

TECHNOLOGY AND TEENS

Today's "tweens" and teens live a technology-filled life. They are connected to the world and each other by digital technology more than any previous generation. The problem is that their lack of life experience and maturity can get them into trouble quickly. Here is information to help you stay connected.



JUST THE FACTS

- 1 out of 5 of children/teens have been sexually solicited online.
- 41% of teens claim their parents have no idea what they are looking at/doing online or on their cell phone.
- 20% of male and female teens (ages 13 to 19) are "sexting".
- 51% of teen girls say pressure from a guy is a reason girls send racy messages or images.
- 40% of teens have had a sexually suggestive photo/message (originally meant to be private) shown to them.

DANGERS AND RISKS

Texting, emails, and social networking websites, like Facebook, are being used to intimidate or send unflattering messages (cyber-bullying).

Cyber-bullying can lead to anxiety, depression, school problems, weapon-carrying at school, and not feeling connected to other people.



Heavy media users may:

- Be desensitized to violence,
- Engage in more violent/aggressive behavior,
- Develop a culture of disrespect (stereotyping, ridiculing, bullying),
- Have inappropriate/harmful attitudes about sexual activity and the opposite sex,
- Develop inappropriate beliefs that substance use/abuse is normal or associated with glamour/excitement,
- Become obese,
- Do poorly in school (especially in reading and comprehension skills).



LEGAL ISSUES

"Sexting" is prosecuted in Colorado as a sex crime.

- It is considered a felony (child pornography).
- Convicted teens may be required to register as sex offenders. This can have a lasting impact on a teen's life. There have been reports of teens losing jobs and college scholarships/admissions.
- States are starting court-ordered counseling for convicted "sexters". This can help teens realize the importance of respecting their own body and to develop self-esteem.



WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Talk to Your Child About:

- Internet safety and using good judgment.
- Potential legal implications of inappropriate internet use.

Set Family Tech Use Guidelines:

- Talk about balance between the importance of privacy and gaining independence with the need for parents to keep their child safe.
- Consider limiting technology use to less than 1 to 2 hours per day.
- Consider limiting use of technology to an area in the home that can be supervised.
- Require all family members “friend”/“follow” each other on social networking sites.
- Discussing sending and receiving communication only from people that are known, never to strangers.

Monitor Technology Use:

- Consider formal monitoring systems to filter, block, or track emails, internet sites, social network activity, texts/cell phone activity, and online friends.
- Check Out:
<http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com>
<http://www.top10spysoftware.com>
spyware/ monitoring technology for cell phones
- Consider random checks of internet use, as well as cell phone and texting use.



FOR THE KIDS TO KNOW

Think before u push “send” – Information u send over the internet is **NOT private**.

- **Message and pictures can be “forwarded” to other people, even if u think they won’t. U can’t change your mind after u push “send”.**
- **Never use the internet or cell phone to send mean messages, gossip, make someone look bad, spread rumors, bully, or damage someone’s reputation.**
- **If u’d be embarrassed or upset if your family, teacher, coach, or boss saw pictures or text u sent, then u need to stop!**
- **Do not post personal information of others without their permission.**



Stay Safe

- Do not give out personal information online.
- Never get together with someone u met online.
- If u feel uncomfortable or frightened by a post u received, tell an adult or parent.
- Report suspicious behavior to an adult or the police.
- Always turn off the webcam’s field of vision when it is not in use.
- **“Sexting” is a crime in Colorado. Legal action may be taken against u.**

IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD HAVE BEEN CYBER-BULLIED...

What to Report:

- **Anyone you do not know who is asking for personal information, photos, or videos.**
- **Obscene photos, videos, text.**
- **Anyone who threatens or bullies you or publishes private information about you online.**

Who to Report to:

1. Go to www.StopCyberbullying.org.
2. Contact local police if you have been threatened online or personal information has been posted without your permission.
3. Go to www.WiredSafety.org. Volunteers will work with police to find the person who is bullying you and evaluate the case.
4. Contact your internet service provider (ISP) and request all electronic evidence be preserved.
5. Contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s CyberTipline to report illegal or threatening behavior at 800-843-5678.

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