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Ten things to keep your Tweens safe online

When your child reaches 10 – 11yrs, they may start asking for their first smartphone and to use social media. Here are my tips on what to do to keep them safe.

1. If your child is hassling for a phone, make sure that you get them to do a little presentation, or write a small project sheet, on a topic of cyber safety every week in the lead up to getting their phone.

2. Think about the age recommendations; it is not illegal for a child to use social media under the age of 13yrs with their parents' permission. But they need to remember to update their age on any site that has asked for it when they actually turn 13yrs.

   Like Facebook, for example. This way, the app will not think they are older. As an extreme example…if your child signs up to use Facebook when they are 10yrs, and they have to lie and say they are 13yrs… so by the time they are 15yrs if they haven't adjusted the year they were born, the app will think they are 18yrs.

   Then they can get a Tinder account as it relies on Facebook for verification!

3. Teach your kids to think twice before they accept a friend request. Just because someone is a friend of their big brother or sister or cousin who goes to another school does not mean they should let them into their life.

4. Engage with them about their favourite social media app and get them to teach you about it so you can at least know the basics. Get them to show you how to block and report so you can be sure they know how to.

5. Be a good role model. Keep your screen time in check. There is no use banning the phones from bedrooms if you go to bed with yours each night, for example.

6. Help them to check and manage privacy settings. This is something you can do together when they are younger by making it a shared experience.

7. Think twice before "sharenting." Do not post photos of your kids in school uniform or school events or holding certificates with their full name and school name on it. You are letting the whole world know where they go to school. This can happen by "checking in" or geotagging a school as well.

8. Ask them first when you are about to share their photo. Let your kids be involved in the decision making on whether they are ok with you posting a photo of them or not as young as possible. This will teach them to ask others first before they post pictures as they grow up.

9. Put healthy boundaries in place. Don't ban them from their device if they forget to do a household chore or are naughty for something totally unrelated to their device. Do not take it off them if they speak up about something that has happened online because you are scared either.

    This is the quickest way to drive all the conversations that you want to be having underground. Instead, if you have a healthy boundary like all devices are banned from the bathroom or bedroom. So then if they are caught with their device in either place, you ban them for a week. This way, they will learn that it is safe to speak up about what is going on online without punishment unless they break the rules about device use.

10. Respect the classifications. The average age of a gamer is 35yrs old. Classifications are there for a reason. It is not ok for a child under the age of 18yrs to be playing R Rated games…even with their parents!!! If your child is playing online games, set healthy boundaries around time playing as well. All of the other tips above also apply to gaming.