TALKING TECH
with tweens & teens



Your Resource Pack

MICHELLEMITCHELL.org



Webinar Notes

Technology is a trade. Our job is to recognise what the trade is, audit it and then manage it best we can. Unfortunately, there is not a way to get the good that tech produces without the rest of it. That's our dilemma as trusted adults.

A really confronting reality we must face - It is not IF our kids will be exposed to inappropriate content but WHEN. HOW we respond as a family will make the most difference so preparing for those moments is crucial.



What are tech agreements all about? They simply acknowledge the risk and hold a boundary up to that risk.

Assessing your child's readiness.

Know your kid. Also know that technology interacts with each child's brain differently, and therefore it's okay to give yourself permission to implements different approaches based on this.

Three things to consider:

- Do they have the ability to think complexly, and critically? Kids develop these skills *from* the age of 12. They may take many more years to use these thinking processes independently and therefore may heavily rely on us to support them.
- How is tech impacting their wellbeing – this is a moving target with tweens and teens, and so greatly impacted by their friendship circle. The wellbeing wheel below gives you a visual of the different areas of their lives.
- How well does your kid access adult support when things go wrong? Who are the adults they turn to, and how easily do they do this?



Non-negotiable Boundaries



Don't ever negotiate:

- Who you are in their lives
- Who owns technology in your home
- Their sleep (so essential!)
- The base line things that all kids need to stay healthy

Encourage tweens and teens to use screens with intent. Engaged, deliberate, focussed tech use can be really healthy for our kids' development. Mindless scrolling is where the most damage is done from a mental health perspective and is in direct correlation to the amount of time they spend on it.

Be the captain of the digital plane.
Dr Kristy Goodwin - Digital wellbeing researcher

Modelling

Our job is to model HOW to use screens intentionally. Here is some language that would help us narrate our intent:

- Hey, I am going to see if this is your grandma. If it's not I'm going to put the phone straight down.
- I am going to take this work call which is how we put food on the table. It is going to take me 10 minutes and I will be back to play this game.
- I am going to listen to a podcast and relax for a while. Let's put 20 minutes on the timer.

Alarm Clock Options

A dark, cool room helps kids sleep, so the ticking noise or light from traditional or digital alarm clocks may not be helpful. Google Home devices or an Alexia may be good options.

You aren't actually CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR by putting a boundary up. You are TEACHING them what is right.

Michelle's Blogs about Tech

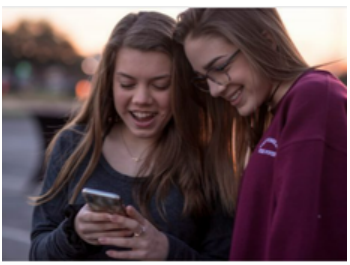
Click on any of the blogs below to read the article.



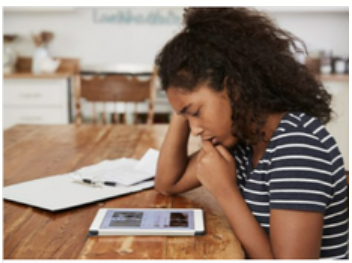
We Weren't Prepared: Year 6 Group Chats



They Sent a Nude: Thoughts to Prevent, Understand and Respond to Sexting



Setting up Social Media Safely: A Crash Course for Parents of Tween Girls



Responding to Pornography Exposure: A Guide for Concerned Parents



Compassionately Assertive: Five ways to approach a tech overloaded teen

If you are a school or a community organisation, there is no need to ask permission to share these blogs, but Michelle would appreciate you referencing her as the author.

Four Big Points

Your tone is everything. Fear or shame normally drive parents' conversations. Try and approach your tween or teen with a heart that is willing to see thing through their eyes. I call it being "compassionately assertive", with the compassionate part leading the way. Remember that we may always disagree about screens – and that's okay.

Tech + your child = an actual relationship. Give tech a name, some personality traits, and a story. It could be a toxic story. It could be an adventurous story. It would be a love / hate story. Discuss: If tech was a real-life person, what boundaries would you need to keep that relationship healthy and safe?

Ultimately, we want to **foster their self-awareness and self-management.** Ask, how do you feel *during* and *after* you are on technology? What is the experience like for you? Is your time on tech doing you any good? Are the benefits outweighing the risks? AND…. what is it replacing? Is this getting in the way of your relationships, sleep, interests, or exercise.Take turns in answering these questions through your eyes.

It's **US as a family against technology.** Tech companies are spending billions of dollars to keep our kids engaged on it, and that is a lot pressure for them to be up against. I like to explain to teenagers the vast number of manipulation strategies that tech companies use and how little they care about the anxiety it causes them! SO, the moment tech is coming between them and us, WE have to adjust how much power it has and where we place ourselves.

Social Media Contract Basics

Keep social media agreements as simple as possible, and then discuss the nitty gritty stuff once you have the basics in place. You might like to consider these two separate conversations:

First conversations:

- WHERE – What are your no-tech zones. For example, dinner table, bedroom, bathroom, when you are out?
- HOW LONG - What is reasonable per day. Then discuss holidays, weekends, and times when you may adjust the amount of time based on their workload or behaviour. Overnight - Where is tech held overnight and is there a cut off time at night?
- WHAT IS IT USED FOR – What types of activity that will be used and not used.
- EXPECTED USE - Talk though details like purchasing stuff, signing up to stuff, downloading stuff, sharing information including photos, etc.
- SAFETY SOFTWARE - If you are going to install any safety software please be upfront about this and discuss it with them.
- EXIT OFF STRATEGY – Will there be a ten minute timer set? Two warnings? Are they allowed to finish the next level of the game or conversation? Screaming at each other is not an exit strategy!

Second conversations:

- Things I am concerned about - pornography, paedophiles, sexting, identity theft, physical safety, drama cycle, mental health, unhelpful messages, etc
- Maintenance – How will you check things are safe and on track? If you plan to check their phone also be upfront with them.
- What to do when they come across unsafe or uncomfortable content – What is the plan? Who can they turn to besides you if they need to?
- When they make a mistake – What is your ‘predictable’ response? What can they expect?
- Do you want to include any technology detox times?

Social Media Contract Templates

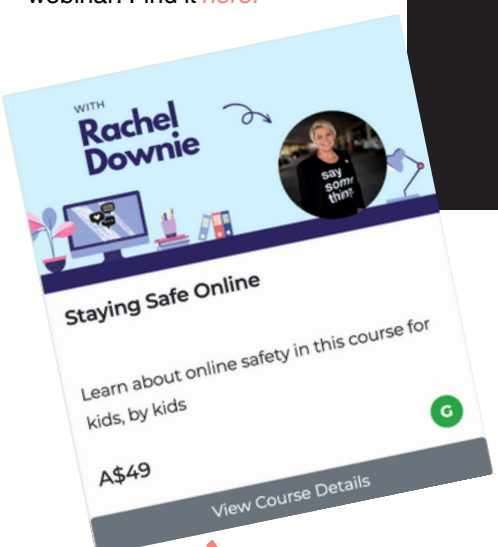
Some great social media contract templates:

https://smartsocial.com/post/social-media-agreement

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/heres-real-proof-that-a-cellphone-contract-works

Dr Kristy Goodwin's "*Your Family's Digital Wellbeing Plan*" which is a pre-recorded webinar which is designed for you to watch with your 8 – 16 year old. It's interactive, so you get to pause the video and basically establish an agreement together during the webinar. Find it *here.*





This is a great short course create by Parent TV and Rachel Downie (founder of Stymie) about staying safe online, for kids by kids. It's awesome. Find it *here.*

What could HEALTHY screen use look & feel like in your home?

How It Could Look

This is an example of a tech agreement with a 13 year old finished. This is extracted from my book *Parenting Teenage Girls in the Age of a New Normal*. I would keep this on the fridge **or at least a condensed version of it,** so it is visible, so it becomes a working guide.

Parent's Agreement

I will set up all technology to ensure your safety and enable homework to be done as a priority. Your entertainment is a secondary issue.

I own and manage all technology. I will install safety software to protect you.

I will model the same tech use I expect from you, and adhere to our tech zones in our house too.

I will conduct random checks of your online activity, and I will schedule these in my diary so I don't forget.

I won't unnecessarily invade your privacy. I will follow your account, but I will never embarrass you online.

There are certain things that I am concerned about. These things include sexual predators, identity theft, bullying, sexting and pornography. I would like to keep talking to you about these things because I know you may come across them.

If you are worried about any of your friends use, know that I am here to support you, and then them.

I hope you will communicate with me if you are unsure about anything online. I will try never to overreact if you tell me about a problem you are having online. I know that you don't have to go looking for trouble online, and that it can find you very easily. I will try to be the parent who listens a lot before responding.

If I need to pause screen time, it will always be for your best interest, and for us to take a break to connect and communicate again without tech being in the middle of us.

Teenager's Agreement

My time on the internet will be between the hours of 8am and 8.30pm except for meal times and family activities when I may be asked to put the phone away.

Tech free zones will be the dinner table, bedroom and bathroom. When we go out we will decide as a family if it is a tech free outing.

I will use the apps and platforms as agreed on with my family, and if this is becoming difficult, I will continue to communicate about it.

All electronic devices including mobile phones will be shut down at 8.30pm at night and put in my parent's bedroom in the in-charge box to recharge.

While online I will behave politely and show respect for others.

I will not share any personal details online including my name, address, phone number, sporting club or school.

I will not enter competitions to win free things nor will I buy things online from companies that ask for private information such as my birth date, address or bank details.

I will never click on links in emails or open attachments from people I don't know.

I will ask before downloading or installing games, music or videos.

I will never meet with anyone I have talked to online without getting my parent's permission.

I will let my parents know if I come across pornography. I will not respond to requests for nudes and will speak to my parents immediately if this happens.

I will be cautious about the photos I post of my friends and myself.

I will talk to my parents (or my aunty, school counsellor, or Amy's mum) if I ever feel uncomfortable or upset by something that happened online. I understand they may contact you if it is serious enough.

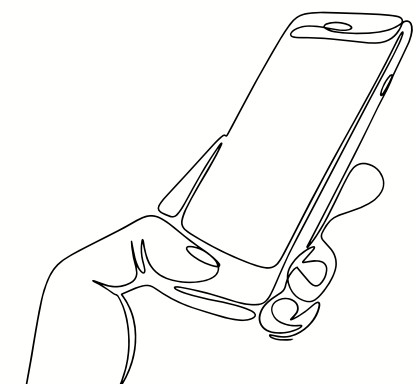
Signed _____ (Parent)
Signed _____ (Teenager)
Date to be reviewed: Every school term

For those with kids under 13

The research is clear, delay as long as possible. Every year we hold off is another year their brain and identity develops in a more natural way.

Start slowly. Text is a great starting point. Even then, give yourself permission to “trial” things. Group chats and can be a nightmare and still needs agreements, supervision and reviews.

Rebecca Sparrow has collated a great list of beginner devices for those who live in Australia. You can access it *here*. **FYI.** You can have smart phones set up without browsers or the ability to install social media apps. If you live outside of Australia you might like to consider the Pinnwheel phone, the Lightphone or the Gabb phone.



Clearly acknowledge the risk and then hold a boundary up to that risk....

For those with kids over 13+

This is an excellent listen by Dr Lisa Damour "Will Social Media Harm My Kid?" about the isolation that can occur when kids aren't on social media, and the real impact of that.

She poses two really good questions:

- What is the LEAST amount of time they need to be on it?
- What is the LEAST amount of access they need? (In other words, can they be on ONE social media platform, where the majority of their friends communicate?)

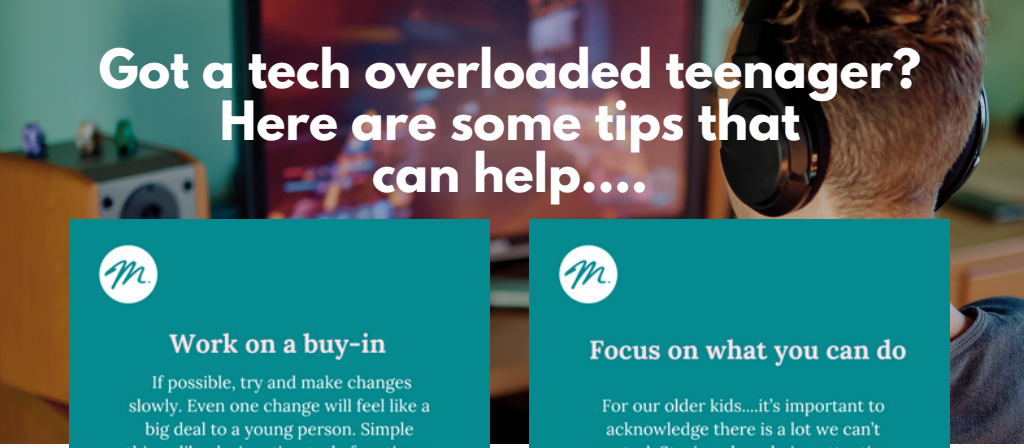
For those with kids over 16+

As kids grow they get more autonomy. Start moving towards reflective conversations - What is working and not working for you? How can I support you in managing technology? When I can see friendship drama or stress is happening online, how can I best support you and what is our plan?

Life360 This is a very popular app amongst young adults who often want to use this with family or friendship groups. Please note, this is not without risks. It has a range of features including location sharing, tracking, checkins, dive and crash detection, emergency response, stolen phone, ID theft protection, roadside assistance and SOS alerts.

Reporting abuse

eSafety helps Australians prevent and deal with harm caused by serious online abuse or illegal and restricted online content. If your teen finds themselves in a situation where someone has shared their private or personal information without their consent, they are able to report it to the eSafety Commission. A nude would be a great example of something suitable to report the sharing of. Here is the direct link *here*.



Got a tech overloaded teenager? Here are some tips that can help....

Work on a buy-in

If possible, try and make changes slowly. Even one change will feel like a big deal to a young person. Simple things like designating tech-free times, or cleaning up newsfeeds can make a big impact but might be best introduced one at a time.

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Focus on what you can do

For our older kids....it's important to acknowledge there is a lot we can't control. Staying close, being attentive and offering a listening ear may be our *most effective* contribution.

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Think "replacement"

If you want your teen to cut back on tech time, ask yourself what are you offering as a replacement? The transition will be easier if we can offer them an engaging replacement, especially if that replacement involves our love, time and attention.

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Think compassionately assertive

When it comes to tech we aim to gain buy-in as much as possible. However, it is okay to make decision to protect the wellbeing of our kids whenever we need to. If you are still paying the bill, you still have a lot more say than you realise.

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Focus on well-being

It is difficult to quantify how much tech time is too much, because each teen's brain interacts differently with it. Some teens are genetically more vulnerable, and others face specific challenges (poor body image, anxiety, bullying) which put them at a higher risk. TALK about tech through a lens of wellbeing - it is the language of this generation.

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Help them take ownership

Reflective questions work best. Try to encourage teens to unfollow those accounts who are not playing a positive role in their lives. It's important that our teens regularly consider who holds their attention and time.

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Documentaries to watch with teens

- Childhood 2.0
- The Social Dilemma
- LIKE
- The Hunting

Starting a conversation about social media....

- What do MOST KIDS your age find most fun about snap chat?
- If you designed the app, what upgrades would you make?
- What features do you think they make the most money on?
- What keeps kids on the app the longest?
- What are the downsides for kids themselves?
- What have you seen go wrong?
- What can be stressful about the app?
- Is there a way to minimise that?
- What do adults not understand about snapchat?





Resources to Help Manage Tech

Lockable Devises

In-charge box - A fabulous Australian owned company. Kate also sells blue light glasses which are awesome.
A plain old toolbox with a key from Bunnings will do the trick temporarily!

Parent Control Apps

There are heaps of parent control apps on the market including those built into your service providers, which are often excellent. Here are a few of which I hear good things about, all which do have slightly different strengths.
Nanny Net
Family Time
Kaspersky
Famisafe
K7
Boomerang Parental Control
iKeyMonitor
Qustodio
Norton Family
OurPact
Google Family Link
Phonesee
Cocosyp
EyeZy
Bark
mSpy

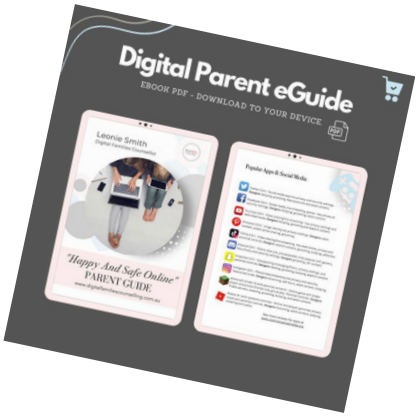


Apps to Help

Away for the Day
One Sec

On on One Support

Sometimes we all need a little help! All of these professionals are people I have worked personally with, and know their tech stuff….





Digital Families Counselling – Leonie Smith
Great to help parents set up technology well



Craig Thomas Counselling – Craig Thomas
Excellent with teenagers and deals with pornography exposure and addictions, as well as all things teenagers growing up!



Space Wellness - Louise Klar
Great with those struggling with their confidence and ability to set personal boundaries.

Understanding Social Media Platforms

Common sense media is a great resource to refer to. Here are some guides worth checking out.

Parent's Ultimate Guide to Instagram

Parent's Ultimate Guide to Snapchat

Parent's Ultimate Guide to Tik Tok

Parent TV is a fabulous subscription site with an array of parenting content, including courses and webinars from cyber experts. It's well worth the investment if you are a school wanting to tap into content for your students or families. Find it *here.*

Cyber Experts to Follow

Susan McClean – Great for Child Protection and Legals
Dr Kristy Goodwin – Digital Wellbeing
Digital Families Counselling - Leonie Smith
Rebecca Downie - Founder of Stymie
Chris McKenea
Common Sense Media
Safe on Social
Protect Young Eyes
eSafety Commissoner

