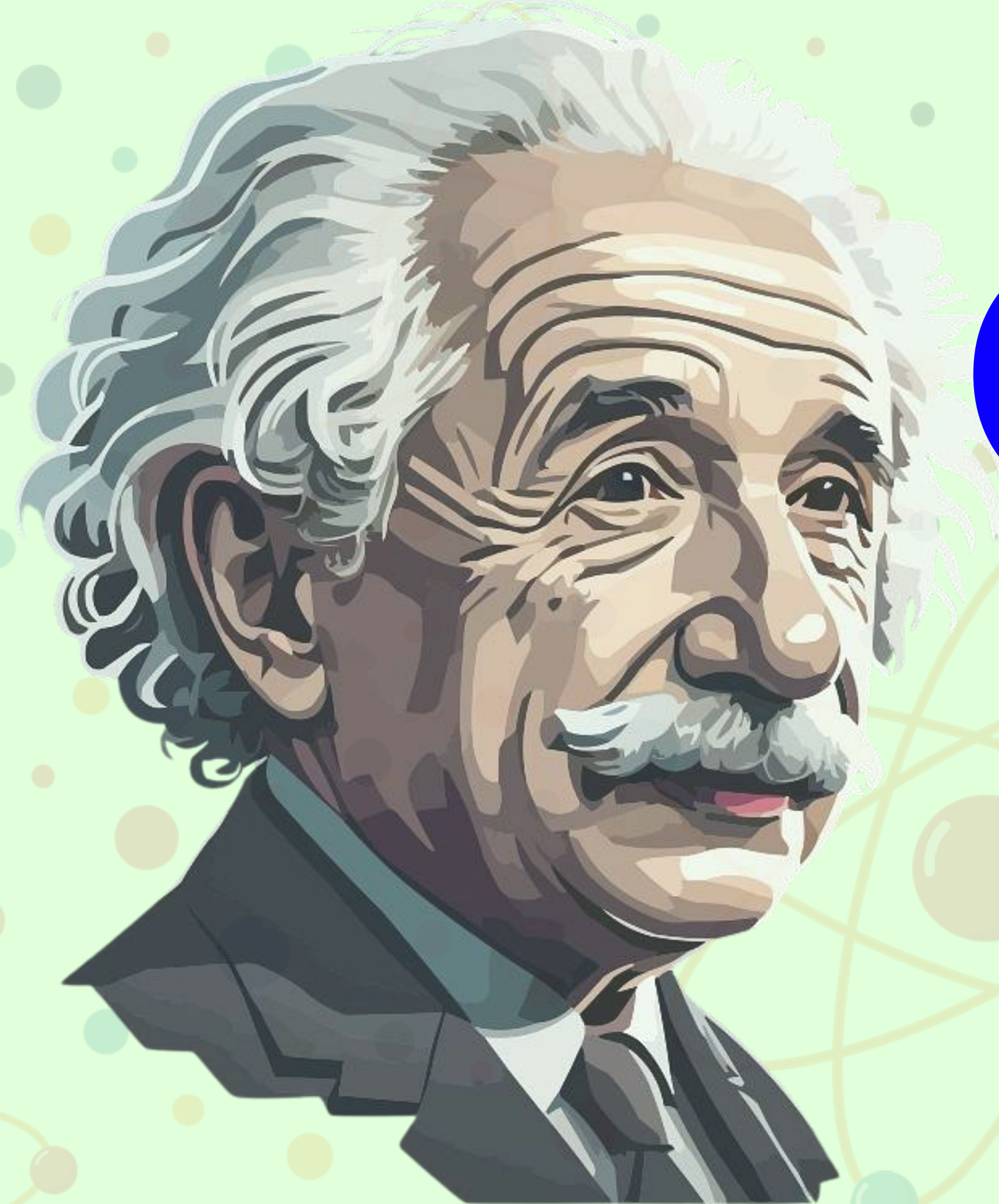


Toward developing well in the Early Years



Jenifer Joy Madden
GAINING

Global Alliance for Inspiring Non-tech Infant Nurturing and Growth



creativity

Intelligence
having fun



Every child deserves
a chance





New risks
because babies
are living
differently than
ever before

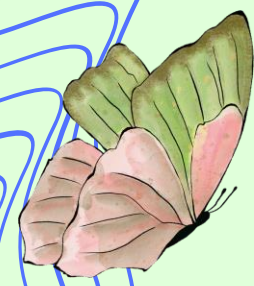
Baby Brain BASICS



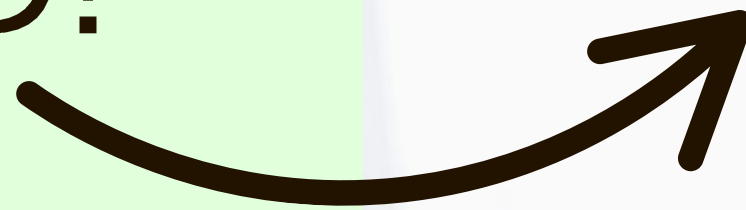
A baby's brain is
DIFFERENT from ours

Growing faster than
any time in life





1 MILLION
new neural
connections
every SECOND!





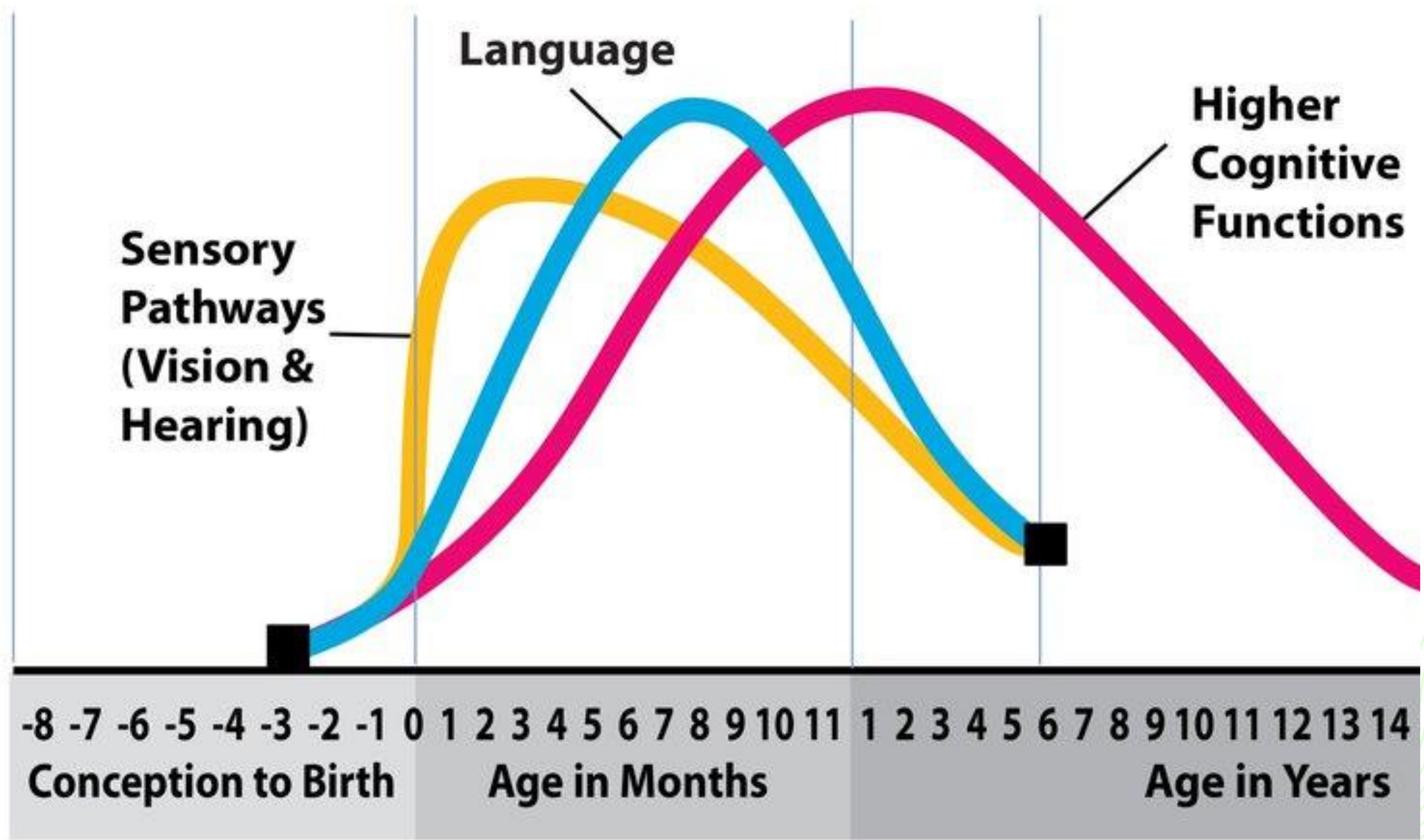
Young children's brains
grow
according to what they SENSE

HEAR
SEE
TASTE
FEEL
SMELL

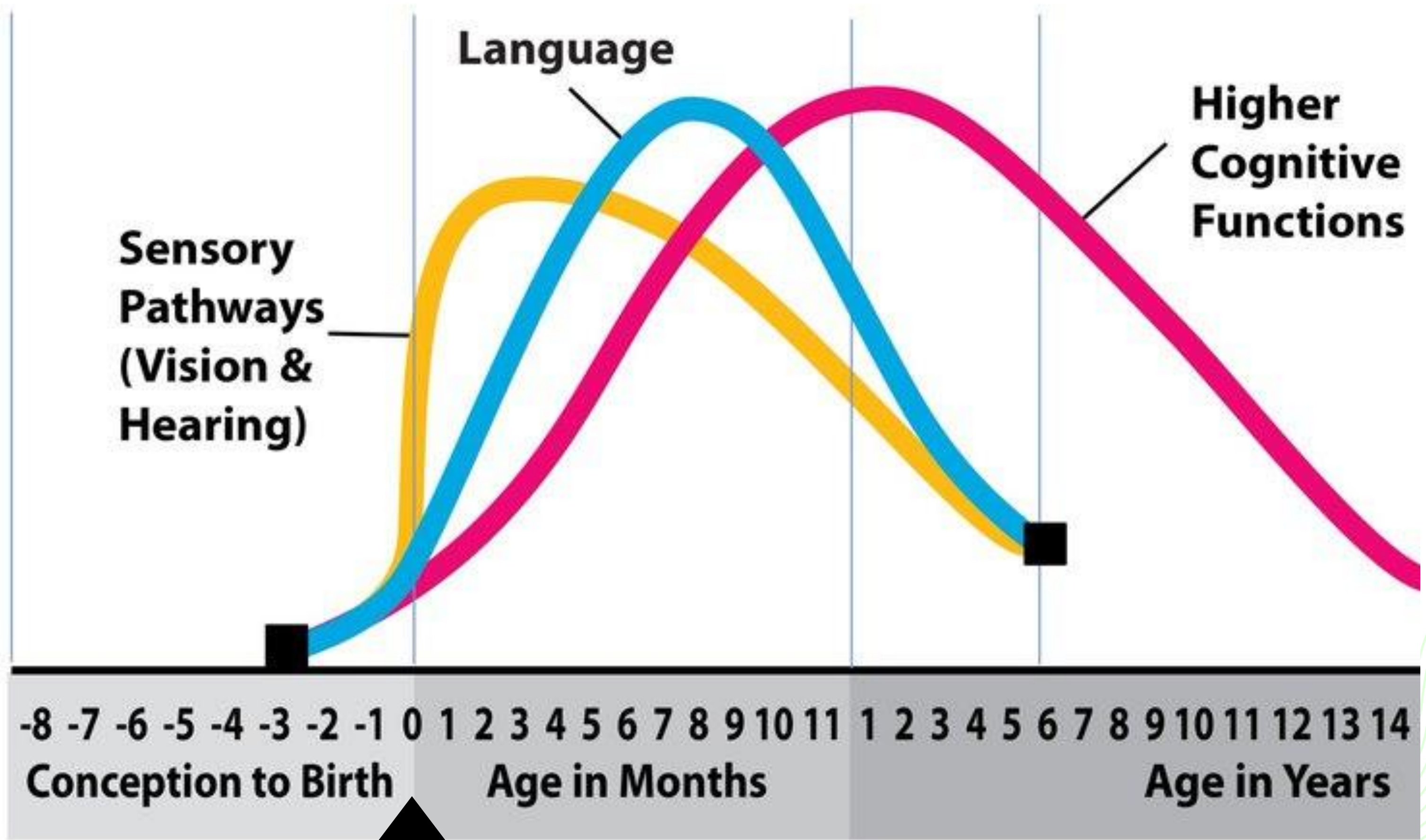


Babies and
young children
learn certain
things best at
certain times

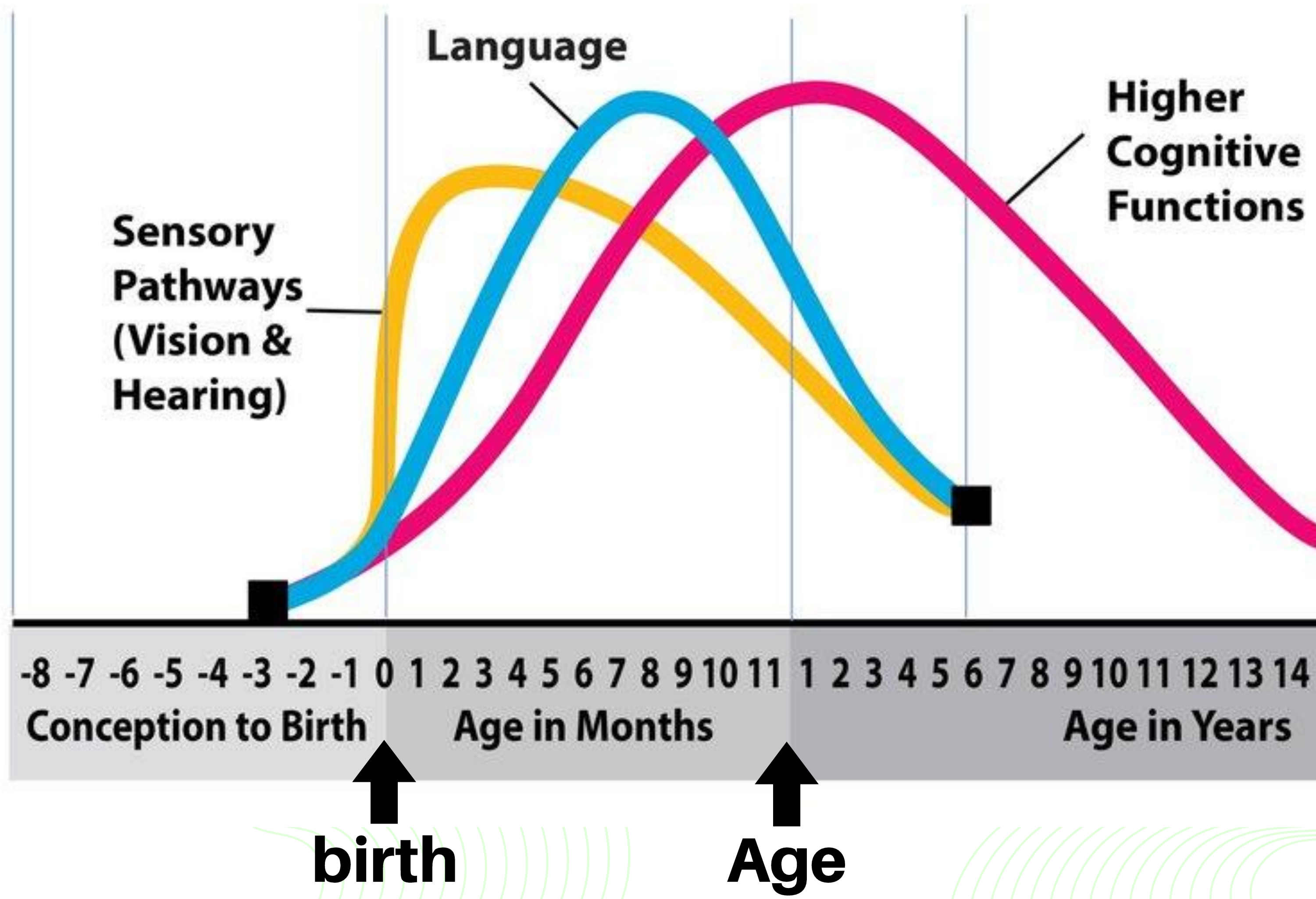




Charles Nelson III, Early Adversity and Critical Periods, 2020



birth



Babies study faces

To learn how to speak



They love to INTERACT



Like playing ball



**They make a
sound or
gesture
and you
speak or
gesture back**



Babies learn from PEOPLE



Babies learn from PEOPLE
and need IRL back-and-forth conversation





**Describing their world builds their brain
and language power**



And human love and connection

**We are made
for each other**



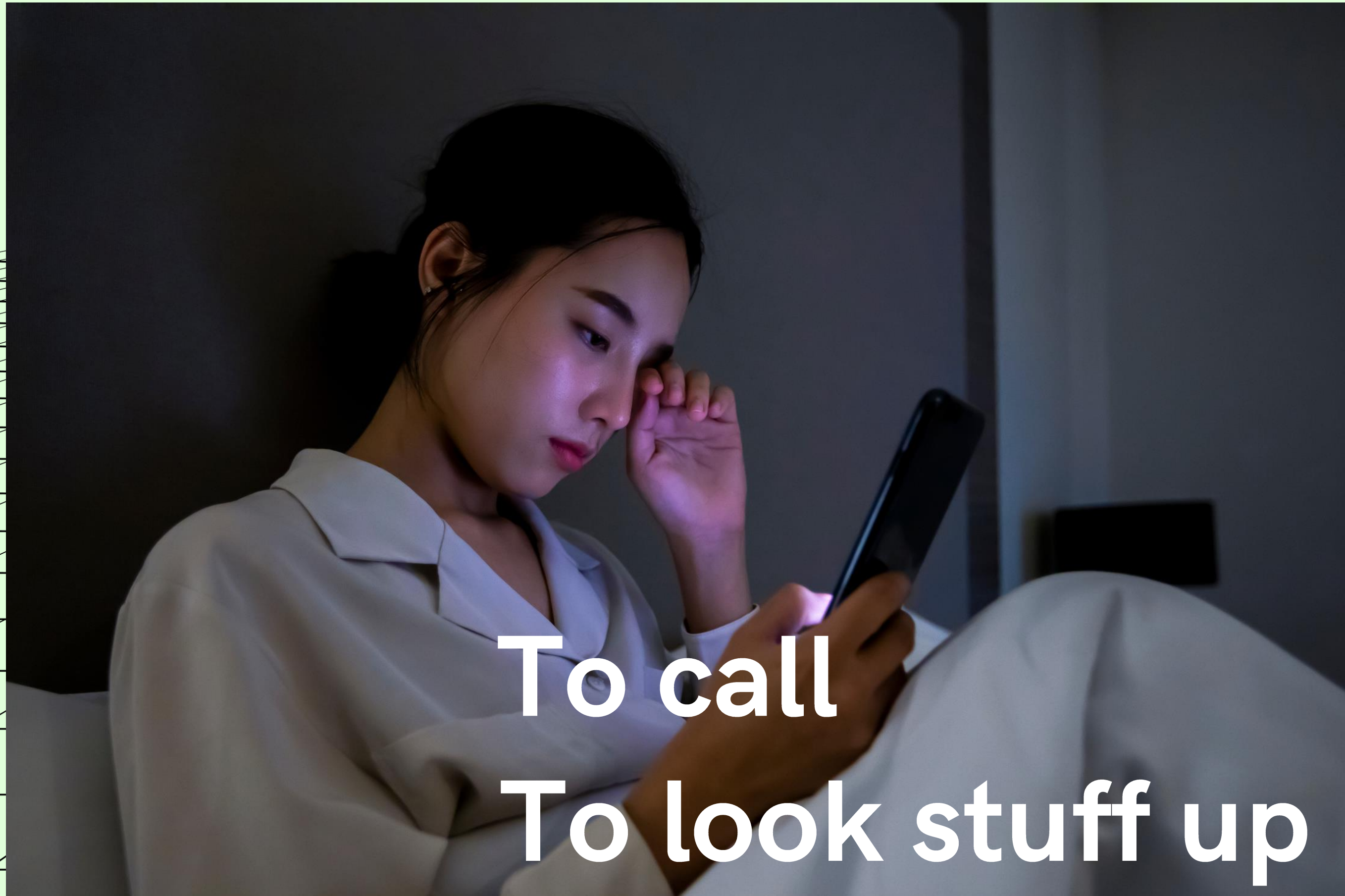
We've Always Been Distracted



But never like this



Yes we need them

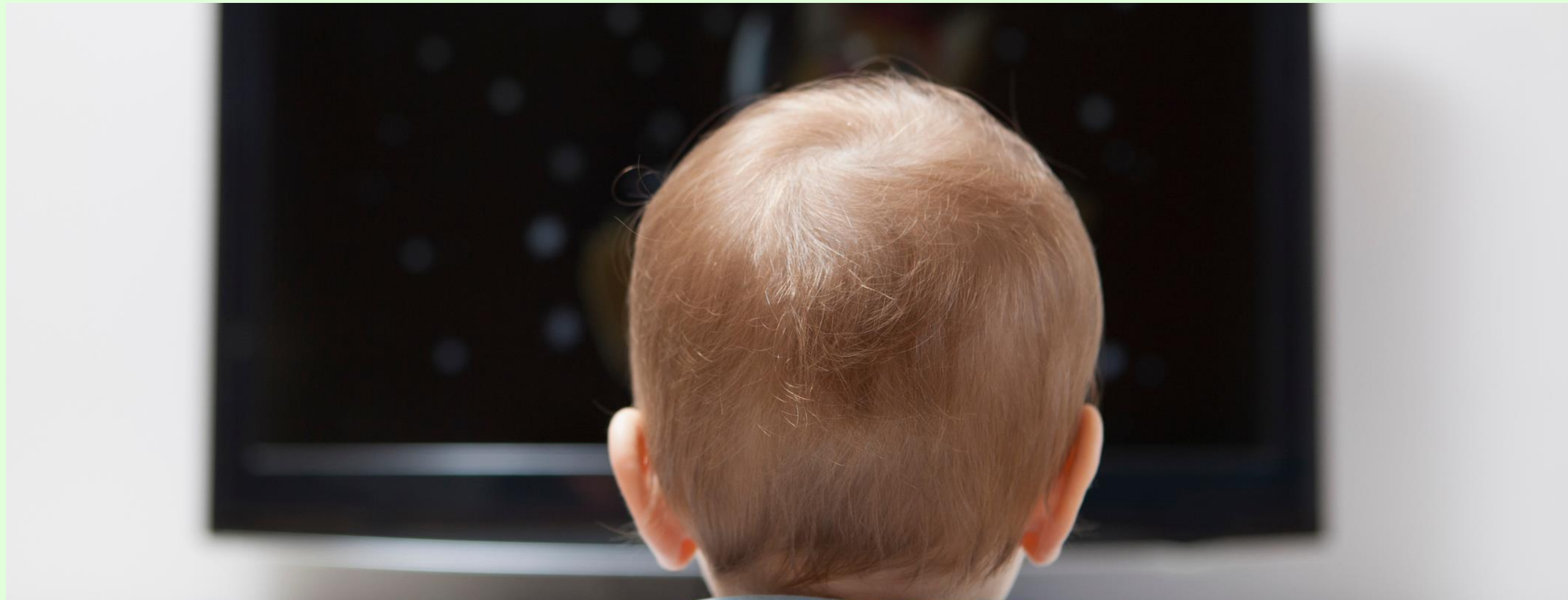


To call
To look stuff up



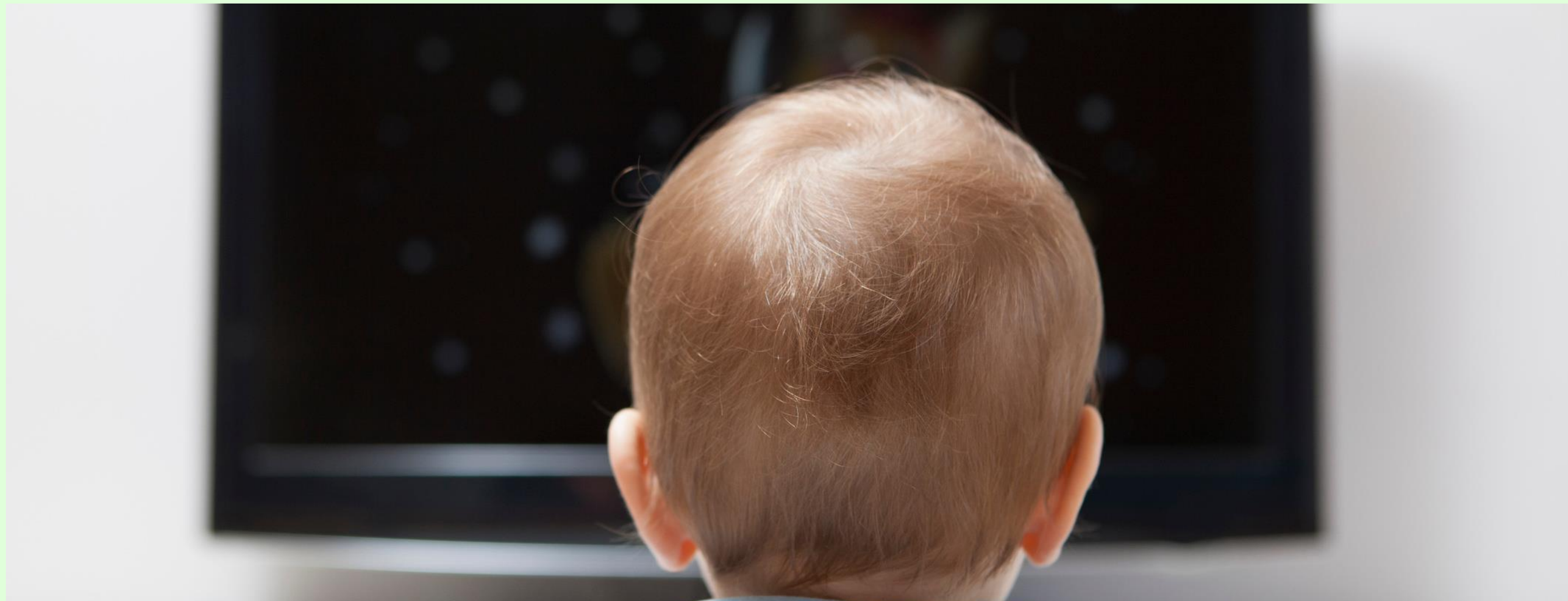
For helpful apps

But while WE learn well from
screens, babies DON'T



But while WE learn well from
screens, babies DON'T

It's called the
“Video Deficit”



Babies may stare at a screen, but they don't learn that way. Up until at least age 2, their brains are not capable.



The sights and sounds are SENSORY OVERLOAD





60 Billion minutes
streamed on
YouTube
in Q1 2023

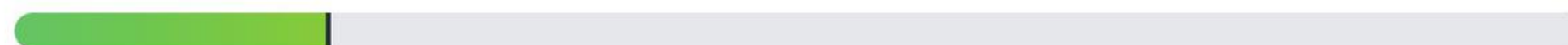
From an internal CoComelon email, according to *The New Yorker*



“High stimulation level”

⚡ Sensory Details

Dialogue Intensity: Low



Scene Frequency: High



Sound Effects Level: High



Total Sound Effect Time: High



Music Tempo: Moderate-High



Total Music Level: High

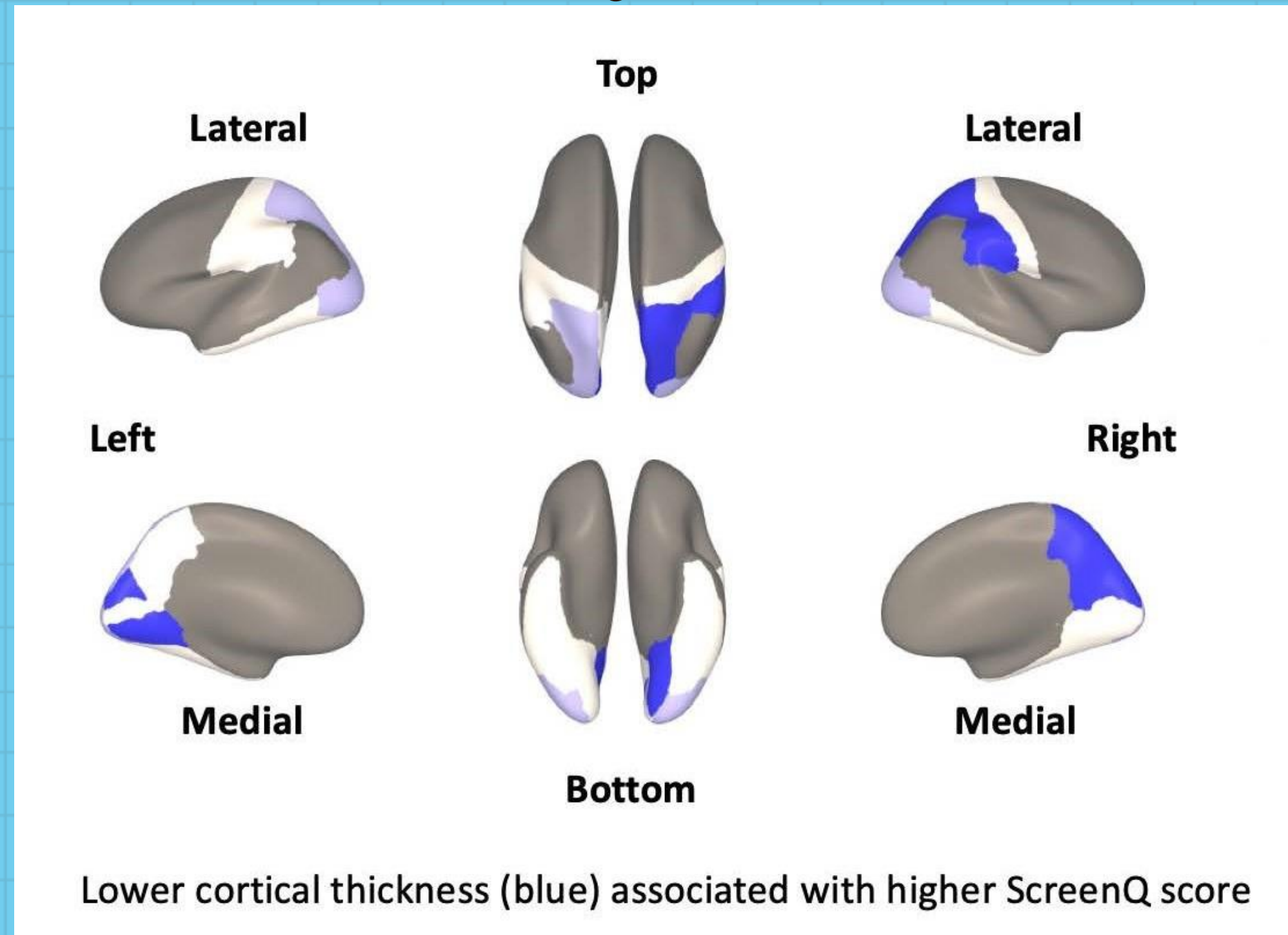


Interaction Level: High



Animation Style: 3D CGI Animation with extremely bright and vivid colors.

Too much screen exposure too soon can change how a baby's brain FORMS



More developmental harms associated with screen time:



Trouble learning words and communicating

Trouble managing emotions and anger

Over- or under-sensitivity to light, sounds

Problems with Sleep

OF GREAT CONCERN
in the research associated with too
much screen viewing



OF GREAT CONCERN
in the research associated with too
much screen viewing

New behaviors which may resemble Autism

- ⚠ Fewer spoken words
- ⚠ Extreme focus on patterns
- ⚠ “Going into their own little world”



It happened to him



**For children using tablets at age 3.5,
by the time they are age 5.5:**

Anger management issues

Social & physical skill deficits

More dependence on screens



Almost all content has
embedded TRICKS to keep them watching



Almost all content has
embedded TRICKS to keep them watching



It's called “persuasive design”

Radesky, US, 2022

Time on screens takes away the time kids need to:

- ★ Build skills
- ★ Get exercise
- ★ Learn to interact with other people



The data shows
TV makes
everyone
STOP
TALKING



For every additional 1 minute screen exposure, parents and children talked or vocalised less and engaged in fewer back-and-forth interactions.

3-year-old avg ~3 hr watching vs 1 hr

100 fewer adult words

840 fewer vocalizations

194 fewer conversations turns

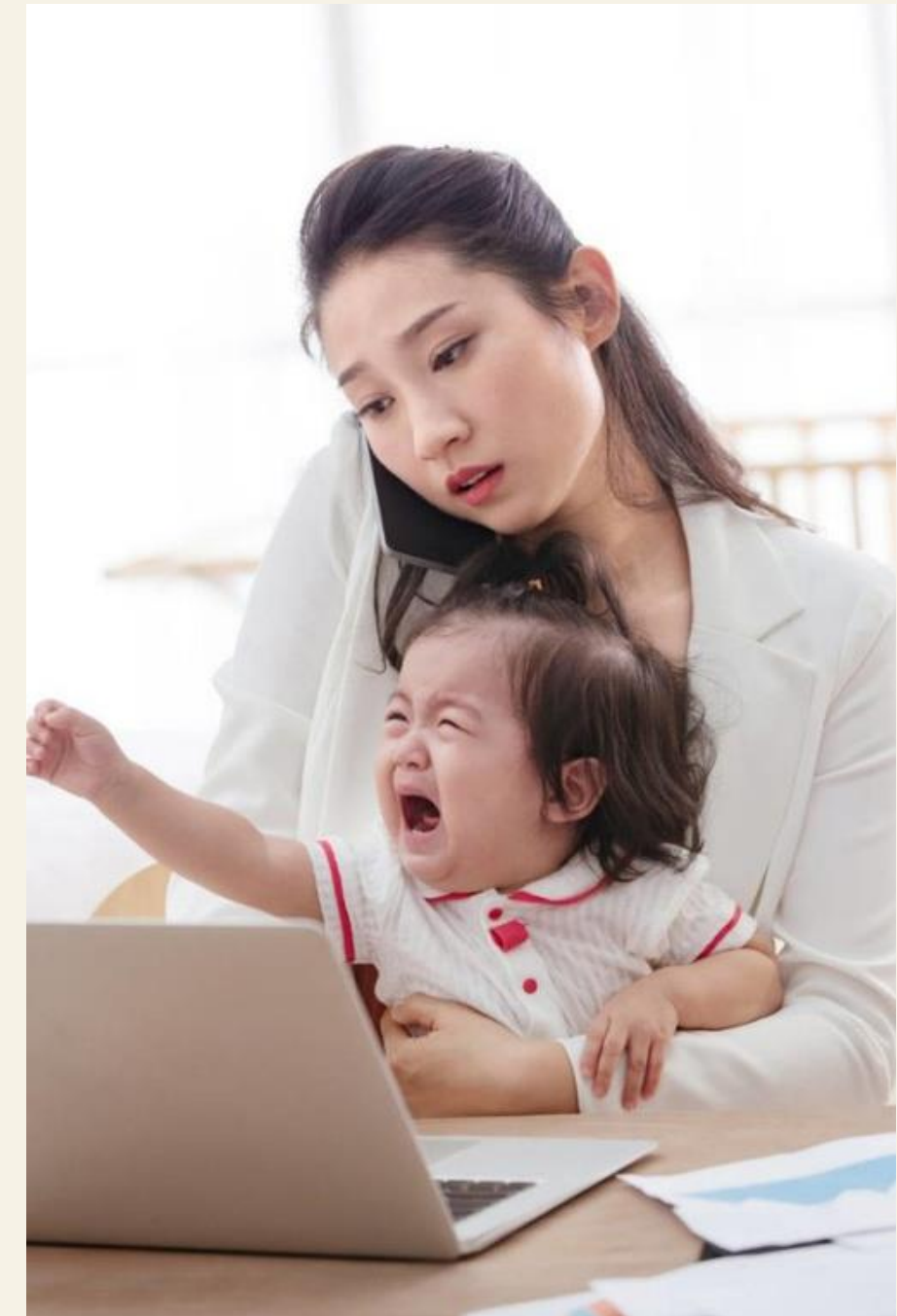


Language delays happen because there is not enough conversation



Brushe, AUSTRALIA, 2024

TECHNOFERENCE



Brushe, AUSTRALIA, 2024

TECHNOFERENCE

The more device use in
presence of child, the more:

Poor mental processing
Lower developmental scores
Less secure attachment
Problem behavior



Toledo-Vargas, AUSTRALIA 2025; Ogata, JAPAN 2025



So what
ARE the
recommendations?

Guidelines for healthy development

Kids under age 2
(at the earliest!)
full time playing
and learning
in real life



Spain, France, Germany, Bulgaria say no screens
under 3 to 9 years old

GAINING, American Academy of Pediatrics, World Health Organization



Guidelines for healthy development

For kids under age 2, video calls are OK because they are face to face



Guidelines for healthy development



Kids up to age 5
(at the earliest!)
also need **PLAY**.
Any screen time
should **total**
less than 1 hour
in a day.



GAINING, American Academy of Pediatrics, World Health Organization

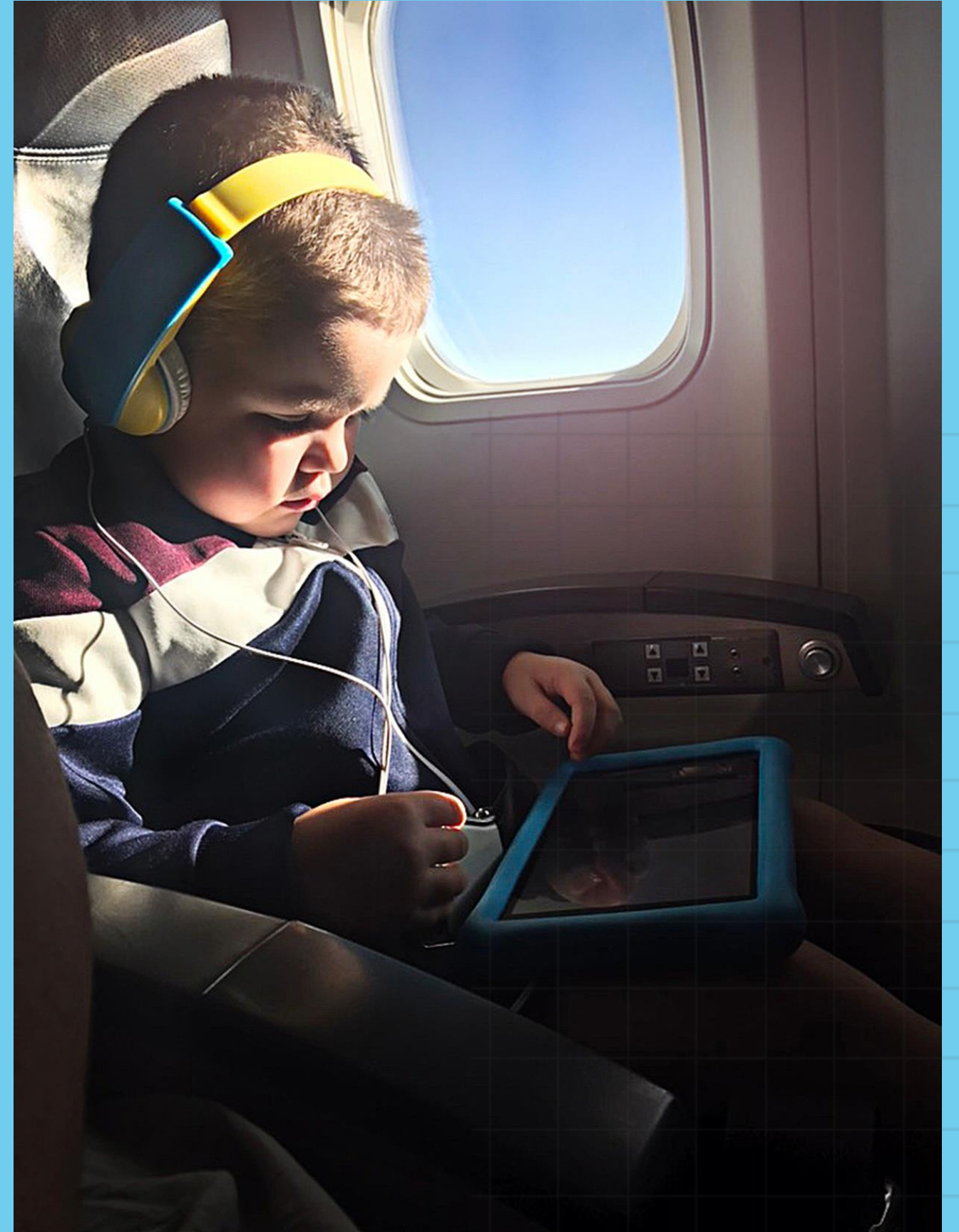
For healthy development

Media should be:

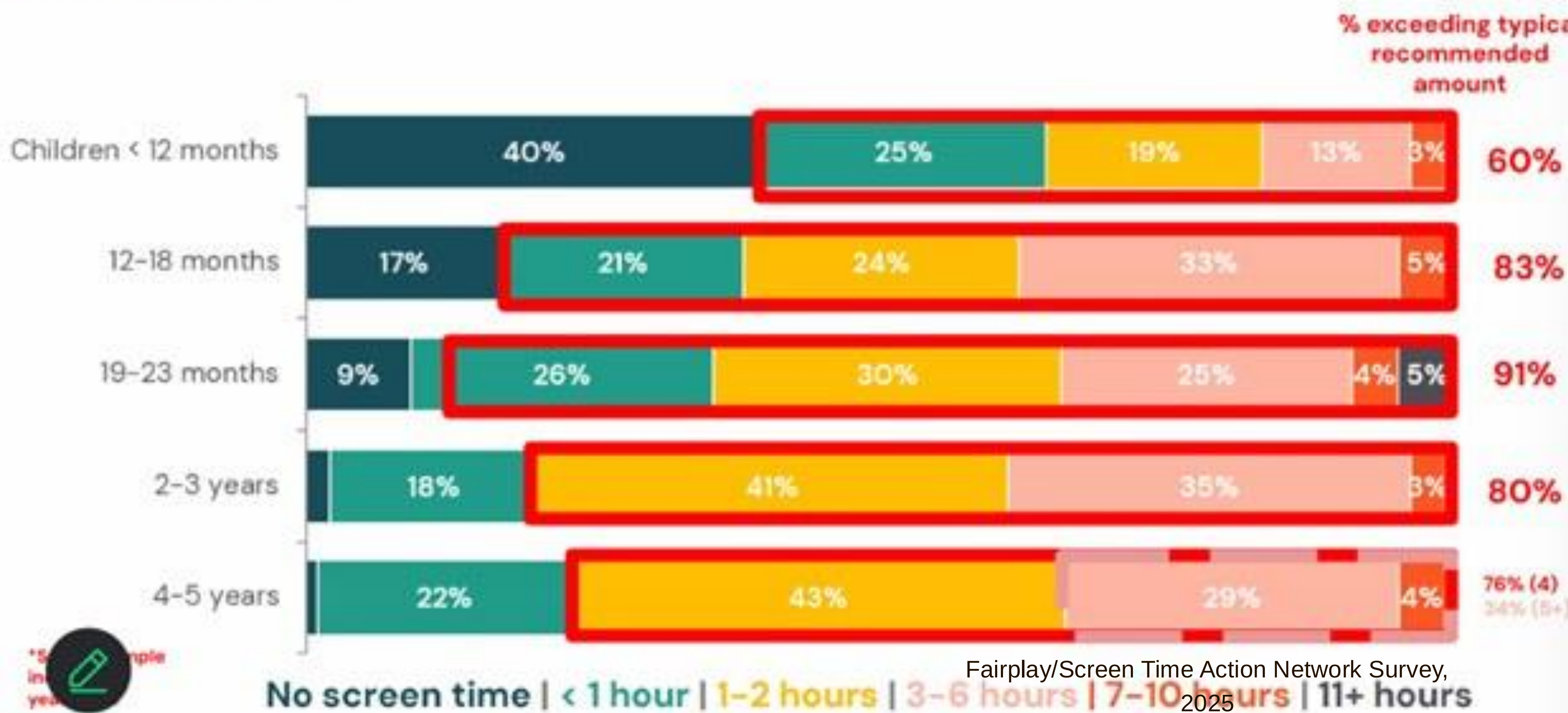
- Slower paced
- Non-violent
- Ideally co-watched



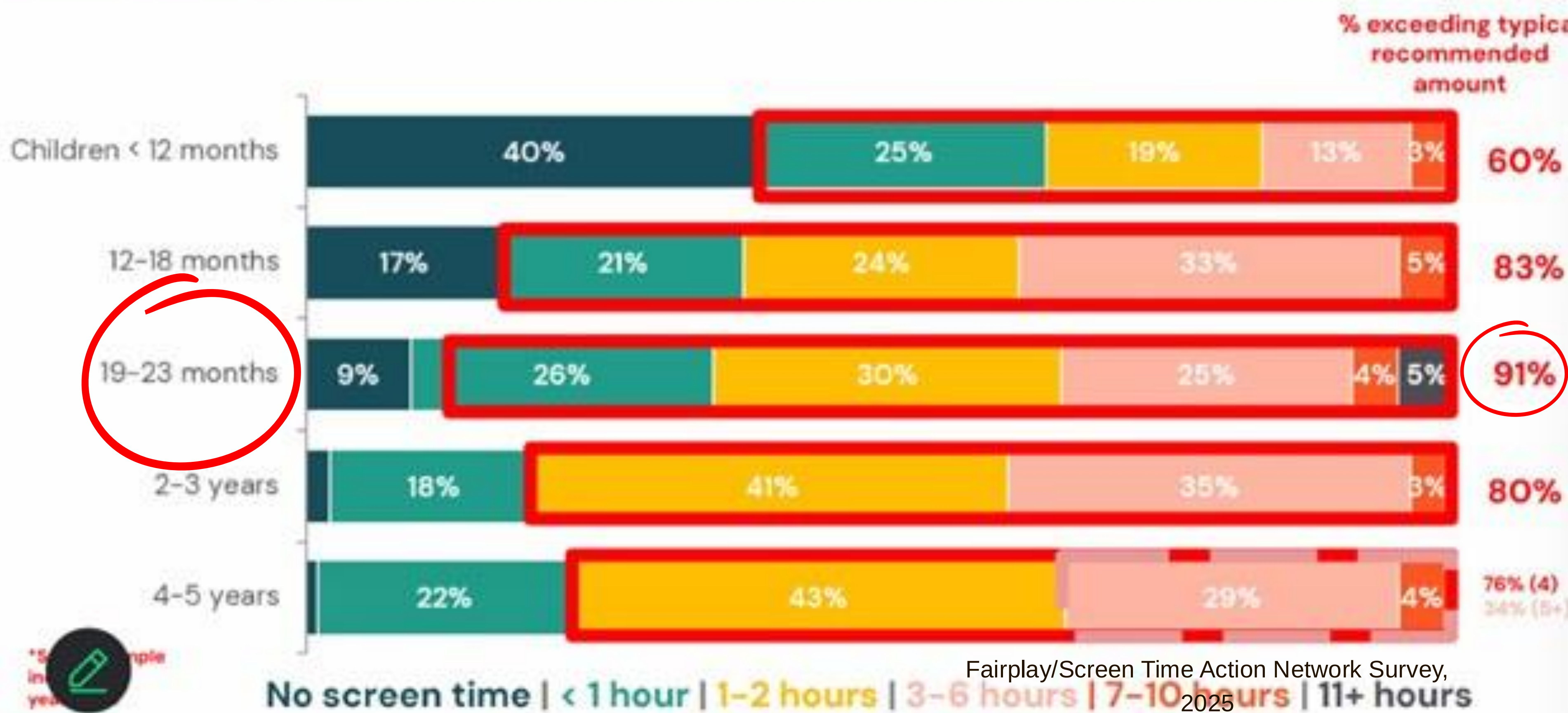
But the REALITY is:
EARLY SCREEN
VIEWING HIGHEST
AMONG TODDLERS,
ESPECIALLY
BETWEEN 19 and 23
MONTHS



How much screen time per day do your children 5 or younger get?



How much screen time per day do your children 5 or younger get?





So what to do?



Inform



When they know
better, they do better!

Lammers US 2022

Depict



Developmental Wellness

INTERACTING

Wherever and Whenever



Right from the start



Being there in the MINI MOMENTS



Involving them in routines



Wherever they go





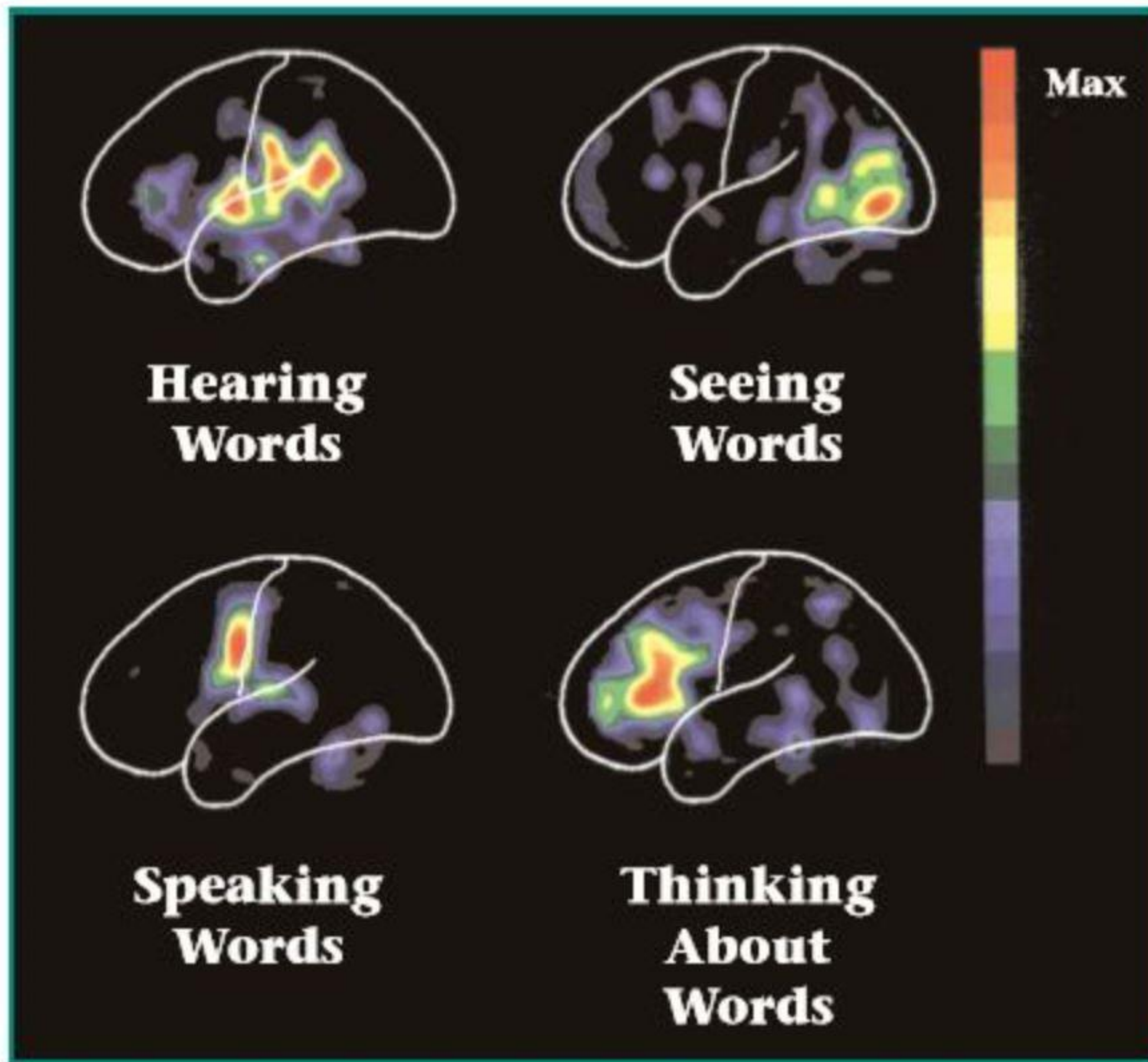
PLAYING!

(indoors
and
out,
alone
and together)





READING!



Reproduced with permission of the office of Marcus E. Raichle, M.D., Department of Radiology and Neurology, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis.



For calming: hugs not screens



TV off
when no
one is
watching



Care givers
control the
device

with time
limits



Families in the same bubble



Watching together

Sharing the
experience





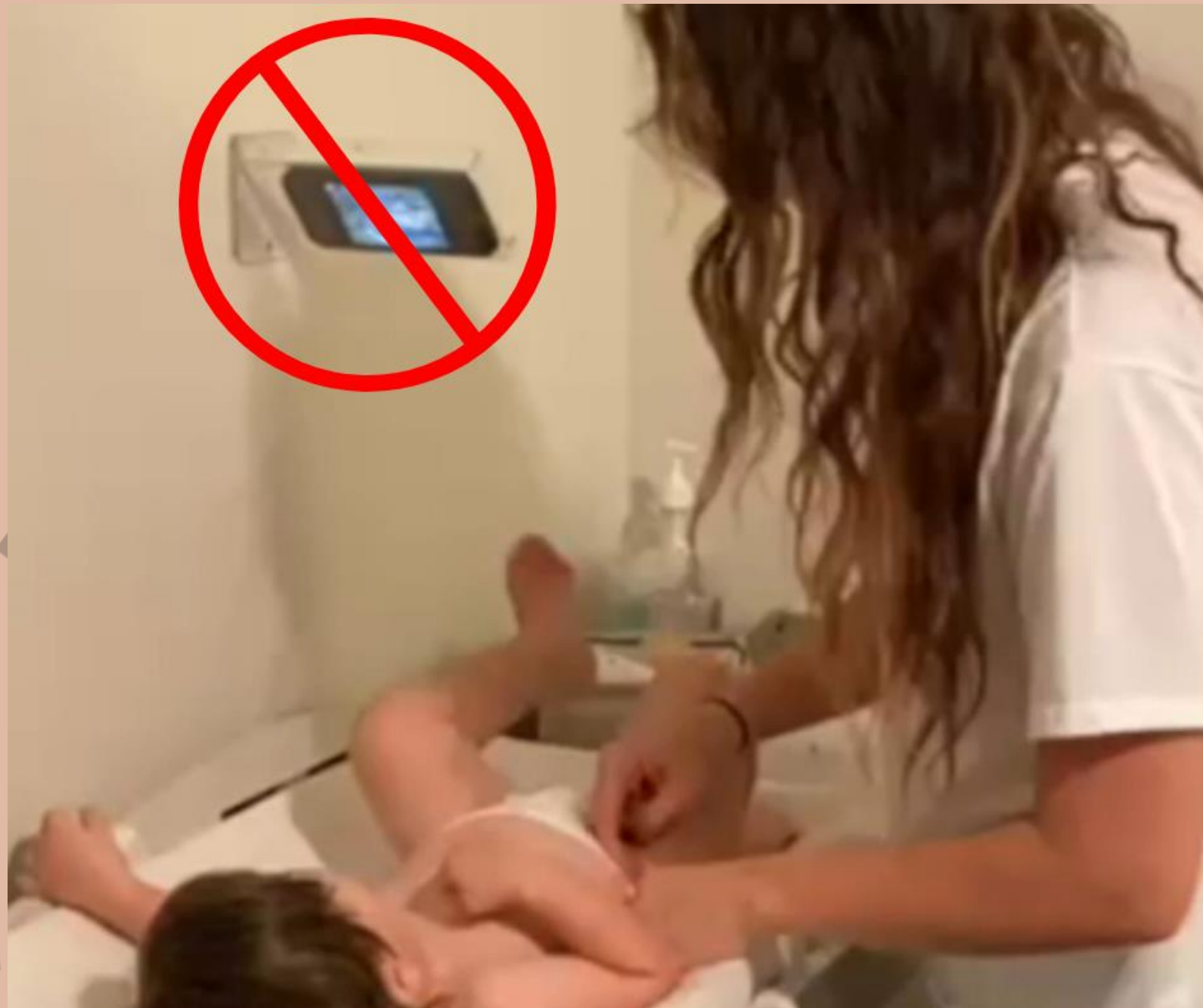
Screen-free meals



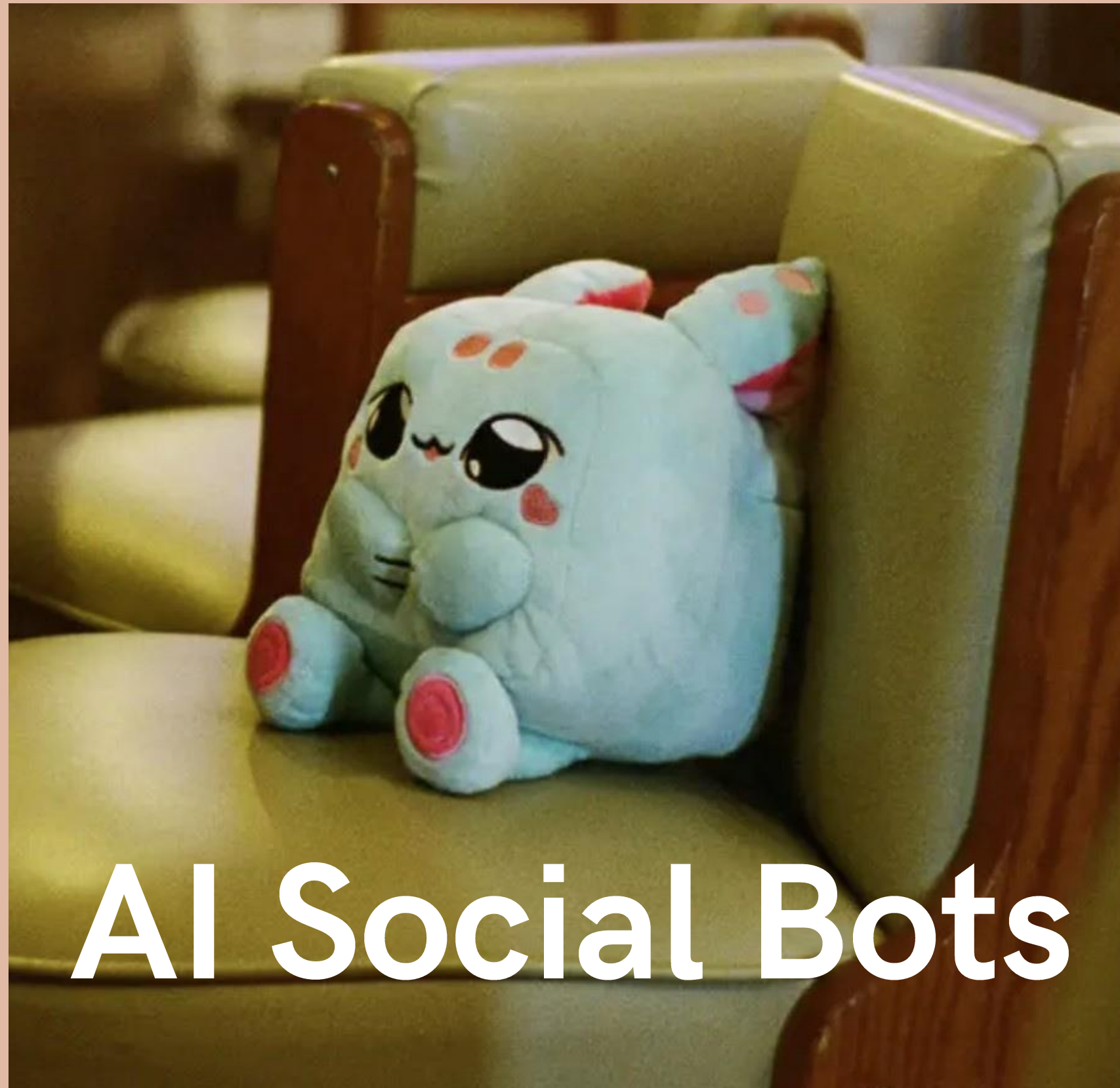
and
screen-
free
bedrooms



Beware of “helpful” products



Here come the



AI Social Bots

Google & Sesame Street



“Digital Wellness”

The Hope

*True
Story*

Kicked out
of
preschool



When the TV stopped
and real play and interaction increased,
his problematic symptoms **went away**.



Same discovery around the world



FRANCE, US, IRAN, AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, NETHERLANDS, etc.

Screen management works!



This is about PREVENTION



If parents get this right,
the mental health carnage we see
today does not have to be repeated





GAINING Developmental Wellness Wish List

Public awareness & education



GAINING Developmental Wellness Wish List

Public awareness & education
Role models



GAINING Developmental Wellness Wish List

Public awareness & education

Role models

Champions!

Let's get

creative!





From Tessa Films