Social Media Tips and Resources for Parents

Tips for Parents:

Conversations and Questions. Have conversations about social media with your children. Ask them what networks they have joined, and what they do on those networks. Tell them not to reveal personal information. Talk to your children about reputation, and how both they and other people can influence their own reputation. Share relevant news stories with your children about social media, and talk about what could have been done to prevent any problems in the news stories. Let your children know how easy it is to steal an identity or locate someone with just a few simple personal facts, such as age and birthday. If your children make a mistake about sharing information, use it as a learning experience, and talk about what problems could have come about from over sharing information, then work out a solution on how to correct it, and prevent it from happening again. Giver older children a stake in their usage and responsibility; if they make a mistake, have them help you in repairing damage.

Setting Rules and Limits. Know the rules that apply to social media, such as COPPA and CIPA. Set rules for what is okay to do and say online, and set rules for who can be accepted as a friend or follower. Set limits on screen time, what networks are okay to join, and what photographs can be shared. Consider making a contract that outlines the rules of your house with your children.

Engage. Find child-friendly social networks for your children to join, so that they may learn the right way to engage with social media. Join social networks with your child, and interact with them. Don't ignore social media or try putting a blanket ban on social media—your children won't be able to learn the right way to engage in the online world.

Parental Controls. Almost all internet connected devices and social networks come with ways to safety-enable or install some kind of parental controls. Search out apps or software which can help you monitor your child's digital usage.

Monitoring Your Children. Do regular internet searches on both you and your children. Let your children know that you will be monitoring their social media use, and determine how much or little you need to monitor your children. Know what access your children have to technology and the internet; this includes all mobile devices, laptops, home computers, and anywhere else your children may be able to connect to the internet. If your children have cell phones or other mobile devices, consider what data or text messaging plans they really need and how to best monitor them. Make it easier to monitor your children by keeping computers in the family

room or kitchen, and by requiring that all mobile devices be charged in a similar location. Consider programs that allow you to monitor all of your children's activities on social networks in one simple location, but don't rely solely on these programs.

Social Media Resources:

On Guard Online (www.onguardonline.gov/topics/kids-privacy.aspx): Government website devoted to information on protecting your child's privacy online.

Common Sense Media (https://www.commonsensemedia.org/): Dedicated to helping families navigate and thrives in a media and technology friendly world; provides unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help them harness the power of media and technology as a positive force in all kids' lives.

Cyber Tip Line (http://www.missingkids.com/CybertipLine)--Tip line that investigates sexual exploitation of children occurring online.

Family Online Safety Institute (http://www.fosi.org)--International, non-profit organization which works to make the online world safer for children and their families; its "Resources" tab has very helpful publications and other information for parents.

Institute for Responsible Online and Cell phone Communication (http://www.iroc2.org)--Organization that has developed guidelines for digital citizenship; contains other helpful information for parents.

Yoursphere for Parents (http://internet-safety.yoursphere.com)--Yoursphere, the social network for children, has a parents section with many helpful article, publications, tips and links.

SafeKids.Com (www.safekids.com) ; SafeTeens.Com (www.safeteens.com); Connect Safely (www.connectsafely.org)--Websites dedicated to helpful articles, publications, information on newest social media and newest changes to privacy settings, tips for parents, and links.

Netskills for Life (http://netskills4life.com/netskills4lifewelcome) Software program designed to educate and test children on right responses to scenarios on the internet.

Cyberbullying Research Center (http://cyberbullying.us)--Dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents.

Emily Bazelon, Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy. (2013)