

Tweens, Teens, and Technology: Do's and Don'ts

Parents of tweens and teens often struggle to “keep up” with technological and social networking advances. When it comes to monitoring their children’s activities, they aren’t sure what’s acceptable and what’s intrusive. Often times because of the confusion, they end up assuming their kids are navigating the technological and social networking waters appropriately. This is often an incorrect assumption. With the recent rash of teacher-student sex scandals and teen bullying, it is all too apparent that parents can never be too cautious or involved in their kids’ lives.

Do:

- Have your tween and teen’s password to everything! Email, phone voicemail, Facebook account, etc. There should be a family rule that you have the right to access these accounts at any time.
- Routinely ask your child or teen to hand over their phone for you to scan their text messages to make sure everything is on the up and up.
- Create and enforce rules and regulations when it comes to technology: When should children and teens shut down their laptop and cell phone each night (yes it’s okay to turn those devices off)? When are they allowed to “surf the net” or hop on Facebook? What misbehaviors cause them to lose these privileges?
- Become “friends” with your child on Facebook. If they deny your request, let them know it goes along with the privilege of having a Facebook account (and promise you won’t post any embarrassing pictures of them).

Don't

- Only look for obvious inappropriate messages from other adults or kids – look for subtle messages that might indicate your child or teen is being cyber bullied or is being led into an inappropriate relationship with a teacher or coach.
- Assume because you’ve set your home computers to have security settings that your savvy teens will be safe. Double check the history of internet use regularly and regularly change passwords on your computers you don’t want them to have access to.

- Be naïve. Don't think that because your child is making good grades and is well-behaved that he or she might not be getting into trouble. Being involved in their lives face to face as well as their technological/social networking lives is essential to good parenting these days.
- Don't feel guilty for caring and checking and double checking and triple checking...(or for posting occasional "shout outs" to your kids on Facebook).

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