

# Parenting, Unplugged

By Jan Pinborough  
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The Savior spoke four simple words: “Behold your little ones.” The Nephites turned their eyes toward their children. And what followed is among the most sacred events in all of scripture. (See 3 Nephi 17:23–24.)

I first experienced “beholding” when my first daughter was a newborn. Her small, insistent cry had awakened me at about midnight, and I was getting ready to feed her when it happened. She opened her eyes wide and looked for several long, precious moments straight into my eyes. As she and I truly “beheld” each other for the first time, I sensed something about the eternal bond we would share.

The study of neurobiology has confirmed the vital importance of parent-child “beholding.” According to neurobiologist Dr. Allan N. Schore, the non-verbal communication of “mutual gaze” is essential to the proper development of the infant brain.<sup>1</sup> In later years, this connection remains crucial to the development of the minds, hearts, and spirits of our growing children.

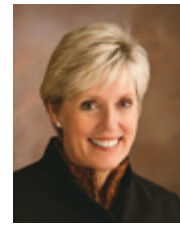
“Beholding” is not giving a casual, distracted glance. It is the act of attending to another with the heart and mind. It is giving the kind of focused attention that says, “I see you. You are important to me.”

For today’s parents, this kind of beholding often requires the discipline to unplug, a conscious choice to turn away from our screens and turn off our digital devices. It may mean resisting the temptation to check our text messages or scroll through social media posts. It may involve thoughtfully establishing personal and family media rules, setting boundaries that will protect the sacred time that we give to one another in our families daily.

By striving to more fully and more frequently behold our little ones, we will nourish our children’s sense of worth, enrich our relationships with one another, and enjoy more of those sacred moments when we see into the hearts of our children. ■

#### NOTE

1. See Relational trauma and the developing right brain: The neurobiology of broken attachment bonds,” in Tessa Baradon, ed., *Relational Trauma in Infancy* (2010), 19–47.



#### DISCONNECT AND LISTEN WITH LOVE

“The answer to our prayer of how to meet our children’s needs may be to more often technologically disconnect. Precious moments of opportunity to interact and converse with our children dissolve when we are occupied with distractions. Why not choose a time each day to disconnect from technology and reconnect with each other? Simply turn everything off. When you do this, your home may seem quiet at first; you may even feel at a loss as to what to do or say. Then, as you give full attention to your children, a conversation will begin, and you can enjoy listening to each other.”

**Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, “The Words We Speak,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 82.**

