



Navigating Social Media

During this period of social distancing, teens will spend increased time on their devices (e.g., computer, phone, tablet) engaging with people and information on social media. Social media entails websites or applications (apps) that allow people to share and consume content quickly and in real time.

Your teen may be using the following applications:



- Facebook or Facebook watch
- Twitter
- SnapChat
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Zoom or Google meets
- Gaming Platforms (e.g., Twitch)
- Youtube

Teens may be exposed to new platforms during the school closure, such as Periscope, Mixer and Caffeine (online gaming).

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Social Media can be used to:

- Build and maintain social relationships while face-to-face interaction is unavailable
- Stay connected (may help with feelings of anxiety, depression and loneliness during uncertain times)
- Practice conversation skills such as articulating own opinions and beliefs
- Help teens understand social expectations and resolve problems as they occur
- Teach teens perspective taking through exposure to different points of view and experiences
- Support teens in developing friendships with peers who have similar interests

USING PARENT PRIVACY CONTROLS:

1. Set profiles to private and adjust security settings on applications
2. Remove geotagging (location setting)
3. Install a pop-up blocker or other anti-virus software to block and monitor content
4. Use child versions of social media applications first, such as Messenger Kids
5. Slowly increase your teen's exposure to social media applications over time to increase independence while maintaining parent involvement



TALKING TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA:

1. Familiarize yourself with the applications or websites your teen is interested in
2. Plan the topics you want to discuss. Examples include:
 - a. Personal information
 - b. Appropriate topics to discuss online
 - c. Appropriate online behaviors, such as liking, sharing, commenting, videos
 - d. Safety concerns (e.g., fake profiles, meeting in person)
 - e. Bullying and cyber stalking
 - f. When and how to respond to negative comments (e.g., blocking, retaliating)
 - g. Money and gaming

Tip: include your teen in the planning process if possible

3. Find a neutral time and space to discuss the topic with your teen
4. Ask your teen open ended questions to encourage their involvement (e.g., What would you do? When should you ____?)
5. Confirm their understanding by making summarizing statements
6. Aim to keep conversations short and positive to encourage future discussions
7. Give your teen an opportunity to practice through gradual exposure to social media

PROBLEM SOLVING TIPS:



1. What should I do if my teen is exposed to inappropriate material on social media?
 - Discuss the dangers of visiting inappropriate sites
 - Set limits of what is appropriate or inappropriate
 - Teach your teen about illegal content and encourage disclosure to an adult
2. What should I do if my teen is being cyber bullied?
 - Teach your teen to identify bullying and block “friends” on social networking sites
 - Encourage your teen to seek out help from a trusted adult
3. How do I teach my teen about predators on the internet?
 - Agree upon an online safety checklist with your teen
 - Encourage your teen to identify red flags on the checklist and speak with a familiar adult
4. I'm afraid my teen will become fixated on games or social networking sites. What should I do?
 - Set clear limits on internet (e.g., use a timer)
 - Encourage technology or computer use in the same room as an adult



HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Internet Safety in Adolescents with ASD:

- <https://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/resources/autism-glance-internet-safety-adolescents-asd>

Rough Guide to Social Media Use for Teens with Autism:

- https://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges/sites/grand-challenges/files/rough_guide_to_social_media_use.pdf

Online Safety Guides for Pre-teens and 14+ years:

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/>



@SurreyPlaceON