academics that when he went back to school, he was just crying, "Please let me stay home, please let me stay home." And I was just like, "No, go to school. Goodbye, go to school crying, here's some extra tissues." Call me cold and heartless but he needed to go back, and now he's fine and he's adapted to it. But two weeks of every day crying, "Please don't send me back to school."

Internet, like I said, it was good for me, it was a babysitter when I needed them out of my hair so I can do my job. But it's killing me. It's ruining this generation completely.

Moderator 2:

I completely understand. What are some of your thoughts around how your child used technology before the pandemic, during and now on their return to full-time? Some of your concerns?

Parent 2:

I think once he played games and video, I didn't... It was a few hours when she got home from school. And she was at school all day and she also would have after school activities and dinner normally. And so, while she did some of the same things, it was definitely much more limited. Also, I found like during the pandemic, when she's socializing with her friends, she's also not considerate with other people. She's constantly yelling on the phone to them.

And my son, who's a senior at high school is, "I'm trying to study for my APs and she's annoying." There you are, go. And I don't know like it's just like she's oblivious to anything else. And we don't need to, we don't want to hear all of the gossip. And I don't know, I hope after the pandemic that better, but I also can see as things are improving, she's also out and about more. [crosstalk 00:34:20].

Parent 3:

Yeah, the thing is like I have three children, as well, and one of them has ADHD and my son, I didn't get his full results yet, but I do know he has dyslexia. I don't know if ADHD is on top of it. Like I said, because we were home, I was able to catch it, because I was working so many hours, I didn't see he wasn't reading well. He faked it and he was able to cover it from me. And his sisters would cover him because they would help him with homework.

And I guess through their frustration, they would do it for him or give him the answers. That helped, even though that was a big fight because he fought with me every day, he didn't want to work. But his reading scores increased, he got better. But the management was so hard for them to keep them off the iPads, the computers because I felt so bad because they don't have the social outside, I didn't want to be the bad mom and say, "Okay, stop, you can't."

And it just, I didn't have the energy to tell them, to always watch over them because I am still working full-time at home. And so, working full-time then teachers calling me, "Oh, they don't see him on the screen." It was a lot. And then, my husband works at night, he comes, that was an argument in itself because he don't know what to do, so his thing is like, "Oh, I can't do nothing," so he goes, so I'm angry at him, so I'm yelling every day.

And so, I wasn't happy any more and my attitude just changed. I just was always upset every day. I was always mad, and always arguing, and so this was how it was for me every day for a while. There's a little change now, but that's because I decided, I don't care. I had to just stop. I was going to lose my mind. That's how it went.

Parent 2:

I agree with you there. I got to the point where all I did all day long was scream and scream and scream that I just personally didn't like being in my house myself, so I could only imagine what my kids were going through. And it just got to the point where I gave up with school, I didn't care, so if they went on the electronics from the time they woke up 'til the time they went to bed, I was done. I'm just tired of screaming and being the mean person. It just has been hell.

Parent 1:

I mean, it's a period that has affected everyone and at home, us parents, we have tried, like in my case, I've tried to, like I said before, overcompensate with giving him the free time to be online for as long as he wants, staying up until whenever he gets tired. That has created a problem in my house because I have my daughter who is right next to him and the bed basically is just divided by the one wall. They are separate rooms, but everything that happens in his room, every conversation, every movement, she could hear it.

And then, that's why we always had a specific sleeping time so that it was good for everyone. Now, that has become a problem because she has to be up at 6:00 and if he stays up until midnight, 1:00 moving around, she is constantly saying, "Tell him to be quiet, tell him I need to go to sleep. Tell him..." That has created a problem, but I think in every household, we as parents, we try to overcompensate the fact that they were not interacting with their friends, they're not having physical activity, they're not outside, so we just let them get away with basically just being online or playing games.

Parent 4:

I totally agree with what you're saying, Parent 1. And I do try to set a bedtime and make sure my son's in the bed before I go to bed. But he does wake up and every now and then, like I said, I'll wake up like 2:00 in the morning, and I'm like, you might hear him in the background now, which is the other thing I wanted to agree with Parent 2 about is, listen, their conversations when they're on these games are, can be outrageous sometimes. And so, my thought now is, he's gotten used to this.

When they go back to school, is this something that, is this kind of conversation or interactions, are they going to continue in person? Or is this just a gaming thing? Right? Or I'm just curious like how is that going to play out? I hope to goodness not. And working in a school with students, I work with all the students with that because a lot of them are on these games and they're talking, oh, the language, sometimes.

Parent 1:

One thing, yeah.

Parent 4:

Go ahead.

Parent 1:

I'm sorry. And I think also the fact that they are getting so used to relating to everyone through online. When they are together physically, I know for my son, they become more introverted because they're so used to talking to each other through a screen, when they're in person, there's going to be less interaction, less conversation because they're not going to feel as comfortable as they did before. Talking in person as opposed to talking from the comfort of your own private room.

Parent 4:

That's true. Yeah.

Parent 2:

I'll say that only one thing that's been an advantage with the friends that the friends have become more of a support system. And that's been a positive. Because my daughter has anxiety. And pre-pandemic, I felt that every time she had homework, I mean not that I had to do it with her, but I had to sit there and she needed me for the confidence. And I wasn't necessarily helping her, I was just wasting my time.

And now, the friends have taken that role, so that is a positive that she has now a support system with the friends.

Parent 5:

I think a negative on the Internet, too, is that these kids have figured out how even though you block certain things, they've made new accounts and new ways to get into things that it's just to the point where I don't block anything just because I figure at least, even if it's inappropriate, at least I can monitor what it is and then talk to them about why it's not appropriate. Why you shouldn't do things like that, why you shouldn't be on a site like that, what can happen to you.

I've made them more aware of things like that, which is stuff I probably would not have talked to them about in the past.

Parent 1:

Yep, they've became pros. [crosstalk 00:42:01].

Parent 5:

Yep.

Parent 1:

Or they would, that's the only time they get along. One of the girls distract me because I have the iPhone and screen time and I block their... One of them distract me and the other one, they work good together, and I'm like... All of a sudden, I'm like, "I don't remember I gave you permission to download that app." And it took me a minute to figure out how they're doing this. And I was like, "Oh, you all could get along when you all want to do something negative but all other times you are arguing, whatever." I said, "I'm going to get you." But just the same as you, Parent 5, it was like, every time I would try to come up with a schedule, and you always have someone to tell you, "Oh, this is what you need to do, because you don't have no control of your kids."

So then, I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to have control." These kids get used to things and they shit, and I'm like, "I'm done." I don't know what to do anymore. Sleeping early and then one wake up in the middle of the night, "Oh, I can't sleep." And then, all of a sudden, all three of them is in my bed. And then, I have a crook in the neck, it's like they find ways for me to change the rules. Certain things I've been good at keeping like, "No, you all not going to switch up on me." But many of it has been hard throughout the pandemic to keep consistency. Very difficult.

Parent 5:

It's so hard, so hard.

Moderator 2:

It is.

Parent 5:

I think the teachers are afraid to call my house anymore because I just break down emotionally to them, because I can't handle it. If I can't handle it at 49 years old with three kids, how am I expecting my three kids at their ages to handle this?

Moderator 2:

Well, moving on a little bit to how they use some of their technology during the pandemic. I think rule bending aside, because I think kids definitely do find a way to get us to do that. I know my own children do. How they're always smarter and find some other way of getting... For the longest time during the pandemic, they'd wait until, like during the original quarantine, they'd wait until I was on the phone and then ask me to by Roblox or whatever it was for their games. But when I was so distracted, like that I would've given them a million dollars to leave me alone for two seconds.

And so, certainly what looks like five... And then, I didn't even notice at some point, I had three different monthly subscriptions for Roblox because they'd asked me so many times and like I thought I was buying it once, I don't know. It's very confusing. But talking how they use social media and gaming, when I use the word social media I mean also things like YouTube and WhatsApp and other chat option, not necessary just Facebook or Instagram or things like that. Or the hideous TikTok. What were your perceptions or how did your children use that prior to the pandemic, during the pandemic and what are you thinking about in terms of as we return to in person school and in person life, especially in light of the CDC's guidelines today, what do you think will be some of your concerns about it?

Parent 2:

Well, I mean, a 13 year old daughter, and I don't know if it's pandemic-related or not, I think it's been awful. Because with the TikTok she can tell who's at who's house. And she can tell when she's left out. And she calls somebody and the person says, "I can't see you, I'm doing something with my mom." And then, an hour later, the person's doing a TikTok with somebody else. And she also has something-

Moderator 2:

[crosstalk 00:46:10] not at you, but because I have a 13 year old daughter.

Parent 2:

Yeah, then the other part, I don't know if it's Instagram or one of those, she sees the little icons of people. She's like, "Okay, Parent 2, Friend 1 told me she's busy today and she forgot." I guarantee you, [crosstalk 00:46:28].

Parent 4:

That might be house party.

Parent 5:

Or Snapchat, they can find their locations, yeah.

Parent 2:

Right, if Parent 2, Friend 1 goes here, I know she's with Parent 2, Friend 2. If Parent 2, Friend 1 goes here, I know she's with Parent 2, Friend 3, which means she lied to me. And sure enough, Parent 2, Friend 1 went to Parent 2, Friend 2's. And it's so much social drama that we did not have. If somebody went out on a Friday night with friends, Monday morning, I don't think it even came up. And the kids are stupid, too, because they're lying about to their friends, and their friends know they're lying. And then, the friends get mad at them and then they're like, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." But I'm like but the other day, her friend was asking her, "Oh, you went to a picnic with these girls?" And she was asking like accusingly.

And I'm in the background, my daughter was going to kill me, I'm like, "Oh, like when you were in Florida and you blew my daughter off?" I'm living through this drama and it's not... it's this media. It's terrible.

Parent 4:

Yeah, my daughter is 20 now, but even before this, because like I said, she's 20. Throughout those whole teenage years, some of the same things were still coming up. They weren't on Instagram, Facebook, they were on other sites. And I would say at least for me, it didn't slow down until she turned 18. And that's when things began to kind of like mellow out.

Parent 2:

Don't tell me that.

Parent 5:

Was that when she graduated high school?

Parent 1:

Yes.

Parent 4:

Yeah. [crosstalk 00:48:17].

Moderator 2:

Five more years of this is what you're saying?

Parent 4:

Sorry. [crosstalk 00:48:22].

Parent 3:

Yeah, mines is 14.

Parent 4:

It's a lot of drama, and I just did a whole workshop with my students who are 11. Some of them are 12, on just that, social media and drama. Because every time I have these sessions with some of my... it's particularly with the girls. It's always about who's saying what to who. And now, they're even taking pictures and sending pictures of other friends to other people and it's just and it's like guys you can't. It's not even legal, I don't think.

Parent 2:

They do that.

Parent 5:

But you know, they see it on TV. Everybody, if something happens, everybody's quick to pull their cameras out. Nobody's quick to step in, it's just oh, pull your camera out and record it, so you could post it. That's all they want to do is get other people in trouble now. But that's [crosstalk 00:49:15].

Parent 2:

And then, send it to somebody else to say, "So and so was talking about you." Screenshot!

Parent 4:

Yep, they do. [crosstalk 00:49:29].

Parent 1:

I always tell my son, "Anything you type-"

Parent 5:

Don't say anything you don't want it to be [crosstalk 00:49:34].

Parent 1:

And just for anyone to take a screenshot like Parent 2 said and then send it around. And the one person that you didn't want to see it, it's going to get to that person, so just make sure you don't type anything. Even if you delete it, don't send anything that you don't want to get you in trouble.

Parent 5:

That's pretty much.

Moderator 2:

I have a funny story. My daughter comes into my bedroom one, it's like a Saturday night at like 1:00 in the morning and she's like, "Dad, I have to talk to you about something." And I was like, "Oh, my God, what?" And it turns out she'd been on the phone with her friends and this guy who she described as this guy was another 13 year old was texting them that if they don't do something then he's going to hack their phones and he's going to do all this other stuff to them. And so, I picked up her phone and I was like, "Oh, what's his phone number." And she read the number and I called him.

She's like, "You're a sociopath." And I'm like, "Why? Because I called?" I got this kid on the phone, I was like, "Hi, you're threatening my daughter, you want to stop?" And he was like, "Oh, I couldn't see her phone, it was her friends who were sending these screenshots of what she was writing the whole time."

And so, I sat my daughter down and I was like, "Listen, I'm just going to tell you, if international spies, the US can't get Apple to unlock their phones to read their text messages, I don't think some kid in Brooklyn is getting yours. But also, if you just call people, like this is why you shouldn't text someone anything you wouldn't want to screenshot and send to everyone they know."

Parent 3:

Exactly.

Moderator 2:

It's just a funny story. But what do you think would be problematic as they go back to school?

Parent 5:

[crosstalk 00:51:37] be able to put down.

Parent 1:

In person, relationships that they will be having, I don't think they're going to feel as comfortable talking in person. At least, in the beginning, as they do now behind a screen from the comfort of their house, they feel protected from their rooms, so they feel like they can say anything and it's not going to go anywhere because when they don't want to see it, when they don't want to hear it, they just turn it off.

But when you're in person, with the other person in front of you, I think that's actually going to, a lot of the kids are just going to become, are either going to be too shy or too introverted. I think it's going to take them some time to adjust back to how it was before, before he pandemic.

Parent 5:

[crosstalk 00:52:30] the opposite. He's so introverted, since she's been home, she's not like this. She's normally out, bubbly, she enjoys everything she can. She joins this, I feel more like her chauffeur after school. She's into everything. Here, she's in the house, she never leaves her room. It drives me nuts. Drives me, she can't... go back to see people and human beings.

Parent 4:

And I notice students even in the class now, though, those who are in the building, they're still texting each other. It's going to be interesting to see how classrooms are going to be run. Because some teachers are saying they still want to use technology, as we're talking about reopening, and is that still going to limit that socialization? Because then, they sit there on the WhatsApp and chat with each other even though they're sitting in the same room. And yes, they're at separate desks, but they just they chat that way. [crosstalk 00:53:25].

Parent 3:

I think my concern is like it's not so much as that. I think for the social part, over the years, they'll come back. It may not be as how we grew up, it is going to look different. No matter what, because there was social media from the get go, there was already issues with social interactions, I think.

This has just made it worse, but I think it was going to be like this no matter what. But what I do believe is going to happen, what I have received from this is my older daughter, she was able to kind of see what is due, what's not due. I felt that having it on the computer and being able to visually see it, also with me knowing what they were learning, it helped me to kind of know how I can help them. Because the other way with the paper and allowing the kids to write it, it was so hard for me to connect.

There was a flexibility of learning so that my children could kind of do the work where they can, you know, oh, I'll catch up when the, after school. That flexibility helped them to give their best when they can. And so, going back, I think they're going to lose that. That is what I see would be a issue. But with the social media, I had social media issues before the pandemic, during, it's going [inaudible 00:55:00] from my household. Especially, with the girls. Especially, the girls.

But I do like the computer but for me, I realize I know what all my children was doing before I'd have access to that information unless I went to school and the teacher told me. And I'm a visual person, because even if they tell me, it's not clicking. Whereas, when I was able to go on the computer and I see, okay, oh, that's what they're doing. How are they doing it? It helped me to know, okay, you know what? I can't teach you that, you need a tutor or I would find ways to help them so they could get better help.

Moderator 2:

All right, does anyone have any other thoughts they'd like to share around this?

Parent 2:

Yeah, I just want to say that I think socially, it's going to get worse. Because, but now they're out and about, there's going to be more evidence of being left out. All of a sudden, now we're going to be back to, "Are you wearing the right outfit? Are you wearing this?" And like, all the stuff that the one good thing was getting dressed was not an issue. She literally went to school at her computer and she would wear her pajamas or sweats and the whole stuff is going to start up again. I don't know. It's just I don't see it getting better.

Moderator 2:

What do you think would change the outcome?

Parent 4:

It's going to be a problem.

Parent 1:

My camera was interrupted, so I just heard the last part where you said the clothing. Did you say they were not dressing up during the pandemic. And then, I know that's another thing that I personally also think of. Being at home, it's all sweatpants and pajamas all day. But going back to school, that they need to wear uniforms where my son goes to school, so that in itself it's work, extra work for me. Washing the uniforms, ironing the uniforms on a daily basis.

I don't mind if it gives him a positive outcome. But when it comes to also, yeah, dressing, that has taken a turn, as well with the way they feel comfortable now. Even when we go anywhere, he only wants to dress the same way as he dresses at home.

Parent 4:

I agree, too. My son will run around in pajamas all day, every day, and even when it's, "Oh, run the trash out." He's running out in his pajamas. I do think it is going to be a process of going back for all of us. Workers, teachers, students, and one of the things I know that we talk a lot about at school is spending just those first couple months, just getting kids acclimated to just being back and socializing again and doing whether it's the circles and getting to know you activities and just different things like that and not, even though they are behind, there is some lag in terms of the academics, but catching up on that after we get them socialized first.

And not just the students, like I said, but also the parents and having workshops and things with parents and also for teachers. I know for us, for at least our school, we refer tons of families to you guys. And then, we try to look at some of the workshops and things that whether it's Child Mind or Healthy Brain offer and put that out there. Because that's what we're going to need, just a lot of that SEL support.

Parent 1:

I know that I also feel the same. My son went through all the studies about three years ago through the Healthy Network. And I wanted to call and see what else is offered in terms of getting help for him in terms of being in turn that the pandemic has the impact on his emotions emotionally, mentally and even physically. Because, spending so much time in a room on a bed, he's not even sitting on a desk. Everything is done from the bed only because of the comfort. Oh, I'm sitting here, my legs are straight, so there's no need for me to sit up on a chair.

The interaction, the emotional, mental, so I actually wanted to know if there's anything else that is offered just so that we can get the information.

Administrator:

It's very funny that both you and Parent 4 brought that up, because that's literally the reason why we're running these focus groups. Even though we're talking about problematic Internet usage, we've been running multiple focus groups. We actually, and tomorrow, we're just basically collecting information from you guys just about your experiences with your children and just how they've been navigating the Internet, what problems you guys have seen so that way we're able to supply you guys with just a host of different resources and things like that that will be helpful to you guys. And that's going to be through the form of a town hall meeting in late May/early June.

You guys hit it right on the nail. If any of the other parents want to just, what ways in which, like what are some ways in which we at the Healthy Brain Network can figure out just different resources we can supply you guys with and different ways in which we can assist you guys with any of the difficulties you've been facing throughout the pandemic.

Parent 2:

Well, one thing that I'm interested in, because she's been doing her school from home and the tests have been from home, her whole test anxiety of walking into the room, sitting down at the desk, having the you know, hasn't happened this year because... and math, that a lot of times she has this one on her lap.

I'm concerned when she goes back and she's in eighth grade and it's going to be more demanding and she still has test anxiety. And so, anything that you can provide to help with that transition back to school and all the anxiety of more formalized learning would be great.

Parent 1:

To me, the number one concern would be social anxiety. The way, like I said, the turn that the pandemic has, or the impact on the way I see, it's next door to you. That to me would be one of the major things and something I would like to get some type of help on the social anxiety.

Administrator:

And then, you guys can also in addition to just like any anxieties around school and just social interactions, so today's group was about social media and just what we call here problematic Internet usage, I don't know if we coined the term, but that's just what we refer to it as. All the concerns that you guys have expressed are concerns that we are seeing consistently with every single group.

What ways can we support you guys just with Internet usage, just like resources for school, any anxieties, any... We've heard like Moderator 2 and I have heard things about different messaging, like services or resources that schools have been encouraging kids to use and how that's become problematic. Just like what can we touch on for you guys' anxiety, exactly. Is it like...?

We've also heard things about social media influencers and how that's on TikTok and how that's just drastically changed the ways in which kids are behaving and what they're interested in now and how that helps them with their anxiety and all these different things. Anything that you guys can supply us with, whether it's with Internet usage, school, anything with any mental disorders that you... as your children may be facing. Any problems of that matter, just please let us know how we can support you guys on that.

Parent 5:

I would definitely think you need some more counseling and cyberbullying because like Parent 2 was saying earlier, these kids don't understand how they're bullying and playing mental games with other kids because the way they talk or the way they lie to each other and now we can find out a lot of access. Because it really is something that's hitting everybody, whether it's boys or girls, because I have both and it hits them both. And mentally, because like I said, emotionally, my son is in counseling in school and he never needed it. Now he needs it because just the transition back into school was like, "I want to stay home." And he's a straight A student that was failing.

And now that he's back at school, he's passing and like I said, the teachers called me up and I cry to them because I don't know what to do. I can't sit down and do his work for him. You know? But this is really, I mean, listen, you got people to help us with mental and emotional, I'm onboard. I got three, I'm onboard. And parents will take it, too. It's tough.

Parent 3:

That was one of the things that I was struggling with for my middle daughter, Parent 3, Child 2. I just, I needed someone, and then she needed counseling. And even before the pandemic, it's like it was hard to get a program for her for several reasons. If they were near my home, they won't take my insurance. And those that are far, I have to work so I would have to take days off to go to her sessions.

Even right now, even through the pandemic, I was like, "Okay, I heard they were doing a lot of these online." I said, "That's great, I could put her on." I couldn't get through and I'm like, "What is it that I'm doing wrong?" And it's like for children, it was like so it's too hard to get them counseling or for her, I wanted her to do CBTs and to be able to get her medication that her doctors don't want to give it to her.

I had to stop giving it to her because it was just getting messy. And those are the things I'm struggling with. And the ones that do have the time, they don't take my insurance so it takes boku of money that I don't have to pay for it. That has been my biggest challenge.

Parent 2:

Parent 3, [crosstalk 01:07:18].

Parent 4:

Oh, okay. I was just saying, is there any way that some of the things that you all offer can be brought into the school in some cases? Because I know sometimes with our family, it's just hard to maybe get there, or they can or if maybe there's, I don't know. If there's some kind of liaison or something who can actually, physically once we are in, could be there to help.

Parent 5:

There's not a lot available. There really is not a lot available. I know in Staten Island, they have the Jewish Board. You have to wait months for an appointment. They make an appointment and that's just to kind of evaluate you. And then, they'll call you when they have somebody available. I'm still on the list from like two years. And my son has been to two or three counselors privately with my insurance and it gets crazy expensive and honestly, useless.

Parent 2:

And see, it's to your guys' point, it's very expensive. But I can't even find anyone. Because of the pandemic, everybody who people recommend, is booked. Booked, booked, booked. And then, the one guy is like, "Oh, well maybe in six weeks." I'm like, "But in six weeks, it's summer." And he's like, "Yeah, well, maybe that's not a good time for her to start since a lot of her anxiety is test anxiety and school anxiety, so maybe during the summer it wouldn't be a good time." And I'm like, "I just want at this point, to have someone lined up for August for her to start with."

Because, she's taking medication and she's like, "What is this medication doing?" Because, she's still full of anxiety, she's picking at her feet. And no one is available. I mean-

Parent 3:

No one.

Parent 2:

[inaudible 01:09:09].

Parent 3:

I can't even get my daughter to get her medication again, that's how bad it is. She's suffering, and I don't know how to help her. And I know it's going to make her... It's creating other things like depression and anxiety that it's so unfair. And I even told her doctor. Her doctor was like, "Well, I'm not a psychiatrist, so I don't want to offer it." And it's hard. Everybody wants money only, when it comes to these kids. Because if they see some money making things, so everybody just, "Oh, I'm not going to give this for free." I could find free for my age, but not for the children. I don't know.

Parent 2:

Especially, with the medication. You are right. You have to like pay for $350 session where they don't do anything, so [crosstalk 01:10:08] fill the prescription for you. I mean, it's such a waste. That's a psychiatrist, not the therapist. That's just someone who has the ability to write the prescription.

Parent 3:

They won't talk to you for more than five minutes.

Parent 2:

Exactly. And they'll charge you and if you don't talk to them, you don't get the prescription.

Moderator 2:

Well, we have to close, wrap-up for today. What I was going to say is we're going to see if the town hall and what services, what we end up offering after, say I would encourage all of you to keep watch and we'll keep in touch with you based on what we find and what we recommend. But if you have any questions, you can always email myself or Administrator and we can help you a little bit further. Administrator, do you want to explain compensation, then we'll wrap up?

Administrator:

Absolutely. Once again, just thank you guys so much for all of the information that you guys provided us with today. It was really impactful, especially the last couple of minutes. This was the first group in which we've actually have parents kind of list ways in which we can provide them with services. Once we do or like just resources once we do have the town hall meeting, so thank you guys so much for that, it really means a lot to us.

In regards to compensation, you should receive it no later than Thursday. It comes via email. It's an Amazon gift card. If you do not receive an email from Amazon that says, "Healthy Brain Network," or "Child Mind Institute," by Thursday, please do not hesitate to email me or give me a call. But yeah, you guys should honestly receive it before Thursday, if anything.

Parent 5:

Just a quick question about the town hall meeting. Will we be able to submit questions prior to it so that they could be like some of the other town halls from the schools and stuff, that they usually say, "Oh, we're going to have a meeting, you can submit some questions that we'll address during the meeting?"

Administrator:

[crosstalk 01:12:08]. Yes.

Moderator 2:

Sure, you could email your question and I will try to have it addressed.

Parent 5:

Okay.

Administrator:

Absolutely, yeah. We haven't really figured out the formatting of the town hall besides the fact that it will be on Zoom, but if you guys have any questions that you want us to definitely kind of what's the word? I'm so sorry, my brain is just... Any questions that you want us to address, just please, do not hesitate to email me or give me a call. I will take everything and we can all collect it. And then, you bring that up, I might even reach out to the rest of the parents who have done their focus groups and ask them if they have any questions that they would want us to address, as well, so thank you for that.

Parent 5:

Thank you. I really appreciate everything you guys do. You are a help.

Moderator 2:

Thank you so much. And thank you all for sharing.

Parent 1:

Thank you for having us.

Parent 3:

Thank you.

Parent 4:

Thank you so much.

Parent 2:

Thank you, have a good day, guys.

Parent 4:

Have a good day. Bye-bye.

Parent 1:

Thank you, good night.