

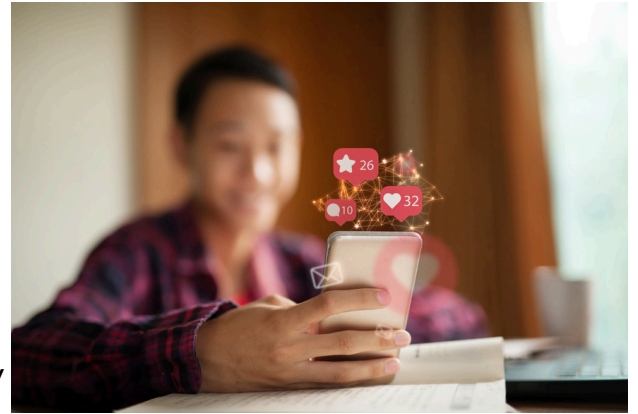
Parents: Help Your Child Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media

Tara Solomon-Smith - Family and Community Wellness Agent
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Social media brings both advantages and drawbacks, with particular concerns for young people. U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy highlights in his Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health that children aged 10 to 19 are in a critical stage of brain development. During this time, their sense of identity and self-worth is still developing. They are also more emotionally sensitive, prone to peer pressure, and likely to engage in risky behaviors they might otherwise avoid.



More research is needed to see if social media is the direct cause of mental health issues but we shouldn't ignore the correlations. Parents can take practical action now to help protect our youth.

- Set guardrails early. Setting ground rules before giving kids a smart phone can set you up for success. Examples include making certain rooms technology-free or limiting use to certain times of day. Delay social media use until 16.
- Navigate and strategize together. Have an open, non-judgmental conversation about social media. Explore what they enjoy, share any challenges you face, and work together to establish guidelines, such as deciding when to take breaks, adjusting privacy settings, or considering which platforms to avoid.
- Have an ongoing conversation about needing to put real-life effort into forging meaningful relationships.
- Work with teens to choose appropriate privacy settings for their social media. Social media sites provide tools for parents on how to set privacy settings. You can also visit [Common Sense Media](#) - the "Parents need to know" section - provides everything you need to know about social media, how different apps work, and how to set privacy controls.
- Be clear about what is unsafe to post: full name, address, specific places they go, phone numbers, vacation plans, or anything else that would help someone identify or locate them.
- Not allowing teens to sleep with their cell phone nearby. When teens are always connected, their rest will be interrupted.
- Monitor for any behavioral changes that could be linked to internet use. Look out for signs such as increased secrecy, spending excessive time online, and withdrawal from friends, schoolwork, or previously enjoyed activities.

The Power in Daily Rituals

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- Make sure your teen knows they are loved unconditionally and can come to you with any problem. Engage with your child by joining them in an activity you both enjoy, like watching a baseball game or playing a video game. Use this shared experience as a starting point for meaningful conversation.

Today's article was adapted with articles by the Greater Good Science Center and University of Minnesota Extension.

For more information contact Tara Solomon-Smith, tsolomon@ksu.edu, or call 620-244-3826.