

Social Media – Helping parents and young people understand the use and impact of social media

Social media isn't simply a way of life for children and teens -- its life itself. To help them keep their online interactions safe, productive, and positive, here is some up-to-date research and guidance on social media basics.

Take a little time to do your research. Our reviews and parenting advice can be an excellent starting point. Other parents also can be great resources. Ask around, and keep your ears open during parents' night at school for any mobile phone or social media issues the school is dealing with. Attend our e-safety parent and student workshops if you can.

Most importantly, talk -- and listen -- to your children. They might tell you everything you want to know or at least drop the name of an app or a website you can check out on your own. Even if you can't stay on top of every new app, concentrate your efforts on keeping the lines of communication open so your child will come to you if a problem arises. Make sure they know it's OK to make mistakes and that they don't need to hide these from you, and that you can actually help them through tough spots.

Beyond that, here are a few more ideas:

- Have your child use your app store account or an account linked to your email, so you'll be notified when an app is downloaded. Consider making a rule, at least until they're older, that they can't download an app or sign up for an online account without asking you first.
- Ask which apps and sites are popular with your teen's friends. Children may open up more when they're talking about someone else.
- Share what you're using. Show them your Facebook page, favourite videos, or a game you're obsessed with. They may be inspired to reciprocate.

To adults, digital drama and cyberbullying may seem one and the same. But to children, there's a difference. Unlike cyberbullying, which involves repeated harassment of someone, digital drama is the everyday tiffs and disputes that occur among friends or acquaintances online or via text message. A boy may change his relationship status to "single" immediately after a fight with his girlfriend to make a statement. A teen may post a comment about someone else knowing that people will see it, friends may chime in, and people will talk about it. In the same way that the word drama describes a performance, children usually engage in online drama with an audience in mind.

In some cases, digital drama can escalate into an offline fight, either verbal or physical. Here's how you can help your child avoid this:

- Help set boundaries. Understand that these days relationships often are played out both online and offline. Children need their family's guidance in establishing appropriate boundaries for healthy relationships.
- Take a time-out. With constant access to texting and posting online, children don't get a break from the back and forth that can keep digital drama going. Have some device-free time to give them a chance to cool off.
- Let them know you're always there for them. Remind your children often that you're always available to talk. While you're at it, remind them about the school pastoral support, a favourite teacher, their tutor, or even a friend's parent. Knowing that they have a trusted adult to talk to may encourage teens to open up more.

- Use media to talk about drama. Reality TV shows often present extreme behaviour as entertainment. Discuss why these shows are less likely to depict positive conflict resolution. Also talk about how these shows can encourage negative stereotypes about female friendships.

Information on this page has been adapted from:

What are the social media basics for high school kids? & How can I help my kid avoid digital drama?

By Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/social-media/what-are-the-social-media-basics-for-high-school-kids>

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