



# PAUSE TOOL

FOR PROFESSIONALS

## RISK FACTORS AND APPROPRIATE PREVENTIVE MEASURES

There are several factors that can increase the probability of someone experiencing problems related to their use of screens. Understanding these risk factors can help us identify those who are most at risk and deploy appropriate preventive measures. One particular challenge is that screens are easy to use, accessible, and offer a wide range of appealing applications. Watching videos, browsing social media, and playing video games are among the most common uses for a majority of teenagers.

While screens can offer many benefits, they can also be detrimental to one's well-being when used intensively or inappropriately. Their impact can sometimes be difficult to recognize and depends on many factors. That's why it's vital to help young people better understand the effects and risks involved, so that they can adopt digital habits that support their well-being.



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## Risk factors related to the individual

Risk factors	Appropriate measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Age (youth's developmental stage)</li><li>• Available free time</li><li>• More than 4h of daily recreational screen time</li><li>• Mental health disorder (anxiety, depression, etc.)</li><li>• Negative body image and desire to lose weight</li><li>• ADHD diagnosis</li><li>• Learning disabilities and difficulty concentrating</li><li>• Impulsiveness/low self-control</li><li>• Low self-esteem</li><li>• Aggravating circumstances (breakup, move, death, etc.)</li><li>• Discomfort or dissatisfaction with living environment</li><li>• Sleep problems</li><li>• Suicidal thoughts or past suicide attempts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise awareness among youth about the negative physical, psychological, and social effects of intensive use</li><li>• Help young people identify the reasons for their use, how it makes them feel, the advantages and disadvantages, and their tipping point</li><li>• Encourage a balanced and shared engagement between online and offline life</li><li>• Help young people set small, realistic goals (avoid quick-fix solutions, tailor-made ones or ones that are too far removed from their reality)</li><li>• Provide information on available support resources</li><li>• Provide referrals for clinical evaluation and individual follow-ups if needed</li><li>• Try to reduce screen time by sticking to official age-appropriate recommendations</li><li>• Make young people aware of the benefits of respecting their offline obligations, and that they remain their priority</li><li>• Get them to recognize that their needs can be met offline, not just online</li></ul>



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## Risk factors related to the family environment

Risk factors	Appropriate measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of parental support</li><li>• Little or no family supervision or rules regarding screen use</li><li>• Parental disinterest</li><li>• Family conflicts</li><li>• Values that encourage intensive use of technology</li><li>• Absence or lack of other activities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise awareness among parents regarding the negative physical, psychological, and social impacts of intensive or inappropriate screen use</li><li>• Raise awareness among parents regarding the importance of supervising the use of screens in the family environment and setting rules</li><li>• Raise awareness among parents regarding the importance of open, caring communication</li><li>• Raise awareness among parents regarding the importance of taking an interest in their child's online activities</li><li>• Raise awareness among parents regarding the importance of planning and participating in screen-free family activities</li></ul>



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## Risk factors related to the living environment

Risk factors	Appropriate measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of offline social support</li><li>• Lack of supportive environments</li><li>• Actions, attitudes, and values that encourage an intensive use of technology</li><li>• Lack of rules and policies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise awareness in the setting regarding the consequences and risks associated with intensive or inappropriate screen use</li><li>• Create environments conducive to balanced use</li><li>• Offer a variety of screen-free activities</li><li>• Implement rules and policies to encourage balanced use</li><li>• Create screen-free zones</li></ul>

## Risk factors related to screens

Risk factors	Appropriate measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Omnipresence of screens</li><li>• The 3 As: Accessible, Affordable, Anonymous</li><li>• Marketing techniques for video games, social media, and streaming platforms, and their consequences</li><li>• Algorithms and engaging, personalized customer experience</li><li>• Gambling techniques used</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise awareness among youth regarding the continuum of digital habits and the possible risk of developing a screen addiction</li><li>• Develop young people's digital skills and understanding of the functions of both devices and platforms</li><li>• Discuss strategies to counter marketing techniques</li><li>• Talk about user habits that should be encouraged</li><li>• Emphasize the importance of taking screen breaks</li></ul>

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## PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION: BEST PRACTICES

- Take an interest in the person's use of screens.
- Offer guidance using an open, objective, neutral, and non-judgmental attitude.
- Avoid using the terms “virtual” and “real”; instead, talk about “online” and “offline”.
- Avoid being alarmist by using the term “cyberaddiction” too quickly.
- Validate the person's feelings before, during, and after use.
- Encourage the person to reflect on and question their use.
- Keep in mind that other causes could explain the person's difficulties.
- Recognize the positive aspects of screen use (well-being, socialization, entertainment, sense of productivity). Don't just talk about the negative aspects.
- Try to understand the function of the behaviour, the needs that are met through screen use and those that aren't met in the person's offline life.
- Make patterns of use, as well as their consequences in offline life, tangible.
- Help the person set realistic personal goals, anticipate obstacles, and establish a plan to deal with them (see reference tool: [Advice and tips to take action](#)).
- Help the person aim for a balanced use in which online and offline life are complementary.