



**SECRET
LIVES OF
TEENS
on
Social Media**

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1 REMOVE THEIR DEVICES



Remove their devices. I know some experts will disagree however, because of their addictions to their phones, laptops, ipads and computers, sometimes we must separate them from the source. When doing so, explain why. Teens, like adults, often don't realize how much time they are spending on their devices. You will know the level of addiction to their devices by their need to find another device (old ipad, friend's phone, etc.) to log in from so the end goal needs to be to help them find effective ways to self-regulate, once you return the device.

Fear of missing out often motivates the time spent on social media. The average teen is on social media 6 - 12 hours per day. They aren't aware of the **dopamine** (*neurotransmitters made in the brain. It is released when your brain is expecting a reward. When you come to associate a certain activity with pleasure, mere anticipation may be enough to raise dopamine levels.*) The constant production of dopamine creates a habit of consequences exasperated with the impact social media overload has on their personal, academic, and other goals.

2 ASK ABOUT THE APPS



Ask about the apps. Ask your child which apps they spend the most time on. Is it Instagram, TikTok, or perhaps Snapchat? Once you find out, install those apps on your phone, too, and figure out how they work.

Some apps have geolocation which can pose a real danger. Try to manage your child's social media activity by informing them of the danger rather than imposing your opinion.

Don't be a manager, be a mentor. Let them know you will be monitoring their usage and behaviors online with spot checks to **confirm** they are following the rules you all have discussed. The goal is to catch them doing good, not trip them up.

3 HELP THEM PROTECT THEIR PRIVACY



Very few teens understand how the world wide web works. They truly believe their text messages are between them and the receiver/sender. They aren't aware of how easy everything on their phones and in the clouds can be accessed.

Now is the time to help them protect their privacy. Talk about privacy settings on different social media accounts. Some teens are not aware of this option. Agree with them to accept only the followers and friends that they know personally. This is not an easy task for a teen because the number of followers is often the barometer of popularity.

If they understand the necessity for well-managed online presence, this shouldn't be a problem.

4 TALK ABOUT SEXTING

Parents find the conversation about “The Birds and the Bees” just as awkward as teens do. However, now you have another level to deal with – sexting.

Teens go from sending sexually explicit text messages to adding images to those messages. Parents must educate their teens on Child Pornography laws not only for your state but also the states your children communicate with other teens in. Laws are different from state to state and where something is legal at 17 in one, it may be 18 in another. Ignorance of the law is no excuse and charges can still be pressed against teens.

Revenge porn is also illegal so if your daughter's boyfriend received a nude photo from his ex-girlfriend and your daughter decides to share that photo with someone else, she can be charged with distribution of child pornography.

Talk about what it means to have a healthy relationship and how to develop and maintain one.



Images of child pornography are not protected under First Amendment rights, and are illegal contraband under federal law. Section 2256 of Title 18, United States Code, defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor. Visual depictions include photographs, videos, digital or computer generated images indistinguishable from an actual minor, and images created, adapted, or modified, but appear to depict an identifiable, actual minor. Undeveloped film, undeveloped videotape, and electronically stored data that can be converted into a visual image of child pornography are also deemed illegal visual depictions under federal law.

Notably, the legal definition of sexually explicit conduct does not require that an image depict a child engaging in sexual activity. A picture of a naked child may constitute illegal child pornography if it is sufficiently sexually suggestive. Additionally, the age of consent for sexual activity in a given state is irrelevant; any depiction of a minor under 18 years of age engaging in sexually explicit conduct is illegal.

5 OVERCOME SOCIAL MEDIA PREJUDICE

Many parents believe that social media is completely, or almost completely, bad. However, when parents talk to their children about social media from this standpoint, the child is likely to withhold and hide information.

Social media is neither good nor bad per se. It is simply a new form of communication and entertainment. Genuine curiosity and an open mind about your child's interest in social media can make a significant difference. Include your talks an agreement of what is appropriate and what isn't.



6 CARE ABOUT THEIR EMOTIONS



Teenagers want their opinions to be heard. This especially goes for the things they're passionate or angry about. Social media offers instant feedback to their posts, which makes kids feel listened to, validated, and acknowledged.

However, if you offer empathy for challenges your teen is facing, you can provide listening and validation inside of your family, too. This will give you an insight into what your teen posts on social media and an opportunity to help them self-filter.

When your child asks you for the first time if they can open a social media account, avoid judging them or jumping to conclusions. Accept their need to engage in such community-based way of communication, talk about it, and help them build a safe profile. You can also add the statement, "this account is monitored by (insert name) parent(s) and inappropriate, illegal and offensive posts and comments will be reported and blocked."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Kiana Shaw is the CEO of TheMomSuite.com, a membership community created by a mother for mothers. This month-to-month membership aims to assist emotionally exhausted mothers who feel disconnected from their daughters, open up communication and establish healthy relationships with them.

Kiana is also the founder of Mothers Raising Teen Daughters Facebook community of almost 23,000 members, providing resources to help bridge the communication gap between mothers and their teen daughters.



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