Family life
Become the best version of you

We’re their tech role models

EARLY Childhood Australia, the national peak advocacy organisation for early childhood, this month launched a Statement on young children and digital technologies.

The statement focuses on relationships, health and well-being, citizenship, play and pedagogy. It responds to the growing influence of digital and interactive technologies in young children’s lives and the need for parents and teachers to have greater guidance regarding young children and their technology use.

This is an issue of interest to me and one I have written about before.

I recognise the escalating time I spend engaging with digital technologies across my life and work.

Recently I signed up to RescueTime (a free personal analytics service) to help me understand my digital life and my daily technology habits. My weekly reports are quite illuminating and serious food for thought in terms of how I spend my time and to what I give my attention.

My technology use has implications for my relationships, my health and well-being and my creative life. It also has implications for my children.

Our children (just like RescueTime) are observing how we use technologies across our daily life to communicate, share ideas, retrieve information and for entertainment and work reasons. Young children are often participating in these digital contexts with us.

So reflecting on our beliefs and attitudes about technologies are important. We need to take time to consider how our experiences of digital technology are influencing the experiences our children are having.

Are we, as adult family members, frequently distracted by digital technology and digital devices? Are we preoccupied with our emails/texts/Netflix/Facebook/Instagram accounts and missing the relationship-building cues of our children?

For their healthy development and learning, children need adults who listen, respond and pay attention to them.

We play a key role in modelling skills and sharing knowledge about behaviours that involve the use of digital technologies.

Given that children learn from us, through observing our technology use, it is important that we give time to putting technology down and focusing on our family interactions.

ECA’s statement provides an overview of existing research and some valuable practical advice. I am going to be reading and re-reading it.