

THE PERILS OF THE DIGITAL AGE

Media & technology are at the very center of all our lives today -- especially our children's. Kids today spend over 50 hours of screen time every week. The media content they consume and create has a profound impact on their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. Learning how to use media and technology wisely is an essential skill for life and learning in the 21st century as online social networks and forms of communication rapidly change the way human beings interact.

For our kids, the online world and the "real" world are all the same thing.

Teens spending 5 or more hours online per day are at significantly higher risk for suicide and depression than those spending less than 1 hour.

The RISKS Online

- **CONDUCT:** bullying, sexting, misuse of personal information
- **CONTENT:** pornography, violence, racism, false or misleading
- **CONTACT:** stalking, 'stranger danger', harassment or impersonation
- **COMMERCIAL:** advertising, excessive or hidden marketing, purchases/scams

The Online OPPORTUNITY

- **LEARNING & CREATING:** support for literacy and numeracy, informational needs, academic achievement, hard & soft skills learned about or through digital media including creativity and personal expression.
- **CONNECTING WITH OTHERS:** communicating with distant family and friends, participating in like-minded communities of support.
- **CIVIC ACTION AND ENGAGEMENT:** joining community or activist groups, connecting personal expression to wider social justice movements.



FAMILY MEDIA USE PLAN

Parents, help your children balance their online and off-line lives! Create a personalized Family Media Use Plan that works within your family's values and busy lifestyles at HealthyChildren.org.

The interactive tool developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) includes a Media Time Calculator that can give you a snapshot of how much time each child is spending on daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, homework, physical activity, and media use. It also includes AAP recommendations on screen-free zones, media manners and much more.

QUESTIONS about the right ONLINE CONTENT?

Common Sense Media helps families make smart media choices. Find the largest, most trusted library of independent age-based and educational ratings and reviews for movies, games, apps, TV shows, websites, books and music at CommonSenseMedia.org. Commonsense ideas, family guides, Parent Concerns and Parent Blog help families understand and navigate the problems and possibilities of raising children in the digital age.

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24/7/365 Mental Health Crisis Hotline
888.207.4004

SURROUND with PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Recent studies clearly show that spending more time online with smartphones and other screens puts children and teens at higher risk for depression and suicide. With online media a basic part of today's everyday life, what should parents do?

Restricting daily screen time may reduce the risk for some, and there are other activities not involving social media or television that can **DECREASE** the risk of depression and suicide. These are called protective factors.

- **Spending Time with your Kids, both One-on-One & as a Family**
If you need daily ideas for fun and resilience-building, check out the Multiply Your Happy Perpetual Calendar at MindSpringsHealth.org/downloads
- **Encouraging Face-to-Face Social Interaction & Activities like Team Sports, Clubs, Hanging out with Friends**
- **Providing Opportunities for Exercise, Religious Beliefs and Activities & Homework**
- **Managing Marital or other Discord at Home**
- **Being Consistent with Expectations, Guidelines, & Discipline**

Even given the risk factors, it's OK for your children and teens to be online. Online relationships are part of typical adolescent development and social media can support teens as they explore and discover more about themselves and their place in the grown-up world.

Just be sure your teen is behaving appropriately in both the real and online worlds. Many teens need to be reminded that a platform's privacy settings do not make things actually "private" and that images, thoughts, and behaviors teens share online will instantly become a part of their digital footprint indefinitely.

Keep lines of communication open and let them know you're there if they have questions or concerns.

HEAVILY RESTRICTING ONLINE ACCESS is NOT RECOMMENDED

It has not proven effective in reducing children's risk of harm online, possibly because children find ways around the restrictions or because the software can be clumsy, leading families to turn it off.

In this technological world, children may not get the chance to explore the media's possibilities or to develop the skills needed to benefit

Parents & caregivers who heavily restrict access tend to reduce exposure to risk but also restrict opportunities for learning and engagement.

Outright bans of activities such as using social media or playing video games can have consequences for young people, who may feel cut off from their peers or unable to access information and support

How to MINIMIZE RISK and MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITY

- **HAVE** a family **conversation** about where media fits into life
- **DETERMINE purpose & rules** for use before acquiring devices for your kids
- **CREATE tech-free zones** like mealtimes, family gatherings, bedrooms.
- **WARN** kids about the importance of **privacy** and dangers of online predators
- **MAKE** mindful choices about use & Create a **Family Media Plan/contract**
- **READ** up on **apps & games** your kids use or might use
- **CONSIDER** installing apps or software to **track** what content is been accessed online or where children physically are
- **KEEP** computers in a **public** area so online activities can be overseen
- **CO-VIEW** programs with your kids & **ask** what's happening online
- **REQUIRE** kids to share **passwords**
- **REMEMBER** kids are great mimics & be a good online **role model**

