FACETIME

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA, VIDEO GAMES & MORE

INTRODUCTION

Parents should be the primary conveyers of wisdom to help their children navigate the technological world.

BIBLICAL VISION:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." || **Deuteronomy 6:4-9, NIV**

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." || **Proverbs 22:6, NIV**

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right… Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." || **Ephesians 6:1, 4, NIV**

HEADLINE:

Parents are to be **informed**, **involved** and **in charge** of their children.

LESSON 1

DANGER #1 : INFORMATION WITHOUT WISDOM OR TRUTH

Today's children and teens go to online sources for the bulk of their information (ex: financial advice from Tik Tok, makeup tutorials from YouTube, video game hints from Ninja, exercise regiments from video games, etc.).

This may be fine for some information, but not for all information; specifically, not for information about God or identity or purpose or hardships.

As your child's parent, you have their best interest in mind; online influencers do not.

"cult of personality" : equating truth with a trusted person or personality

> Kids tend to place online influencers on a pedestal, seeing them as a sort of life coach, not realizing that online influencers can be right about some things and wrong about others.

> This is especially prevalent for children of minority groups.[1]

4 of 5 teens get their news from social media.[2]

> 82% of teens cannot distinguish between an ad labeled "Sponsored Content" and a real news story online. [3]

> And yet 69% of Gen Z-ers say it's easy for them to distinguish real news from misinformation.[2]

[1] Donnella, Leah. "'Racial Imposter Syndrome': Here Are Your Stories," *The Code Switch Podcast*, January 27, 2018

[2] Kight, Stef W. "Gen Z Is Eroding the Power of Misinformation," *Axios*, September 15, 2020

[3] Wineburg, Sam, Sarah McGrew, Joel Breakstone, Teresa Ortega. "Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning." *Stanford Digital Repository,* 2016

The more we interact online with people who hold an extreme view, the more extreme we will become in our views. Internet algorithms contribute to this.

PARENT RESPONSE:

Establish yourself as the go-to resource for your child's information - for both minor issues and major issues.

If you're going to YouTube (or another online source) for information, do it alongside your child so you can coach them on reliable sources.

> Although most Gen Z-ers and Alpha kids go to social media for news, they overwhelmingly indicate that they trust their parents the most.

Try to limit extreme voices in your child's sphere.

Know what your children are absorbing online by establishing rules that put screens in public spaces and without headphones.

Avoid the over-idolization of celebrities.

Limit the time your child can spend on social media and social technology.

> Our suggestions:
> - no more than 2 hours of screen time each day
> - no social media until your child is 13 years old
> - limit social media access to 1 hour/day

Establish the Bible as the ultimate source of truth.

>Show your children how to take what they learn online and compare it to what the Bible says.

>Get involved in a local church, and let the Bible and church play prominent roles in your child's life.

DANGER #2 : EMOTIONAL DESENSITIZATION

New technology uses what is not real to desensitize us to what is real, disconnecting digital actions from real-world consequences.

Kids and teens have been known to spend a LOT of money on video games, eSports and apps, not realizing that the money is real.

Most technology is fueled by advertising, designed to coerce you and your children into spending money. Online transactions feel less real than in-person transactions, which advertisers use to their advantage.

Some social media apps encourage their users to anonymously share very private information about themselves or to comment on the confessions of others. Users feel empowered by the anonymity to share things that are not always wise to share.

Cyberbullying is rampant online because of the emotional desensitization that surrounds it.

>When a group of students was asked about whether they bullied someone in the past 6 months, 70% responded "no." [4]

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[4] Modecki, Kathryn L., Jeannie Minchin, Allen G. Harbaugh, Nancy G. Guerra, Kevin C. Runions, "Bullying Prevalence Across Contexts: A Meta-analysis Measuring Cyber and Traditional Bullying." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, August 24, 2014

And yet, when asked if they had participated in any of the following activities, 70% indicated that they had done at least 4 of them, such as:

- name calling

- purposefully excluding someone

- sharing false information about someone to damage their reputation

- sharing naked pictures of someone without their consent

Headline: Kids are emotionally desensitized to what they say or do online.

Instagram is the platform where cyberbullying is most prevalent. [5]

Studies show that those who see violent acts or bullying but do not report it or do anything to stop it are more likely later in life to: [6]

- blame the victim

- use power aggressively in the workplace

- feel like the world is not safe

- have higher anxiety

Emotional desensitization can also result in increased loneliness.

Kids are increasingly replacing in-person friendships with digital "friendships."

More than half of all Gen Z-ers are associated with at least 10 of the 11 feelings associated with loneliness (compared to 10% of those age 72 and older).[7]

[5] "The Annual Bullying Survey 2017." *Ditch the Label,* July 30, 2019

[6] "Study Shows Bullying Affects Both Bystanders and Target." PSU News, October 11, 2011

[7] "Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index: Survey of 20,000 Americans Examining Behaviors Driving Loneliness in the United States." *Cigna,* 2018

PARENT RESPONSE:

Mange your kid's money online.

Talk with your kids about secret-sharing sites, or don't allow them to be on those sites in the first place.

Have conversations about online conduct and bullying.

Encourage both online and in-person interactions with their friends.

BEFORE YOU WATCH LESSON #2:

- Talk with your spouse about this and become unified in your position.
- Work on a list of rules to help protect your kids (but don't share the list with them yet!).
- Make a list of conversations you'd like to start having with your kids.
- Download these three apps, and explore them and their privacy settings:
    1. Instagram
    2. Tik Tok
    3. YouTube

NOTES:

LESSON 2

REMINDER OF THE BIBLICAL VISION:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right… Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." || **Ephesians 6:1, 4, NIV**

Takeaways:

- God has given YOU the authority to be in charge of your kids.

- Enforce your rules AND explain your reasoning.

DANGER #3: THE DANGER TO SHARE PUBLICLY THAT WHICH SHOULD REMAIN PRIVATE

Sexting

Kids are increasingly considering the sharing of sexual content to be normal.

A study done in 2018 found that[1]:

- 1 in 7 adolescents have sent sexts.

- 1 in 4 have received sexts.

- 1 in 8 have forwarded sexts without the consent of the person in the photo.

A 2019 study found that more than 3 times as many girls as boys felt pressured to send a sext. This has been made worse by the pandemic. [2]

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[1] Madigan, Sheri, Anh Ly, Christina l. Rash. "Prevalence of Multiple Forms of Sexting Behavior Among Youth: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2018

[2] Titchen, Kanani, Sofya Maslyanskaya, Ellen J. Silver, Susan M. Coupey. "Sexting and Young Adolescents: Associations with Sexual Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence." *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*, October 2019

Half of teens feel pressured to send nudes or ask for them.[3] And half say it's normal for sexual content to be shared with someone other than the intended participant. [4]

On average, 2 out of 3 students, when asked for a nude photo by their boyfriend or girlfriend, send them. [5]

43% send nudes when asked by a non-current romantic partner.[5]

1 in 10 teens have had explicit photos of theirs shared without consent. [6]

The main places where sexual pictures are sent/received are on apps (like Google Docs).

Apps themselves put pressure on their users to share sexual content.

Children are also being asked to share basic information like their home address , phone number, email address, school, etc.

While many apps have helpful privacy settings, they are frequently used.

Additionally, app updates will often reset all privacy settings to default settings, eliminating your personal preferences.

Less than half of parents talk about online safety with their kids.

Less than 1 out of every 3 parents help their kids manage privacy settings. [7]

Few parents employ accountability software to catch sexting or inappropriate messaging.

[3] Klettke, Bianca, David J. Hallford, Elizabeth Clancy, David J. Mellor, John W. Toumbourou. "Sexting and Psychological Distress: The Role of Unwanted and Coerced Sexts." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, April 5, 2019

[4] The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. "Teenage Sexting Statistics." *GuardChild,* April 14, 2014.

[5] Patchin, Justin W, Sameer Hinduja. "The Nature and Extent of Sexting Among a National Sample of Middle and High School Students in the U.S." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, July 31, 2017

[6] Anderson, Monica. "A Majority of Teens Have Experienced Some Form of Cyberbullying." *Pew Research Center*, September 27, 2018

[7] Madden, Mary, Sandra Cortesi, Urs Gasser, Amanda Lenhart, Maeve Duggan, "Parents, Teens and Online Privacy." *Pew Research Center*, November 20, 2012.

PARENT RESPONSE:

Talk to your children about sexting, emphasizing that it should never become normal. Discuss the importance of their bodies and the dangers associated with sexting.

Make your home a safe space where your kids can talk and share without fear of being judged or rejected.

Whenever you get a new video game or app, first set the privacy settings. Then periodically return to those settings to make sure they're still intact and adequate.

Restrict the downloading of new apps or video games without your permission.

Download keylogging accountability software (ex: Accountable2You), which will help identify the use of any words that you might flag as inappropriate.

DANGER #4: iMINDS (THE IMPACT OF SCREENS ON MENTAL HEALTH)[1]

Dr. Jean Twenge[2] found that the rise in mental health problems among teens since 2010 coincides with an increase in cell phone ownership:

- half of teens who spend more than 5 hours/day on electronic devices reported suicide-related behavior.

8 to 12 year old kids spend an average of 6 hours/day on screens. [3]

Not all screens are equally damaging to mental health:

Social media and video games are the most damaging, followed by TV and passive YouTube viewing.

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[1] Swingle, Mari K. "i-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming, and Social Media Are Changing Our Brains, Our Behavior, and the Evolution of Our Species." 2016

[2] Twenge, Jean M., Thomas E. Joiner, Megan L. Rogers. "Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescents After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time." *Clinical Psychological Science*, November 17, 2017.

[3] "The Common Sense Census: Media Used by Tweens and Teens , 2019" *Common Sense*

The least damaging are school-based screen time or video chats with friends and family.

The more a screen detaches you from the physical interpersonal world, the more likely it will cause depression.

Not all screen times are equally damaging to mental health:

The 30 minutes before bed is the worst time to spend on screens because of their affect on sleep. [4]

Screen time is also linked to ADHD behaviors and compulsive behavior.

Social technology is created to be addictive, feeding relational hungers that we all possess, but falling short of true connectedness. [5]

More than half of teens and young adults admit to being addicted to their mobile devices. [6]

PARENT RESPONSE:

Keep screens in public spaces without headphones. And interrupt your child's screen time with conversations that will reconnect them to the physical world.

Set screen time limits.

Per the American Academy of Pediatrics, children under 2 should not be exposed to screens at all. Children ages 2-5 should not exceed 1 hr/day. Children 3 and older should not exceed 3 hrs/day.

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[4] Levenson JC, Shensa A, Sidani JE, Colditz JB, Primack BA. "Social Media Use Before Bed and Sleep Disturbance Among Young Adults in the United States: A Nationally Representative Study." *Sleep,* September 2017

[5] "Why Can't We Put Down Our Smartphones?" *CBS News*, April 7, 2017

[6] Hurley, Katie. "Teenage Cell Phone Addiction: Are You Worried About Your Child?" *PSYCOM*, November 16, 2020.

BEFORE YOU WATCH LESSON #3:

- Talk with your spouse about this and become unified in your position.

- Work on your list of rules to help protect your kids (but don't share the list with them yet!).

- Continue working on a list of conversations you'd like to start having with your kids.

- Explore (for about 5 minutes each) the content of Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube, with these questions in mind:

    1. What do you notice on the explore pages?

    2. How easy is it to start a conversation with a stranger?

    3. What types of people are featured?

    4. Are there any location-based posts?

NOTES:

LESSON 3

DANGER #5: CONTENT THAT DAMAGES SELF-IMAGE AND SELF-WORTH

Much of today's youth look online to find their success and self-worth.

> 1/3 of teens say their confidence is directly linked to the number of likes and followers they have on social media.[1]

Cyberbullying can also affect the way kids view themselves. [2]

> Cyberbullying can take place on social media, video games, message boards, etc.

> It can also affect kids who aren't regularly online, through technology like Deepfake Technology.[3]

Advertisements send messages to kids that influence their self-perception.

> However, when parents are present, kids' mind-body connection alters, allowing them to engage their brains more in whatever they are watching, rather than being passive recipients. [4]

PARENT RESPONSE:

Be present when your kids are watching screens, and if they are watching something you do not agree with, **say** something.

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[1] Madden, Mary, Amanda Lenhart, Sandra Cortesi, Urs Gasser, Maeve Duggan, Aaron Smith, Meredith Beaton, "Teens, Social Media, and Privacy." *Pew Research Center*, May 21, 2013

[2] Anderson, Monica. "A Majority of Teens Have Experienced Some Form of Cyberbullying." *Pew Research Center*, September 27, 2018

[3] Dormehl, Luke, "Inside the Rapidly Escalating War Between Deepfakes and Deepfake Detectors," *Digital Trends*, February 14, 2021

[4] Watson, George. "Parents' Presence When TV Viewing with Child Affects Learning Ability." *Texas Tech Today*, January 3, 2017

Before posting or sharing anything that includes your kids, ask their permission.

> This reflects that you care about them and their online image and reputation.

Make your home a safe and healing space to talk about bullying and online pressures.

> Consider asking questions like:
>
> - Has anything happened online that made you feel scared or uncomfortable?
>
> - Has anyone harassed or attacked you online?
>
> - Do you ever get trolled?

6TH DANGER: UNSUPERVISED RELATIONSHIPS

It is easy to begin conversations with strangers online.

Today, all media is social. Connecting people is integral to the success of video games, social media and messaging apps.

40% of teens are friends with someone online they have never met in person. [5]

52% of teens have shared personal information with someone they don't know. [6]

Contact with online predators occurs most often in chat rooms, social media and the chat feature of multiplayer games.

Studies show that kids are knowingly interacting with people who they believe are older than 18. [7]

> And when kids do have uncomfortable interactions with adults online, they usually never report it.

[5] Lenhart, Amanda. "Teens, Technology and Friendships." *Pew Research Center*. August 6, 2015

[6] "McAfee, Inc. Survey Reveals that Despite Recent Headlines, Teens Still Share Alarming Amounts of Personal Information with Strangers Online; Cyberbullying Continues to Affect Teens." *Harris Interactive*, June 23, 2010

[7] "Responding to Online Threats: Minors' Perspectives on Disclosing, Reporting and Blocking." *Benenson Strategy Group*, May 2021

Businesses can pursue teens online with cheap product endorsement deals, pressuring kids to sign contracts without parental consent.

PARENT RESPONSE:

Have accountability software, and with keylogging capabilities if possible.

> Screen capture accountability software is also recommended (ex: Covenant Eyes).

Talk with your children about the wisdom needed when interacting with people online.

> Discuss the potential dangers they may not be aware of.

> Outline what your child should do if someone shares inappropriate content with them or asks for inappropriate content.

BEFORE YOU WATCH LESSON #4:

- Talk with your spouse about this and become unified in your position.
- Continue to work on your list of rules pertaining to the use of technology.
- Continue to work on your list of conversations to have with your child.
- Again, pull up Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube and explore:
    1. How much of the content is sexual in nature?
    2. What messages are conveyed by the content you see?
    3. Would you be comfortable if your child watched this content without you present?

NOTES:

LESSON 4

7TH DANGER: INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Pornography is incredibly prominent online, accessible on nearly evil social media platform and in many popular video games.

Porn can be accessed in a variety of ways such as:

- hashtags (#) or keyword searching

- links in the comment sections of videos or chat forums

- Google docs (a program allowed by schools)

- avatar simulations on video games

It's estimated that pornography-blocking software only prevents 20-40% of porn sites. [1]

2017 data showed that the average age of exposure to porn is 11, but most experts think it's now closer to 8. [2]

Modern pornography is becoming more violent in nature, resulting in higher levels of violence in dating relationships. [3]

In 2017, journalists discovered hundreds of graphically sexual or violent YouTube videos masquerading as "child-friendly" on the YouTube Kids app. [4]

[1] Heins, Marjorie, Christina Cho, Ariel Feldman. "Internet Filters: A Public Policy Report." *Brennan Center for Justice*, 2006

[2] Steele, Amy. "Pornography Viewing Starts as Early as Elementary School." *YouthFirst*, June 5, 2018

[3] Knight, India. "Porn Survey 2019: How Internet Pornography Is Changing the Way We Have Sex." *The Times,* February 17, 2022

[4] Di Placido, Dani. "YouTube's 'Elsagate' Illuminates the Unintended Horrors of the Digital Age." *Forbes*, November 28, 2017

Social media challenges can encourage violent or dangerous actions, fueled by peer pressure.

Today's generation of kids don't want to be passive observers of what they see online; they want to recreate it or participate in some way.

PARENT RESPONSE:

Get accountability software!

That said, there is no accountability software that works effectively on iPhones or iPads because Apple restricts them from monitoring apps.

The only devices that allow accountability software to monitor everything on a phone (including apps) are Android devices.

Keep screens in public spaces without headphones. Speak up if you hear misinformation or dangerous messages.

Make and enforce rules about the video games your children watch, not only those they play.

If your child has been exposed to pornography,:

- Ask questions or make statements that help your child know that you are a safe person to talk to. Questions like:

    1. How did you end up seeing the image?

    2. How long have you seen videos or pictures like this?

    3. How did it make you feel after you saw it?

    4. Is there anything else that's bothering you about the whole experience?

- Stay calm so your child knows that you're willing to walk through it with them.

- Don't ask leading questions, but rather allow your child to describe what they saw or experienced in their own words.

- Have follow-up conversations as your child may reveal more over time, depending on your reaction to an initial conversation.

- Seek counseling if your child has been exposed to violent porn, shows signs of addiction, or seems to be experimenting in inappropriate ways for their age.

- Develop boundaries designed to protect your child. Consider asking questions like:

    1. When do you notice being most drawn to look at pornography?

    2. What can I do to help you avoid and stay away from pornography?

    3. How am I doing at helping you feel safe to talk to me about this? What can I do to help you feel safe talking to me about this struggle in the future?

Remember: your job as the parent is to train and instruct your child. You will NOT be able to perfectly protect them.

COMMON-SENSE RULES

1. NO PHONE / TABLET AFTER 9 P.M.

2. NO DEVICES IN PRIVATE SPACES OR DURING FAMILY TIME

3. DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD JOIN ANY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM PRIOR TO THE STATED AGE.

4. NO HEADPHONES

5. DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD PLAY A GAME, WATCH A MOVIE/TV SHOW OR USE AN APP THAT YOU HAVE NOT REVIEWED THOROUGHLY.

6. DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD WATCH A GAME YOU WOULD NOT ALLOW THEM TO PLAY.

7. DISABLE LIVE CHAT WHEN POSSIBLE ON ALL GAMES AND APPS.

8. KNOW ALL PASSWORDS FOR ANY DEVICE THAT CAN ACCESS THE INTERNET.

9. DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO SHARE THEIR PASSWORD (EVEN WITH THEIR BEST FRIEND).

10. PARENTS SHOULD NOT POST ABOUT THEIR KIDS WITHOUT THEIR KIDS' PERMISSION.

11. LIMIT SCREEN TIME TO 2 HOURS/DAY.

12. RESTRICT DOWNLOADING APPS.

13. INSTALL ACCOUNTABILITY SOFTWARE ON ALL DEVICES (INCLUDING THOSE OF PARENTS).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

ACCOUNTABILITY SOFTWARE

- Covenant Eyes
- Accountable2You

BOOKS

- "52 Ways to Connect with Your Smart Phone-Obsessed Kid" by Jonathan McKee
- "Growing Up Social" by Gary Chapman
- "Screens and Teens: Connecting with Our Kids in a Wireless World" by Kathy Koch
- "The Tech-Wise Family" by Andy Crouch
- "Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain" by William Struthers

MECK MESSAGE SERIES

- Gender