

Digital Parenting

We live in a digital world where technology and social media are a permanent part of our daily lives for us and our children. They are useful tools for us to reach out and connect with others, take care of business, find information and even sources of entertainment.

With that being said, today's youth are more digitally connected than ever before – sending messages, listening to music, playing games and connecting on social media. These connections have many benefits and can be fun and exciting. Unfortunately, with these digital connections there are also negative aspects like cyberbullying, sexting, online predator situations and much more. These concerns can be challenging for young people socially and emotionally and can negatively impact their home, school, and social lives. Not only can these concerns be challenging for youth but for parents as well. We as parents and concerned adults have the power to equip our youth to be good digital citizens by promoting kindness, empathy and ways to navigate technology and the internet safely.

10 tips and reminders to be proactive that keep youth safe online:

1. Talk to your children often about connecting with others in a healthy, safe and fun way online.
2. Set clear whole house rules and expectations for using technology and social media. Discuss the rules and expectations often with your family and explain why the rules are important.
3. Talk to your children about online risks such as cyberbullying, sexting, and online predators. Help them understand the possible consequences of online risky behavior i.e. trouble at school, with the law and the potential of harmful or unsafe situations.
4. Talk with your kids about the importance of using appropriate language online, posting and sending appropriate content.
5. Teach and promote being kind and respectful toward others online.
6. Give your children guidance on what to do if they encounter risky online situations. Teach them to block and report digital abuse and encourage them to talk with you or another trusted adult about anything that scares them or makes them feel uncomfortable.
7. Discuss age appropriate websites and their content as well as online scams.
8. Set parental controls and content filters and randomly check your children's social media, computer and cell phone histories. If you see something alarming, use it as an opportunity to have a conversation without blaming or shaming.
9. Talk to them about using social media privacy settings, protecting their private and personal information and accepting friend requests only from people they actually know in real life.
10. Model positive online behavior for your children and help them understand – what goes online stays online.

For questions and more information about Cyber Safety contact:

Robin Batten, Program Manager: robin@washtenawchildren.org
3075 W. Clark Rd. Suite #110 | Ypsilanti, MI 48197 | 734.434.4215
www.washtenawchildren.org/cybersafety

Additional online resources for parents:
<https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/home>
<https://www.common sense media.org/>
<https://protectyoungeyes.com/apps/>