Picture-Perfect Privacy A Guide to Responsible Sharing of Your Kids' Photos

We're all familiar with the overwhelming urge to share those heart-melting or proud moment photos of our children online. But wait a minute! Before you rush to hit that "post" button, let's pause and have a real talk about the social media risks that often slip our minds.

Consider their cybersecurity

Daily, we come across social media posts showcasing children's milestones, such as a heartfelt message celebrating their birthday, proudly announcing their accomplishments, or sharing snapshots of them participating in various activities, be it sports or other endeavours. As we delve further into your online presence, we may find additional photos featuring pets, family vacations, and even links connecting other family members, including grandparents.

While seemingly innocent, these posts and tags can inadvertently expose your children to potential cyber threats. Consider a scenario where your child, at an older age, needs to reset a password, and the security questions posed are along the lines of "Where did you attend school?" or "What was the name of your first pet?" Furthermore, other questions like "What was your mother's maiden name?" may also be included. When coupled with readily available information such as the date of birth (as evident in the birthday cake post), inadvertently, you have just given away all the personal information we have been diligently teaching children to refrain from sharing since they were old enough to handle a device.

As parents, it is crucial to exercise caution when sharing photos of your children online. While the temptation to showcase their achievements and document their growth is understandable, weighing the potential consequences of such actions against the immediate gratification of social media likes and comments is vital. By adopting a more cautious approach and being mindful of the information we inadvertently disclose, we can take proactive steps to protect our children's privacy and safeguard their future well-being.

Communicate and Establish Family Rules

Talk with your partner (or ex-partner) to ensure you are on the same page regarding sharing photos of your children online. Never use photos of your children in profile photo's ESPECIALLY on dating apps, this should be non-negotiable. Consider the rights of your child. Discussing this as a family when your children are old enough to understand. Use this opportunity not just to set family rules, but also to impart values of thoughtfulness, caution, respect, and kindness both online and offline.

Explore your motivations

It's worth considering whether ego validation plays a role. Are you sharing the photo of your child for "likes". Seeking validation as a parent is natural, it's important to remember that the act of sharing doesn't determine one's parenting skills. Instead, focus on the positive aspects of sharing, such as staying connected with loved ones and creating digital memories. By being mindful of privacy risks and prioritizing our children's well-being, we can strike a balance between sharing and ego-driven motives.

Respecting their privacy

Some parents choose not to show their child's face on social media. Think about a child's right to privacy and use this as a way to teach kids about online consent. Simply ask them as young as possible. "May I take your photo"? Can I share it on my Instagram? Show the photo as soon as they are old enough and let them make the decision and respect it. Establishing boundaries on what can be shared and what should remain private fosters lessons on consent and ownership of personal information.

Impact on Your Child's Future

We don't know the long-term consequences of sharing photos and stories about our kids online. A public facing family photo album and diary tracking everything they do may cause so issues down the track. Think critically and reflect on how your online posts may affect your child's future, particularly in professional or public-facing careers. You may be the one that is putting an end to their career of choice before they even get the change to choose it!

But what if a school shares their photo online

It's important to avoid tagging other parents or children in posts about their child. Not all parents want their child's information or photos associated with their social media accounts, and it's crucial to respect their privacy preferences. Remember, schools may share photos of your child online based on the permission to publish form you signed. However, it's crucial that the school only shares your child's first name or initials and never their full name (and even though they have your permission the school should also ask the child for their permission before they post). Refrain from tagging your friends if you come across a photo of their child on the school's Facebook page. If their page is not completely secure, it could potentially expose personal information like birthdays, pet names, vacation destinations, and create personal security issues.

Consider other children's circumstances

Other parents may not have provided consent through signed permission forms, and there could be various sensitive circumstances, such as children fleeing domestic violence or being in witness protection, where photographing them is not appropriate. Avoid sharing group photos taken at sporting or school events without consent from the organization, regardless of the size or location. By being mindful of these considerations, we can prioritize the privacy and safety of all children involved.

Safeguarding Against Online Dangers

It is a distressing reality that fully clothed children are often found on predator sites on the dark web and similar platforms. Law enforcement agencies have reported instances where these images, despite the children being fully dressed, are sought after by predators. While the exact statistics may vary, a study conducted by the

Australian Federal Police (AFP) revealed that over 90% of the images identified as child exploitation material seized during their investigations depicted children fully clothed [source: Australian Federal Police]. This alarming fact emphasizes the importance of safeguarding children's photos and being vigilant about their online presence to protect them from potential harm.

If in Doubt, Don't Share

Consider whether there is anyone who should not see the content you share about your child. When in doubt, it's best to err on the side of caution and refrain from sharing sensitive or private information. Strike a balance between sharing your family's precious moments and safeguarding your child's privacy. Remember that you have the power to control the narrative and protect your child's online presence.

By exercising caution, respecting privacy permissions, being mindful of motivations, and safeguarding against potential risks, we can strike a balance between sharing our children's moments and protecting their privacy. Ultimately, as parents we have the power to shape their online presence and digital footprint and create a safe online environment for them.

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