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A Deloitte podcast series to empower your well-being

Taming technology

Jen Fisher (Jen): I'm a self-proclaimed technology addict. Managing my relationship with technology is a constant work in progress. But since I've been researching and talking to experts in the field of technology and well-being, I've really made some strides in breaking my dependence on my mobile devices. I found that awareness is half the battle. The other half is making mindful decisions on when and where to use your technology. And for most of us, including myself, it's easier said than done. This is the WorkWell podcast series. Hi, I'm Jen Fisher, Well-Being leader for Deloitte, and I'm so pleased to be here with you today to talk all things well-being.

Teaser - Adam Alter (Adam): One of the things that tech companies have done systematically over the last 15 years or so is to eradicate what we call stopping cues. So a stopping cue is any moment in an experience that gently nudges you on to the next thing. The tech companies that try to capture your attention try to remove all of those little barriers. Everything is bottomless, endlessly scrolling feeds, infinite, there is just this kind of loop that keeps going and going and going, and that's by design. Borrowed from casinos in even the 1950s and 60s where they became designed like a maze where once you were in you couldn't get out.

Jen: I'm here with Adam Alter. He's an associate professor of marketing and psychology at New York University's Stern School of Business and the author of the book, "Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked." So Adam, let's start this conversation out on a positive note. How has technology changed our world for the better?

Adam: I think it's made it much easier to connect to people who are not in the here and now. So this is a big deal for people who are international, who've traveled, and for me that's true. Fifteen years ago I moved to the US and it was very very hard for me to connect to my family in Australia, and maybe five years after that, the technology associated with Skype, and with Facetime, and with the cameras that we put in our computers had improved to the point where I could have real-time conversations. So that now my kids, who are one and two, they don't actually distinguish between their grandparents being in the room and their grandparents being on camera. So when my parents visited, my kids were just like, here's grandma and grandpa. Like here they are. So people who were once

very far away and inaccessible, we couldn't really feel that sense of connection with, we can now do in a very profound way. And that's definitely new, and I think the biggest strength of technology is bridging people who are otherwise very far apart.

Jen: Reflecting on what you said there, your children don't necessarily see the difference between having them on camera versus having them there in the room, does that change the way that our children or all of us think of connection, and is there a worry there or no?

Adam: I think so, yeah. I found that a little bit concerning that my kids couldn't distinguish between the two, and I think as they get older they certainly will, yeah. And also the idea that they could actually hug their grandparents was a big deal. I think the other big benefit of technology is as a utility. So as a way of making things that are annoying, or frustrating, or that take a long time to do much quicker to leave more time in the day for things that are actually meaningful and important. So weather apps, or apps that show us how to get from A to B, those kinds of apps, those really sort of small apps that we go to 10 or 15 times a day that save us a huge amount of time. We take those for granted now, but I think the fact that we have those at our fingertips makes much more of the day available to us to do things that really require our attention across time.

Jen: And do you think that we are actually using the time that we've gained in better ways or are we wasting it away on other technology that perhaps isn't as valuable?

Adam: I think we're doing a lot of the wasting.

Jen: Okay.

Adam: So the evidence suggests we spend about four hours a day on our screens. That's for adults in the US, and actually around much of the developed world. For kids, it's even worse. Kids and teens spend somewhere between six and seven hours a day, many of them in front of their screens.

Jen: And is that four hours a day, for those of us that are in the working world, does that include while we're at work or is this four hours just doing whatever on our screens?

Adam: Yeah, it's just your phone.

Jen: Okay.

Adam: So if you do work on your phone, that will be caught by that number. If you do work on a screen, like a laptop screen or a tablet, that's gonna be an addition.

Jen: And, am I really asking him this? Are you addicted to technology?

Adam: Oh, totally, totally. There's no controversial response there. I'm happy to embrace that idea. I try very hard not to be, but there are certain things that pop up that I think are very hard for me to resist. E-mail is my biggest poison by far.

Jen: What actually got you into studying and researching this?

Adam: I wrote a book in 2013. I published a book in 2013 about all the little forces in the world around us that shape how we think, feel, and behave. All these sort of subtle cues, like the weather, and colors, and natural environments and things like that, and I got to the end of that and I sort of wondered, is there some profound big cue? I'd been looking at all

of the little ones. What is the biggest thing that's shaping how we live today? And I wanted to understand the force, that one force, and that was, for me, technology and screens. And I'd noticed it having a growing affect in my life as well. I had the sense that there were certain experiences that I couldn't resist, and I started to wonder whether that was true of just me and also whether it might apply to more experiences than I had been interacting with. So there were a few little games that I played longer than I would have liked. My wife and I would sit on the couch next to each other and just sort of stare at our screens for hours, which is a very common experience, and I wondered what was going on there. As a psychologist, I knew I was in a position to kind of unpack that, to understand the mechanisms that were driving that. So I was sitting on a plane that was taking off, and as we were taking off I started playing a game, and it was a flight between New York and LA, so it's like a six-hour flight, and as we landed I was still playing the same game. And I must have played, I don't know how many dozens of rounds, and I realized on landing that I'd had this full schedule of things I wanted to do on that flight. I was very busy at the time. I wanted to do some writing. I wanted to nap. I wanted to eat. I had a whole lot of things I wanted to do, and I did none of them. And it was that moment, landing, where the person next to me actually said, "are you okay?" Because it was so clear that I had been engaged in this one experience in a very mindless way for six hours. I realized that maybe I wasn't okay, and I wanted to understand better what was going on. That was the real moment that pushed me to start studying this more carefully and closely. I also read a number of articles I found very interesting, suggesting that some of the tech titans that we know have very publicly promoted their own products, are very careful about how they, themselves, use them and how their kids use them. Seeing myself, I think of myself as having a fair amount of self-control, but seeing myself succumb to these programs and then hearing that the people who designed them also are concerned about them, there was enough evidence that I needed to look into this further. So the middle part of the book is really this sort of attempt to backward engineer all these experiences, to say what is it about them that makes them so hard to resist? And I talk about six, or seven, or eight different cues that have built in or tools that are built in, and each one kind of further ramps up that sense that you can't let go of the device or whatever you're experiencing. I also got very curious about the history of addiction because to me this seemed a lot like addiction, like a sort of clinical form of addiction for some of us. And so I wanted to understand how we got to this point where without a substance, even just staring at a screen, you can be addicted to something. There was nothing directly working on our brains or our bodies, but the experience was so well engineered that it became difficult for us to resist, and I found that really fascinating.

Jen: Yeah. The way that it has embedded itself in like our everyday life and every part of every experience that we have, you almost can't remember life without these screens.

Adam: It's really hard to remember. It's strange. It's only 11 years, 12 years ago. It's amazing how fast our lives have changed in that way.

Jen: Yeah. Yeah. So what is it that is going on that is making this technology that we're spending so much time on so hard to put down?

Adam: I think there are a lot of hooks that are embedded in the tech we use. Hooks that are sort of designed to get us interested and then to keep us engaged across time. And we're very sophisticated now, so the people who developed these forms of tech know exactly what they're doing. They know that if you embed a particular feature in the tech, that will make it harder to resist. People will spend, marginally, an extra say five minutes a day or five percent more on the platform that you've developed. So they will build those features in, which is what you're supposed to do when you design a product is to make it as

sticky as possible. So there are a lot of these features. They include things like goals, so goals that are sort of laid into the program in the same way as you would have with games. This is the process known as gamification, where you turn experiences that wouldn't be like games into game-like experiences where you give people points. So as they engage with the platform they get more and more points. They perhaps reach certain milestones, which are known as badges, and sometimes you build a social element in, which is known as a leaderboard. So you have all these game-like features that you would have seen on a space invaders arcade, and now they're part of a huge amount of the things we do, a huge number of things we do. The other thing that I think happens is, if you have access to enough data you can just, without any theories, A-B test a whole lot of features. So if I have a button, and I move it five centimeters to the right, or if I have a mission and instead of trying to save a person you're trying to find a missing artifact, or whatever it may be, I can tweak those features and then see how long different people engage with that experience, whether it's a game, whether it's a platform where you buy things, or where you interact with other people, and over time, you keep iterating that process. And so I know that the button in position A is better than the button in position B, and so now everyone gets the button in position A. Then I want to know, that button in position A, is it more effective if it's green or red? And I keep doing that over and over again, so the version that arrives on your screen has been kind of weaponized over time to be maximally addictive, and every little feature has been optimized to extract an extra minute or two, and in aggregate that means you end up spending a huge amount of time on the experience.

Jen: I feel like everywhere you turn these days there's something that we're seeing or reading about technology and how addictive it is.

Adam: One of the things that tech companies have done systematically over the last 15 years or so is to eradicate what we call "stopping cues." So a stopping cue is any moment in an experience that gently nudges you onto the next thing. And so reading a book or a magazine or a newspaper, stopping cue might be getting to the end of an article or a chapter or the whole magazine or whatever it is, and then you usually do something else. It's a subtle way of suggesting you go elsewhere. The tech companies that try to capture your attention try to remove all of those little barriers. So for example, where a newsfeed or some other feed would've had a point where you had to click a button to show more content or you would've got to the end of the content, everything is bottomless and endlessly scrolling, feeds are infinite. There is just this kind of loop that keeps going and going and going, and that's by design. So that's one of the really effective techniques to get you engaged, and this is borrowed from casinos, even the 1950s and 1960s, where they became design like a maze where once you are in, you couldn't get out. You had no idea what time of day it was. It's always dark, it's always nighttime in a casino, and if you could see daylight, that means you can see the sun setting and then rising again, and that will gently push you to maybe you've seen four sunsets and four sunrises, it might be time to move on. There are no clocks in casinos. The version of that in the tech world is similar, which is to say we want you to have no sense the time is passing or that you have to do something to decide at this particular moment to continue. A lot of streaming software used to require that you did something to move on to the next piece of content. Now, the default is that the next piece of content starts playing 10 seconds later. I think that is the single most-effective tool these companies have their disposal, is to help you forget that you are engaging because then you're less likely to move on.

Jen: So even though we, as humans, know this, and we hear this, and we're reading about it constantly, maybe we're even reading about it on our screens, why is it so difficult for us to then just do something about it as individuals or as human beings?

Adam: Yeah. I mean I think there are a lot of features of these forms of tech that make them hard to resist despite the fact that we have this part of our brain that's telling us this is not good or I'm spending too long. The reward centers that are engaged here are very low level, they're very hard to overcome with self-control. And also self-control is, to some extent, limited. If you have to exercise self-control at all moments of the day, you will become depleted, and exhausted, and eventually it will give way and you'll do the wrong thing. So if you're in front of a screen, or the screen is in your pocket, say, you talk to Americans, 24 hours a day 75% of them can reach their phones without moving their feet. Every minute of the day. That means it's next to the bed, or under the pillow, or in their pockets, or as in my case now, sitting right next to me. And that means I'm constantly resisting the temptation to pick it up and use it, not so much in our conversation, but any idle moment that's something you're wrestling with in the back of your mind. So even though I know I'd rather not have my phone nearby, I know there are certain reasons why I want it close. Contact with loved ones, for example. And as a result, it's always there, it's always kind of nagging at me, and even though I know it's not the thing I should be doing, I often turn to it when I shouldn't. It's also become a sort of default. That's what we do in moments when we don't have anything else to do. If you look at…we're now at a business school, when all the students get into the elevator, every single student without fail will take out a phone even if they're in the elevator for no more than three seconds, between two floors. And that's become a default because our boredom threshold is now incredibly low. We get bored doing nothing for even 30 seconds. That feels like too much. It's kind of painful. And so I think for all those reasons, even knowing that these phones are extracting a lot of minutes from us, they often seem like the better option, or the default, and so we just happen to turn to them.

Jen: And I know there's, and I've heard you talk about it before, there's some research behind the benefits of being bored.

Adam: Yeah. I mean if you think about creative, or divergent, or innovative thinking, it's really about hitting some sort of roadblock and finding a way around it. If you keep thinking in exactly the same way about exactly the same topics, you're never gonna find a new avenue. And so boredom is sort of an all-purpose roadblock that forces you to think differently about things. So where as you may have gone from mental state A to mental state B a thousand times, in that moment of boredom you're sitting there at mental state B thinking, well, what next? How do I get to C, and D, and E? And because you're sitting there with nothing else to do, your mind wanders. And that kind of mind wandering can be really useful if it has a purpose. And often in those bored moments it turns to find something useful to do and often does. So it's these moments of boredom when you get a lot of really creative, interesting ideas. And when you talk to people about the generation of new ideas, or new businesses, or new concepts, a lot of that comes in moments when you aren't actively trying to court those ideas.

Jen: Like when you're in the shower?

Adam: Exactly. Exactly.

Jen: You get your best ideas in the shower.

Adam: You do. Yeah, exactly.

Jen: And I want to go back to what you talked about, being in an elevator, because certainly in the business world or even where I live in my condominium, it's the same phenomenon. You get in the elevator and even though you're going like one floor, or three

floors, which doesn't take very long, everybody's on their phone. Again, I kind of go back to, nobody wants to make eye contact, nobody says good morning or good afternoon, what's kind of happening in society and our culture because of our addiction or our kind of reliance or need to constantly pull out our devices? I feel like we're losing our ability to connect with other human beings or just be friendly.

Adam: Yeah. I think that's exactly what's happening. I think what's happening is it's easier to connect to people, to get the things that you need done, done, without having to actually talk to them. So it's easier to text. It's easier to e-mail. It's easier to send instant messages of some sort. And we can get a lot of the things we want to get done in life that way, and that becomes the fallback. That's the easiest path. The path of least resistance, in a sense. And if you do that a thousand times, instead of actually interacting with people, that faculty kind of withers away, that ability to do that. So even there are times when, say, I've been home sick with the flu, and I'm away from people for a week, trying to get back into work life after a week, it feels like you've got to relearn some of the social skills that were second nature. And I think that's happening on a very big scale to a lot of us, and to our kids as well, that by not having the chances to interact with people on a daily basis it starts to feel hard when you do. It feels like it requires a lot of effort, and time, and energy, and you have to really think about what you're doing, and that makes it unpleasant because humans don't like to have to put in that much energy and effort. So I think by giving us options that make our lives easier, like texting, and like email, we've made the options that we used to turn to, interacting with people face-to-face, less appealing.

Jen: What are some other ways that we, as individuals, can identify if we are kind of over-indexing on the use of our technology?

Adam: I think there are two main kinds of things. One is the opportunity cost of spending all that time on a phone, like what are you giving up because you spend, say, four hours a day on your phone? For many of us it's social. So we don't spend as much time face-to-face really forming bonds with other people, whether they're loved ones, or friends, or even acquaintances, we just don't have that same building of relationships. For a lot of other people it's about exercise. We're not exercising as much. We're not spending as much time in natural environments, outdoors. So that's part of it, is what you're giving up. The experience on the phone is also not great for you, if you do it enough, and depending on what you're doing. So if all of your social interactions happen on a phone, you get this very sort of thin bandwidth of information. You're not having the same sort of rich connection that you would be having if you were having an offline interaction with someone. So you hear the words. Even if you're on Facetime, or Skype, or something like that and you're actually talking to someone through a video, it feels like you're looking at them in the eyes, but you're not, you're looking at a screen, they're looking at a screen, and there's some sort of vague sense that you're looking at each other, but you actually aren't. You don't get that same richness of communication that you get face-to-face, and that changes the quality of the interaction. It changes the quality of the bond that you form, it just feels materially very different. It's better than nothing, but if the alternative is to actually spend time with people face-to-face, that's a far better alternative. There's just a richness of connection.

Jen: Are we kind of inadvertently feeding this addiction to technology, and what can businesses do to use this technology in a very productive way for business, but also help the people that work for them have a good relationship or a hygienic relationship with their technology, perhaps when they're not at work or even when they are working?

Adam: I think there's a sort of rule of thumb that we blindly follow, which is that tech is good and so we're gonna just try to cultivate as much tech in any environment as we can.

You see this in schools, that more and more are turning to iPads and other devices, for example. I don't think that's inherently bad, but when you do that sort of thing blindly and you just acquire more and more technology, that's a problem. And I think the question to ask is, what is the benefit we will get from using a particular form of technology? So what are the biggest challenges in the workplace or in the educational environment that we're in? And will tech help us solve those challenges? Will it make something that we're doing better, or easier, or more efficient? And I think often the answer is yes. I think if it's communication challenges, tech is a miracle. If you want people to use screens for the sake of screens, I think it's worth auditing that experience and saying, is that right? Does that make sense? What are the costs of that? Is there a better way for us to do this? Would a pen and paper be better? And we know there are differences in how we think with pen and paper versus screens, for example. So I think it's just a matter of being more thoughtful. I don't think there is an inherent goodness or badness to tech. I'm agnostic about the value of tech and of screens in general, but I think the way we are using it today is just kind of blind and we're not very thoughtful about it.

Jen: So building on that, what are some of your most thoughtful tips for people and how they can create a better relationship with the technology that they use?

Adam: I think one really important thing to do is to carve out some time that is tech free. No matter what happens in your day, there has to be time when you are not in front of a screen. And there are some very basic building blocks to being a human that require that. And so there are a number of ways of doing this. I think the easiest thing to do is to pick a part of the day that is consistent. So it could be that every day I have dinner, I know I will be eating dinner. I don't know whether I'll be alone, or with other people, at home, or at a restaurant, the context might change, but I know I will be having dinner, and my rule will be every day during dinner and maybe for half an hour afterwards I will be absolutely tech free. Whatever that means. And there will be times when it's annoying. Trying to cultivate that habit means that you are spending that 30 minutes after dinner just being a little bored. And that's okay. It's fine for that to happen. And it will become a habit, and what's interesting is I've watched a lot people go through this process of trying to insert these tech-free periods into their days, and you start out feeling a sense of withdrawal, a sort of FOMO, you're wondering what is it that you're missing out on. But it becomes something you really look forward to. As you get past that initial withdrawal symptom that comes from being without tech you start to say during the other parts of the day, "I kind of wish this part was tech free as well." And so a lot of people end up expanding that experience to cover the weekends. So one thing I try to do is…obviously I want to be able to take pictures of my kids on the weekend if they're doing interesting things and cute things.

Jen: Put it on airplane mode.

Adam: Yep. The phone in airplane mode. So it turns it into a camera.

Jen: I think I've heard you say that.

Adam: You may have. You may have heard me say that before, but that was a really powerful realization for me that you could get the best of the phone without having the worst of it encroaching on your life.

Jen: One of the other things that I've heard you say is spending time in nature, but kind of so immersed in nature that you lose track of time or what year it is. So it could be 1908 or it could be 2018, but nature is nature, so that kind of removes all of the modern-day barriers I guess, if you will.

Adam: Yeah, I think that's really important, that there should be at least certain parts of the day where you can't tell what year it is by looking around. And, as you've said…

Jen: That's probably hard for you to do in New York City.

Adam: It is difficult, yeah. I live in the suburbs, so I live outside of New York, and when I get home I can do that much more easily, and that's part of the reason I moved there is because it's near the ocean, or near the water, and there are elements there that allow me to step only a few hundred yards from my home and to feel like it's a timeless experience. And that's really nice to have. There's nothing inherently better about what people were doing thousands of years ago, but there are reasons why we are here today, and part of it is that the things we're doing a thousand years ago, or two thousand years ago, worked for us as a species. So just spending a bit of the day going back to those kinds of things, whether it's natural environments or face-to-face communication, I think is a good way to work out whether you're living your life well.

Jen: How do you personally manage your relationship with technology, and where do you, if you don't mind getting vulnerable here, where do you kind of fall off the wagon even knowing everything that you know because you're human as well?

Adam: So I have a considerable commute. So I come into work, and my commute is probably an hour and a half long, and I sometimes listen to music, and podcasts, but I try very, very hard not to use my phone.

Jen: You listen to the WorkWell podcast, right?

Adam: I do. Of course. Of course. Number one on the list. So I sit on the train and I think people look at me like, what's wrong with this guy? Because everyone sits on the train looking at their phones. It's an above-ground train. You have good reception the whole way, and I sometimes sit there kind of staring ahead or looking out the window and that's not the done thing anymore. Where do I fall off? That's a long answer. I have an app on my phone that tracks how long I use my phone every day, and it's not great. I have to be very, very careful not to go above two or three hours a day. And many days it will be longer than that.

Jen: And what's kind of acceptable to you? What's your target?

Adam: Yeah. I used to think acceptable was under two hours. I now think I've shifted my boundary to under three hours.

Jen: Okay.

Adam: I think the biggest problem for me is not big chunks of time. It's not like I sit and watch hours, and hours, and hours of video content, because with small kids I don't have time to do that. What it is, is that I will be interacting with my kids, I'll get a buzz in my pocket, and I'll be distracted, and I don't want to go to the phone. And sometimes I'll go to the phone just to pacify that need, and that I never feel good about. And if you do that enough times your kids start to notice. My kids certainly know when that's happening, especially as they get older and more sophisticated and clever about it. They then get curious, like if there's something so interesting to dad that he needs to go into his pocket and look at the screen, that's gonna be interesting to me as well. And I see them learning from me in that way. And that I think is my biggest failing, is not behaving in front of them the way I should be, to model the way we should behave around phones. You used the term tech hygiene earlier, which I love, that's bad tech hygiene.

Jen: What do you think the future will be like? Are we at a tipping point where we're going to start seeing better use and design of technology or is it just going to continue to grow and take hold of us as humanity?

Adam: But all of these companies are profit-making companies. So if your model rests on attention, you're part of the attention economy where you're competing with other companies that want attention. The only way you will succeed as far as the bottom line goes and as far as money goes is by capturing more attention than anyone else. So to the extent that big companies are now building in features that allow us to disconnect, those features are eating away at the bottom line and that can be a problem. Now, I think what a lot of them are gambling on is this idea that in the long run, consumers are starting to and will continue to demand that tech companies treat them with respect, which involves giving them the ability to disconnect. Now, obviously, we all have our own self-control and we have, to some extent, the power to say I don't want to use this program anymore, but we know enough about how these programs are designed to know that we can't do that easily. If they're trying to help us a little bit, I think it's an attempt to salvage the long-term brand image and loyalty. And as we start to become more critical of what we're consuming, especially looking into the next 5 or 10 years, I think we will not respect, and will try to find alternatives to, the companies that don't allow us to disconnect and that don't help us, in some way, manage our time. It is bad for the bottom line in the short term. There are other companies that don't require, say hardware companies for example… They don't need you to spend an additional minute on their product. They just want you to buy the next one when the next one is available. So for those companies, it's a completely different economic model and they can help you get off the device, and a lot of them are doing that very successfully. There are new even more immersive forms of tech around the corner. So virtual and augmented reality tech is still in its infancy, but when you talk to people in the industry, a lot of them say, within the next few years, we will all have our personal goggles and they will become very inexpensive. In the same way as we walk around with phones, we will have goggles that will connect to our phones, and there will be enough software that… right now, if I want to go to the beach in Greece, I just put on my goggles and I'll be there. And as the software becomes more sophisticated, you'll be able to essentially leave the complications of "here and now at any moment" to go to this ideal perfect world that is virtual and that doesn't really exist. Now, when that's to happen, I think if a phone, if a small rectangular device can remove us from where we are right now, imagine how powerful an immersive experience will be in removing us. And when we're removed by a phone, we're still in the room, but when you have goggles on, you aren't interacting with anyone in the room. This is my big concern and why I think we need to spend so much time thinking about this now, while we still have the ability to focus. I think it's going to become harder over time.

Jen: You're scaring me. There's a part of me that is going, "oh, wow, I can just transport myself to this serene beach."

Adam: That's sounds amazing, right?

Jen: Yeah. There is a part of me that's like, "that's perfect for meditation practices," but then there's a part of me that's like, "oh, wait" because this can be overused and abused just like anything else. I've heard you talk about children and screen time, children using screens and the kind of games or what they're doing on screen, and at the pace at which it's moving and some recommendations around that.

Adam: This is something that came to me when I moved to the US. So I lived in a small town in New Jersey and things moved fairly slowly there, and I would come into New York,

which was about 90 minutes away, and it just felt overwhelmingly fast. The pace of everything, the way people walked, the way they interacted, the pace at which they spoke—everything felt really fast. Then I moved to New York about five years later, and maybe three months after I arrived, I realized that all of those things that I used to notice didn't seem so quick anymore—they felt comfortable. And then when I traveled, I would go to Paris or I would go back home to Sydney, those places just felt ploddingly slow, which was really strange because I had never felt slow before. I always felt that they were really interesting and engaging. Kids have this experience, but much more extremely than that. And especially when they're young, you're setting the equilibrium, the comfortable speed for them. So if you want your kids to sit with a book and read and grapple with ideas and stories that take time and energy and attention. If you give them New York City, the reading is like a small town to them. It's slow and it takes a long time to get involved in. So if you sit them in front of the TV and let them watch a show that's really fast paced with animals flying around and cartoon characters interacting at high speed, they're going to demand that rate of engagement and level of engagement from everything they do. They will not want to read, they won't want to sit and talk to you, and they won't want to interact with each other. So the basic rule of thumb is start as slowly as possible with things that are very slow—they can still be engaging but slow-paced—and introduce things that are quicker paced slowly across time. And the way to tell what you're doing is right is just to experience whatever it is yourself. So if there's a show you're thinking of showing your kids, sit there and think to yourself, "Does this feel quick? Is the pace of this rapid?" And if it is, hold off for a year, find something that goes more slowly. So Sesame Street is extremely good at this. They pace everything quite slowly. There are real interactions between real people or real Muppets, or real characters, and that's by design. It is meant to be slow, but there are other shows where things move really fast and that's bad because then Sesame Street and everything else becomes boring.

Jen: I just watched the Mr. Rogers Documentary, and he actually talks about the pace of his show is very intentional, but it is very slow as well.

Adam: It is a great example. Mr. Rogers Documentary is a perfect example.

Jen: I'm so grateful Adam to be with us today. Thank you to our producers and our listeners. You can find the WorkWell podcast series on deloitte.com or you can visit various podcatchers using the keyword "WorkWell" to hear more. If you like the show, don't forget to subscribe so you get all of our future episodes.

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Thanks and be well.