Managing Screen Time

Digital Dilemmas are brief hypothetical situations and corresponding questions designed to foster cross-generational conversations about different aspects of adolescents' digital lives. Use this fictitious scenario, based on real-life stories, to spark a conversation at home with your children and open up the discussion about these very important topics.

"Put away your phone," "close the laptop," and "turn off the television" — Liana felt like she was constantly policing her kids' screen time. But her kids felt like they were constantly having to explain themselves: "I'm doing homework," "I'm trying to figure out my plans," "This is the first minute I've spent relaxing all day," or "My friend needs me." Everyone in the family was exhausted by negotiating tech time. Liana wanted to make sure she was doing her part to raise kids who could actually have a conversation and weren't totally addicted to their devices. Her kids kept telling her she was overreacting and that their screen time wasn't just fun and games; they needed technology for all their responsibilities.

? What seems realistic (or unrealistic) about this story?

? Do you think Liana is right to be wary about her kids' screen time, or is she just out of touch?

? How much screen time do you think is too much? Does the reason for using a device (homework, fun, social media, gaming) make a difference?

? What advice would you give to this family to try to make everyone feel more comfortable with how the kids use technology? Is this an inevitable source of conflict, or are there ways to alleviate some of the frustrations?

Are there any times of day when you think it's a good idea to unplug (before bed, first thing in the morning, during meals, after school)? Why, or why not?