

Listening p24

Lead in

3 Key

- a teenagers and digital technology
- b three distinguished experts: a child psychologist, a headteacher, and a university counsellor.

4 Key

- a texting his friends at mealtimes
- b a temporary addiction / a phase

Audioscript

Presenter In this evening's *Phone the experts* we're starting off with a subject which has clearly got a good many of you out there worried. We'll be discussing the subject of teenagers and digital technology. It appears that this is not just an issue that worries parents, but something that increasingly concerns young people themselves. On our studio panel we have three distinguished experts: Evan Matthews, a child psychologist, Joanne Carter, a secondary school headteacher, and Liz Polanski, who has three teenagers of her own and is a university counsellor who helps students with their problems. Our first caller this evening is James Benson. Hi James, how are you doing?

James Hi. I'm fine.

Presenter What's your question for our panel?

Sentence completion

5 Key

- a digital friends
- b two and five
- c text messages
- d adults
- e dad
- f less time

Audioscript

Presenter What's your question for our panel?

James I'd like to know what you think about my parents' behaviour over the last few weeks.

Presenter Your parents?

James That's right. **They're getting more and more obsessed about the amount of time I spend with what they call my 'digital friends'.**

Evan Hi James. Can you tell me who exactly these friends are?

James Just people I've met on the Internet.

Evan And what contact do you have with them in a normal day?

James Well, when I wake up in the morning, I always turn on my computer to see if anyone's sent me any emails or put a comment on *MySpace* for me. Then I usually check my mobile to see if anyone's left me a message.

Evan How long does all that usually take?

James **About five minutes if I have to reply to any messages or emails. If I don't, it only takes me about two minutes.**

Joanne Five minutes every morning doesn't sound too bad to me. What about later in the day?

James It depends if I'm at college or at home. If I don't have to go to college, I usually go on MSN for a couple of hours in the morning, and maybe a couple more in the evening.

Joanne Hmm, four hours a day – that does sound rather a lot.

James I suppose so, but **what Mum and Dad really object to me doing is texting my friends at mealtimes.** They're always accusing me of being rude and anti-social.

Joanne And what do you think?

James I just think it's normal behaviour for people of my age.

Joanne How many texts do you send a day?

James I don't normally keep count, but probably about thirty or forty.

Joanne OK – and do you understand why your parents are getting so annoyed?

James Not really. It's just a bit of fun. **I think adults tend to be too serious about things.** I bet when they were young they used to do things that annoyed their parents.

Liz Can I ask you, James, do you have any other interests outside your digital world? I mean do you play any sports?

James Not now. **I used to go swimming regularly and play tennis with my dad.**

Liz But not any longer?

James No, my dad's always too busy. I remember last summer every time I suggested a game of tennis, he'd say he was too busy. Now it's the opposite problem – it's me that's too busy.

Presenter OK James, I think we get an idea of what your life is like. I'd like to invite each of our experts to comment on what they've heard. Can I start with you, Evan?

Evan OK James. You phoned the programme to complain about your parents' attitude towards you. Having heard you talk about your life, I have to say I completely understand and sympathise with your parents and what you're putting them through. They feel like they're losing you to your digital friends. **I suggest you spend less time on MSN and on your mobile** and make sure you spend at least a couple of hours a day on other things – preferably interacting with real people – including your parents.

Presenter Thanks, Evan. OK – would you like to go next Joanne?

Joanne Sure. OK James, here's what I suggest. I think you should realise that you have an addiction – not very different from the way people become drug or alcohol addicts. Obviously you can't stop altogether – the shock to your system would be too great, but what I suggest you do is try to cut back by a few minutes every day, so that by this time next year your life is back in some kind of balance. Get back to going swimming and playing tennis with your dad – and of course spend time hanging out with your real friends! I'm sure you'll be happier that way. You won't lose any genuine friends and you won't have your parents on your back all the time.

Presenter OK and lastly, Liz.

Liz Right, James. If my own teenage son's experience is anything to go by, I think your addiction is probably a very temporary one. I guess in another month or two you'll find you get bored with your digital life – and almost without thinking about it, you'll slip back into the kind of life you had before you caught this digital virus. In other words I'd say you're going through a phase.

Presenter Thank you all very much – and thank you James for your very intriguing question. I suppose we haven't really answered the question you asked, but I think all three of our experts have come up with ideas that should improve your family situation overall.

James Thanks very much.

6 Key

anti-social, impolite, rude
assertive, determined, stubborn
depressed, fed up, unhappy
exhausted, overtired, sleepy