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Additional Information About Talking with Kids:

1. [Netiquette for Kids](#) from the Boston Public Library website.
2. [Communicating with teens](#) from Family Education online magazine.
3. [Parents tongue-tied when it comes to talking to teens](#), is an article by Anastaia Goodstein for the Huffington Post. (published in December, 2006)
4. [How to Talk to Your Kids About Anything](#) includes "10 tips for talking with kids about tough issues" from TalkingWithKids.org.
5. [Setting Limits for Your Children](#) by Tina Sederston, MSW/Therapist at Alegent Health.
6. [Setting Limits is Easy, Enforcing Them is Not](#) contains practical advice from author Elaine Gibson.

Software Tools to Help Parents Set Limits Online:

1. [PC Time Limit](#) (PC's only)
2. [Net Nanny](#) (PC's only)

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Whenever we give parent workshops we are often asked to suggest ways to talk to children about life online. This is especially true of teens. Many parents have conflicting feelings because they see much of their child's online activities as socializing. These activities therefore seem to require a certain sense of privacy. Hence the conflict... Would parents be at the door listening in on a conversation between a group of friends hanging out in their child's room?

The very key difference between real life and life online is that in real life we know who is in our child's bedroom chatting with them. There is no question about authenticity. We may also likely know their friend's parents. Conversations are face-to-face. Even telephone conversations carry a greater feeling of authenticity (as well as voice inflection) than conversations online which contain a layer of anonymity behind the computer screen or even behind the cell phone screen.

Below are several suggestions to parents for talking to their children about their online life. As always, we welcome your comments and questions to our Newsletter.

Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman



Suggestions for Talking to Your Child About Life Online:

In today's ever-growing technological world, it is increasingly important for parents to be guiding, protecting and talking to their children about their experiences online. While there are very good software products available to families

3. [Safe Eyes](#) (PC's and Apple Macs)

4. [Content Barrier](#) (Apple Mac's only)

Life online is NOT the same as real life and parents need to be more vigilant and involved. Also, our experiences (and those of other experts in this field such as Dr. Elizabeth Englander who researches cyberbullying with the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center) show that children and teens very often dissociate rules of courtesy from social interaction online.

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(recommendations found on our website), software is only as effective as the discussions and education parents offer their children. We believe that parents should be having conversations about technology and the online world from a young age. Just as parents have on-going discussions on safety, respect, kindness, alcohol, drugs, sexuality and other developmental issues at different stages of life, all parents should have those conversations around life online. Every conversation should include references to ethics and be value centered.

Talking to kids about bullying and meanness.

Today's older child and teen are commonly exposed to bullying, harassment and mean language online. Emails and instant messages are often hastily written with little regard to hurt feelings or common courtesy. Younger teens (aged 12-14) are especially vulnerable to being bullied or to being mean to others online. While it is clear that children are exposed to meanness, children often refrain from telling parents for fear of losing "computer time". Here are tips to begin conversations...

Encourage your child to explore websites with you. Show your child examples of mean emails and discuss why you find it mean and unacceptable. (See example below.)

When you are angry or upset about behavior online, try beginning your discussions with an "I" statement:

I am uncomfortable with this

I am worried about this this...

I would love to talk about this...

Talk about what is acceptable behavior in your family and link it to technology and communication online.

Tell your child to be same online as they are face to face.

Talking to kids about limits and boundaries for computers and cell phones.

It can be very difficult for parents to tell their children (especially teens) about rules for technology without arguments and anger. Children and teens believe that the internet, texting, and cell phone use is their domain and adults are not welcome. Here are tips to begin conversations about rules and limits.

Start conversations with an explanation of your role as a parent to protect and guide. "It is my job to keep you safe and this (rule) helps me do that."

When children argue and say you are being too tough, acknowledge that that may be true, but for now this is what you need to do. Offer a time in the future, (3 months away for example) when you will re-address the rules. It is especially challenging to impose a rule when one hasn't been in place. It can be helpful to acknowledge that this difficult and that you didn't fully understand the safety implications involved. Again, offer to re-address the rules in the future.

Talking to kids about the dangers and safety issues online.

Without conversations with adults about safety, children are left to their own defenses and values when navigating the internet. This is very difficult for children and young teens. Kids need help in identifying and understanding the dangers online. While kids will resist this type of education, it is important for parents to give it anyway. Here are tips to begin conversations about safety.

Talk to your child about the reality that nothing is private online. Help them understand that even private pages on social networking sites can be seen by people they don't know or expect to see them and copied by friends and strangers alike.

Tell children about the risk of resolving conflicts with friends online. Kids often turn to texting or instant messaging to work out relationship issues. Encourage your children to pick up the phone or talk in person.

Educate your children on their individual responsibility to be respectful and kind online just as they do in person with friends and family. When kids say "but everyone is like that online", respond with the statement that your family values kindness and respect in every situation. You expect them to do the same.

Always encourage your child to tell you immediately when they encounter something online that makes them uncomfortable. Reassure them that you want to help them and talk it through.

Look beyond the anger that kids show when limits are imposed. It is the job of the parent to impose limits and structures for children and the job of the children to push against those boundaries.

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