

Talking to your Teen - Social Media edition



10 things I wish my PARENTS knew about SOCIAL MEDIA

Starting a conversation with your teen can be tricky- show too much interest and they'll assume you're up to something; not enough interest, and it must mean you don't care. It's enough to make parents close their eyes and count the days to adulthood.

The conundrum is that most teens actually want their parents to be involved and see the value in things that interest them, like social media. So how do you establish guidelines regarding time limits, privacy, and proper behavior online, without starting an argument?

The key is establishing rules early and keeping the lines of communication open. Here are a few other tips to help you communicate with your teen.

1. Be curious instead of condemning

If you want to learn about what's important to a teen, take a look at where they click and understand why they click there. Ask them to teach you things and show you things. Be genuinely interested in their online life. You'll learn a lot about your child, and maybe even yourself, along the way.

2. Don't assume that every teen on a smartphone is up to no good

Even if you don't say anything, a teen can smell your silent lack of approval from across the room. Most teens are exploring new ideas, being creative, or just engaging in mindless relaxation while online.

3. You can't protect kids from every digital danger, but you can give them the tools to stay safe

Not all kids are ready for social media at the same age. Have conversations about dangers they may encounter online and what to do when it happens. Check their privacy settings. Review examples of Personally Identifiable Information and why it shouldn't be shared online. Then trust that they listened.

4. The best way to model the importance of personal privacy is to honor theirs

How would you feel if your teen posted photos of you sleeping, or not looking your best? Do you want the embarrassing encounter you had at work today, posted for all to read about? Probably not. Teens feel the same way. They tell us, "please don't post photos or tell stories about us without our permission." We know it's probably not meant to be mean, but it's crossing a boundary. When parents do that, they are teaching their kids that their boundaries don't matter.

5. The way we use technology as parents affects our children

Do you put your phone down and give your child your full attention when you talk to them? Do you text and drive even though you know it's not safe? Do you spend hours endlessly scrolling through the internet? Research reveals that our kids notice these modeled behaviors and follow our lead. Be present.

6. Just Listen

Your kids understand the digital world better than you do. Ask them about the risks and involve them in the conversation to create rules around for their own personal safety and welfare.

