The Must-Know, Hard-to-Hear Facts for Parents Raising ADHD Kids in a Tech-Driven World

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"If we just got rid of screen time altogether, not just cut back, but got rid of it, the kids would get better. Their focus, grades, learning, and even kindness would improve."

Electronic Screen Syndrome (ESS)

When we talk about Electronic Screen Syndrome, or ESS, we're looking at how repeated exposure to screens—whether it's for gaming, videos, or even educational content—triggers a series of physiological responses in the brain. Every time a child interacts with a screen, it activates the brain's reward pathways, particularly those involving dopamine. Over time, this constant stimulation can lead to a state of overstimulation and desensitisation.

ADHD kids have a tough time controlling their energy, and this complicates things more. The frontal lobe, which is responsible for things like focus, impulse control, and mood regulation, essentially goes offline. This makes them more impulsive, reactive, and less capable of thinking ahead or considering others' feelings.

Going 'cold turkey'

Now, I know it can be tempting to try to just cut back on screen time gradually, but I've found that this often isn't enough to reverse the effects of ESS. The best approach I've seen is going cold turkey—removing all screen stimulation for at least three to four weeks. This gives the nervous system a chance to reset.

To get your kid on board with this, teach them how the brain works—how it manages emotions and thinking. Schools talk about this, so just build on it. Explain that while screens are fun, they're not always great for the brain. Use real-life examples, like a friend who plays too many games and acts out, so they can see the effects themselves.

During this time, you'll likely notice your child becoming more organised, calmer, and able to focus better. Their brain will literally start working more efficiently again. The changes you'll see in your child can be quite profound. After this period, you can decide how, or if, you want to reintroduce screen time.