CHAPTER 2

Wake Up to the New Reality of the Digital World

My children, of course, will have a computer,
but first thing they will get books.

—Bill Gates

As technology has embedded itself in almost every aspect of our lives, it's easy to see that many of the "old ways" of doing things are just not available. Gone are the days where high schoolers carried around a 50-pound book bag with all their textbooks. Gone is the 100-foot phone cord stretching from the kitchen into a closet where kids hid from their parents to have private phone conversations. Cubicles and rows of filing cabinets in office spaces are being replaced by open concepts and digital file folders on a shared network, or no office at all with the advent of work-from-home. Checking in at the laboratory clinic for blood draws is done via touch screens and QR codes rather than talking with a receptionist. Schools communicate with parents via message apps that send information in soundbites rather than

filling a student's bag with colorful flyers that fall out when it is time to get out the homework folder. Contactless payment has made it easier than ever to tap your life savings away at Starbucks. How many of us still carry enough cash around on a daily basis to pay for items we need as we run errands? How many businesses do you know that are still closed on Sunday besides Chick-Fil-A? Do you still write letters or mostly emails, including the occasional obligatory thank-you note? Slowly, your own habits of engaging with the world have shifted as you have become a consumer in a digital world.

What's Your Personal Opinion on Technology?

Chances are that even if you initially struggled to learn each new process, you accepted the gradual creep of technology into your home, your children's schools, your workplace, and your community. Some of us not only accept it but get really excited with each cool piece of technology that seems to make life easier. You may be the first one to get the new iPhone or only lease cars so you always have the most up-to-date technology. I have to admit, I am pretty curious about the shopping carts that scan and tally up what you have purchased, checking you out automatically on the way to the car. Haven't tried them—but I am curious how they work.

Where do you fall? Are you skeptical about how much of your data is being collected every day? Are you worried that AI will take your job? The release of ChatGPT and many other AI platforms made that a reality for many industries starting in 2023. Or do you see technology as a place of constant innovation not to be feared but to be embraced? Maybe you are somewhere in the middle. I think most of us are. "The middle" is a pretty big place with lots of variations in opinions on the

right ways to use technology. As parents, we are always asking ourselves how we should use technology but also how we should let our children use technology. And arguably, screen use creeps in more and more—as life gets busy and we get overwhelmed; as we are seeking learning and communication solutions; or as what we or our children need is just not available offline.

Ah, the Good Old Days

Like our parents and grandparents before us, you may already find yourself repeating the timeless phrase, "When I was your age …" We may not have the story of walking to school five miles uphill both ways, but Gen X parents did grow up pre-smartphone. Callers had to leave messages on our answering machines and wait patiently for us to return phone calls. Millennial parents had technology integrated into their academic life much more regularly as young adults. For those born in the '90s, use of technology in the average household grew steadily during the dot-com boom. Many parents from this generation exposed their children to technology earlier because they experienced the positives of connection, collaboration, and impact as the opportunities available online grew. No matter what generation you belong to, we are all raising our children the best way we know how in a constantly changing world filled with technology.

We can all agree that the world keeps shifting. Naming some of those shifts puts you in a much better position to decide what changes will have the most impact for your children and adapt your parenting strategy accordingly.

This book focuses on the beliefs that:

- You are a parent who wants the best for your children, so they grow up happy, healthy, and successful.
- What is best for your children and what the world wants you to believe are not always the same thing. You have to find your way through the noise and make the best decisions you can along the way.
- How you set up each day—being proactive not reactive—sets the foundation for your children's health, happiness, and success in life.

"But, Aubrey, This Seems Like You Are Asking a Lot"

I am asking a lot. I do have high expectations. But I also have a very strong belief that you are reading this book because you are a parent who cares, a loving parent, and a parent who is just trying to figure all this out—the same way I am. The only difference is that I have experiences in my professional toolbox that have shifted my lens and the way that I see the challenges that kids are facing. I am committed to helping you shift your lens too.

My whole life I have told myself, "I am too overwhelmed and I don't have time." I said this when I didn't go to the gym. I said this when I opted to serve chicken nuggets and French fries at dinner for the fifth day in a row. I said this when I was too tired to take another trip to the playground, and it was just easier to let my child play on the iPad while I finished another evaluation for a client.

We have all been there. Most of us are still there and will continue to be there for many years to come. That is both the joy and the challenge of

parenting. We somehow make it through, and our children continue to grow and develop in spite of us. I didn't learn until my child was a pre-teen that a lot of what was holding me back was myself and my own habits. During the pandemic, I read the book *The Miracle Morning* by Hal Elrod. In it, he outlines what he refers to as the SAVERS method, an outgrowth of research on the habits of highly successful people. It was my first step towards setting up habits and routines for myself that would eventually pay dividends for my child. If you are interested in hearing more about his work, Amazon and YouTube will be happy to introduce you.

How Success Habits Can Transform Children's Lives (And Yours)

In this book, I am going to walk you through the Five Pillars that, when cultivated, will help your children succeed in an ever-changing digital world:

- Pillar 1: Save yourself first.
- Pillar 2: Connect and collaborate.
- Pillar 3: Move with purpose.
- Pillar 4: Learn and grow sensationally.
- Pillar 5: Build digital awareness and safety.

These are the Five Pillars around which you will create success habits and routines to help your children be leaders and creators in a digital and AI world. I have witnessed many children whose lives have changed as a result of cultivating these habits and opportunities in collaboration with their parents. I often invite parents into my sessions, so they can see how I guide their children toward understanding themselves and

the world around them for lifelong learning. Parents see how I help kids find their "bravery brain" and get out of their "worry brain," so they can confidently explore the world around them and become resilient.

Kids learn flexibility, cooperation, and positive communication that allows them to adapt to many people and situations, expand their creativity, and move out of their comfort zone all through opportunities to experiment, practice, and develop mastery over their bodies and their environment. Parents learn the language of empowerment so that they can help their children understand what works for their body, what helps them get ready to learn, and when they need to take time to recover. They learn how to set up activities and create opportunities within the environment while maintaining a strong belief in what's possible for their children to achieve. The habits you will learn are simple, actionable, and designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of your family, regardless of your children's ages. You will be better able to create opportunities for critical experiences that foster brain and body development while keeping in mind the skills that leaders and creators need to have that can never be outsourced to AI, securing the opportunity for your children to succeed in an AI world.

Some of the Benefits

Here are a few of the benefits you can expect to see in your children when you implement the Five Pillars of Success in this book:

- Improved behavior and self-regulation
- Increased exploration, awareness, and engagement in learning

- Enhanced adaptability for greater independence, flexibility, and executive function skills
- Expanded social skills and ability to connect with others

I should add that when I write, "executive function skills," I'm referring to the skills of self-control, planning/organization, goal setting and follow-through, flexible thinking, and reasoning and problem-solving that so many children struggle with today in the "done-for-you" world of AI and technology.

"But, Aubrey, I Am Terrible at Sticking with Prescriptive Programs. Life Is Too Hectic in My House"

I know these are big promises, but my goal was to create a book that is purposeful, actionable, and customizable to your unique family dynamic without telling you to limit screen time or prescribe a daily routine that is a "must do" for every family. Achieving balance is not about what you limit, it is about how you spend your time. I am going to help you make a Family Playbook to take immediate action towards setting up your environment, your family routines, and your new expectations. It is my hope that you will have an active conversation with your family, especially if your children are older, and collaborate to find a balance that fits the unique rhythm of your family's life. If you make too many changes too quickly, you might set yourself up for failure. I believe you can win. I believe you can begin to make the changes necessary to make success habits part of your children's everyday experiences.

Whether you are a parent who is exhausted and overwhelmed or a parent who is high performing and highly organized, you will learn how to cultivate success habits for your children. It doesn't even matter

if your children struggle with learning disabilities, ADHD, behavior issues, difficulties with executive function skills, or are on the autism spectrum.

We are all sensory beings, uniquely human, who rely on information from our bodies and the world around us to learn and grow. The key to fostering growth in your children is in how you help them balance technology with other multisensory life experiences. Achieving this balance optimizes the way the brain and body were meant to learn while supporting self-regulation. The result is happier, healthier, independent, and successful children. This is the dance that I will teach you.

Pull out your Family Playbook, and complete the Chapter 2 exercise.