Screens, space and your family

When your child pushes back - what to do

WEEK 6

We're at the halfway point of term. For many families, this is where things get harder before they get easier. The novelty of a new rule has worn off. Your child knows you mean it — and that's exactly when the resistance tends to sharpen. Negotiation, arguments, sulking, accusations that you're the strictest parent in their year group.

If that's where you are right now - this note is for you.

PUSHBACK IS NOT A SIGN THAT YOU'RE FAILING

It's a sign that the habit was real and the change matters. Adolescents are developmentally wired to test boundaries — that's not a flaw, it's how they grow. When you hold a boundary warmly and consistently, you are doing exactly what good parenting requires, even when it doesn't feel that way.

Language that tends to help

When the argument starts, less is usually more. Try:

- "I know this is hard. The rule is still the rule."
- "This isn't about trust. It's about what's good for your brain and your sleep."
- "I'm doing this too — look, my phone is in the kitchen."
- "You don't have to like it. You do have to do it."

Short, calm, and repeated. You don't need to win the argument. You just need to hold the line.

Things that tend to make it harder

These are understandable responses — and they usually backfire:

- **Long explanations in the heat of the moment.** Save the reasoning for calmer times.
- **Negotiating the rule away.** "Just this once" teaches that persistence works.
- **Bringing up other grievances.** Keep the conversation focused on the one thing.
- **Giving up quietly.** Children notice — and the next round gets harder.

If the conversation gets heated, it's fine to pause it. "Let's talk about this when we're both calmer" is not backing down.

This week's ask

Find a quiet moment — not in the middle of a disagreement — and ask your child: ***"If the device wasn't there, what would you actually want to do?"***

Then listen. Don't fix, don't redirect, don't turn it into a lecture. Just listen to what they say.

You might be surprised. Many teenagers know exactly what they'd rather be doing — they just haven't been given the space to get there. That conversation can shift something.

You are not alone in this

Many families across our schools are navigating exactly the same thing this week. Some are finding it easier than they expected. Some are finding it much harder.

Both are completely normal.

If your child is struggling significantly — *with anxiety, withdrawal, or distress that feels beyond the usual* — please reach out.

Our Wellbeing team is here, and so am I.

Keep going!

The second half of term is where the change starts to settle.

WHERE WE'RE HEADED THIS TERM

WEEKS 1-2: FIRST STEPS | **WEEKS 2-3: THE CURFEW** | **WEEKS 4-5: THE WHY** | **WEEK 6: WHEN IT GETS HARD** | **WEEKS 9-10: READY FOR TERM 1**

COMING NEXT WEEK: Setting things up for a low-device summer holidays