

Setting Social Media Boundaries for Kids



Unlike when we were kids, our children are growing up in a technological age full of computers, screens, and social media. Nowadays, there are many, many social media sites that your child might be drawn to like TikTok, Instagram, or Twitter. Social media can be a great way to stay connected, but for growing kids who are new to technology, it can be so easy to get too much of a good thing and suffer consequences. Parents can help their kids set social media boundaries so that they can navigate this strange new space.

Downsides to Too Much Social Media Time

Let's set the record straight. Social media has a pretty poor reputation, but what you get out of it is often about how you use it. For kids, social media can be a time to connect with friends, follow and explore interests, and can pose as a creative outlet for kids who like to create videos or post images. That said, it can have serious unintended consequences like cyberbullying on social media. Kids who use social media are also at HIGHER RISK for anxiety, depression, and other psychological disorders. Social media also encourages a ton of screen time, which equates to less time doing other things like exercising or exploring other hobbies. The list of both positive and negative consequences could go on and on, but one thing is certain. Balance is key! That's why it's so important to set up social media boundaries with your child.



It's Necessary to Set Social Media Boundaries

Social media is not going away anytime soon. Let's face it. Kids are not always responsible with social media, but there are plenty of adults that aren't either! It's not always about age. It's about what you know. What you teach your child now will be what they carry into adulthood. If they do not understand now how to set up social media boundaries, they could very well struggle with it in adulthood. Mindless scrolling, consuming inappropriate content, privacy issues, comparison/judging others, and cyberbullying seem to be particular problems that people of all ages face on social media, but with a little knowledge and action, we can do a lot better. Of course, opinions about social media usage vary, but if your child is going to use social media, then this would be an advantageous time to teach your child about setting up social media boundaries for themselves.



Ways to Help Your Child Set Boundaries

When setting social media boundaries, it's helpful to identify the "what, when, where, why, and how." Parents can use these as guidelines to help their children outline the finer details of setting boundaries. Let's break it down.

1. What?

Identify what kind of content can be shared on social media and what kind of content is not acceptable. Content like pictures of pets or travel destinations are example ideas of things that can be shared. Content that can't be shared would be pictures designed to embarrass or hurt others or sharing personal information.

2. When?

Social media time management matters greatly. Identify what times of day it is appropriate to be on social media and for how long. It's easy to scroll through the newsfeed, only to find out that thirty minutes have gone by. Yikes! You could have gone on a grand adventure in that time.

3. Where?

Where is it appropriate to use social media and where is it not? The dinner table, during conversations, and at school would be examples of inappropriate social places and situations to use social media. Setting aside designated spaces can make social media use more manageable. A book nook corner or an office desk or space are examples of appropriate places to use social media.

4. Why?

Do not forget the *why*. It is possibly the most important for setting up social media boundaries. Identify why you want to be on social media and what you want to get out of it. Do you want to share fun pictures that you take? Do you enjoy speaking with friends conveniently through Messenger? Do you want to keep up with old friends? Do you want a good laugh from TikTok videos? Once you figure out the why, it will help you figure out how to best utilize your time.

5. How

How about setting up the account and how you will access the account? Will it be exclusive to computer use only? Will you be able to download the app on a phone or tablet? Once you establish the means, you can also cover any other ground rules you want.

Encouraging Other Activities

For some kiddos, screens take up a tremendous amount of free time. Between social media, video games, and television, screens provide so much entertainment. Plus, tech is being used more and more in school. Parents can help minimize SCREEN TIME by ENCOURAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES and hobbies. Additionally, don't discount your ability to set an example. Your child is watching you and will likely follow suit if you're on your phone frequently. If anyone in the home is hooked on social media already, try setting small goals to help you spend your time in other ways. Life is so much more than what you see on the web. Make sure you're living life to the fullest.



Kids that struggle with mindfulness, self-regulation, or appropriate behavior can benefit from OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY. Contact us today.

Social media can be used as a tool to learn new things! Give us a follow on FACEBOOK or INSTAGRAM.

KW:

Cyberbullying on social media*

Social Media Boundaries*

Social Media Boundaries in Relationships

Social Media Time Management

How to Stop Mindless Scrolling*

I/E:

HIGHER RISK: <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2011/08/social-kids>

MINDLESS SCROLLING:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/highly-functioning-is-highly-dangerous/202009/my-name-is-dana-and-im-addicted-mindless>

SCREEN TIME:

<https://prescottpediatrictherapy.com/tech-for-kids-screen-time-in-the-early-years/>

ENCOURAGING: <https://prescottpediatrictherapy.com/off-couch-encouraging-kids-get-active/>

CONTACT: <https://prescottpediatrictherapy.com/contact/>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/gilraytherapy>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/gilraypediatrictherapy/>

Resources:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/entertainment-technology/digital-life/social-media>