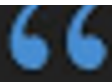


ONLINE SAFETY

"I THINK PARENTING THESE DAYS IS DEFINITELY DIFFERENT FROM WHEN A LOT OF PEOPLE GREW UP. AS MUCH BLAME AS WE GIVE A LOT OF OUR KIDS FOR WHAT THEY'RE NOT DOING... I ALSO TRY TO GIVE THEM AS MUCH CREDIT FOR DEALING WITH THINGS THAT WE DIDN'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH."



PRIVACY AND SAFETY
ARE NOT THE SAME
THING.



CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH

FOR PARENTS

by Kathleen Morris.

How do we keep children and young people safe online while ensuring their technology use is positive and purposeful?

If you're a parent and you're feeling lost when it comes to guiding your child with technology, you're not alone. For the first time in history, many parents may feel like they don't have a reference point to navigate digital parenting dilemmas. Their own childhoods probably involved minimal technology. Even friends and family with older children may not have faced the same scenarios currently playing out in family homes around the world.

- 1) Don't ban your child from using technology: The media is full of scary stories about online risks for young people. However, it's important to not let potential problems stop you from letting your child use technology for their education and personal interests. We live in a digital world and that's not about to change. We need to remember that technology can enrich our lives in many ways when used well. Risks can be minimized when the whole household agrees to some solid strategies.
- 2) Take an interest in your child's online world: Talk to your child about what they're doing online. Take an interest in their interests and consider co-viewing or co-creating with them from time to time. Ensure you're familiar with your child's favourite apps or websites. Find out how they work and what they're getting out of them.
- 3) Remember, you're in charge: At the end of the day, remember you're the parent. Set boundaries and consider using filtering software and parent controls on devices (but be aware that this is only part of the solution).
- 4) Create a family media agreement: Create your own internet/device rules for your household and have your child agree to adhere to them. A media agreement can have more impact when children contribute their own ideas.

This agreement might include designated tech-free zones such as cars, meals, and bedrooms. Many experts recommend these three areas as key places to avoid using devices. Keeping devices “in view” in common household areas is an essential internet safety strategy for many families.

5) Help your child learn about privacy: Teach your child to keep personal information private online. YAPPY is a useful acronym to remind children of some of the personal information they should not share on public online spaces (blogs, forums, social media, etc.). YAPPY stands for: Your full name, Address, Phone number, Passwords, Your plans and birthday. There are many grey areas beyond YAPPY though — sharing opinions, sharing information about others, deciding if the content you create should have a public audience... the list goes on. Experience and conversation can be vital.

6) Help your child to think critically when they’re online: Remind your child that not everything you read or see on the web is true, and not everyone online tells the truth. More than ever, internet users are required to wade through a lot of noise, distractions, and opinions that flow freely online. Children need guidance to learn this skill.

7) Keep the lines of communication open: It’s crucial to talk to your child regularly and openly about what they’re doing online. Encourage your child to tell you if they ever have a problem online. Help them come up with a plan of attack if they ever see anything online that makes them feel worried or unsure (e.g. tell an adult, close the tab, etc.). Work together with your child to help them navigate digital dilemmas.

8) Educate yourself Explore reliable resources for parents so you can educate yourself and protect your children.

A key message that underpins all of the above is: be a role model. Our own digital habits, like being constantly distracted by our own devices, are noticed by children. It can be easier said than done, but being more mindful of having a balanced approach to using technology ourselves is crucial.

