

CORNERSTONE
DAY SCHOOL

Parents Matter

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The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Social Media

Part 4 in a series on Social Media and Your Child

To Monitor or Not to Monitor

Social media and access to the internet has become part of the fabric of our children's lives, and therefore, has added a whole new set of challenges to parenting. While students have 24/7 access to the internet and social media, there are simultaneously a lot of apps and services that allow parents to monitor and limit their children's use. As a parent, it can be difficult to find the balance between this monitoring and maintaining some level of privacy. It is all about balance.

What you can do as a parent:

- **It's all about open communication.** Have a dialogue with your child about safe internet/social media use. Communicate about your expectations and set clear rules. It is appropriate to set limits around the amount of time that a child spends online or to implement a time when the Wi-Fi gets disconnected.
- **To monitor or not to monitor**----again, this is all about balance. There are hundreds of apps out there that provide an opportunity for parents to monitor their child's use, block certain sites and limit use. Monitoring a child's use is part of being a responsible parent, yet too much monitoring may not be helpful. When parents try to monitor everything, teenagers may become more likely to just improve their abilities to get around the monitoring and may actually increase secretiveness. It can be helpful to openly communicate with your child about the reasons that monitoring is beneficial (ensuring that they are safe from predatory behavior and scams, etc) and how they can earn the right to have less monitoring by demonstrating appropriate, safe use.
- **Privacy is a privilege and not a right.** It is a delicate balance, but as a parent, it is important to implement boundaries and limits while simultaneously building in some privacy for your children. Provide an opportunity for your child to demonstrate

an ability to use the internet and social media safely and appropriately. Let them know that if they demonstrate being responsible and using it appropriately, then they can earn some privacy.

- **Responsible parenting.** If you discover that your child is engaging in risky or unsafe internet/social media use, then it is appropriate to inform your child that their behavior is not appropriate and therefore, they have forfeited the right to their privacy for a specific amount of time. This is all about responsible parenting and teaches your child that there are consequences for their behavior, while simultaneously providing an opportunity for the child to earn the privilege back.
- **Allow for some privacy.** Part of the developmental task of adolescence is to gain some sense of independence. This provides an opportunity for your children to feel a sense of competence and self-esteem. As a parent, you may experience some anxiety about allowing the privacy, but you still have the control to implement rules and to monitor use.
- **Find out about the good, not just the bad.** Focusing on strengths and positives is conducive to having a healthier, happier relationship with your child. Acknowledge when you see them refrain from engaging in posting something negative when their peers are engaging in negative posts.
- **Keep the communication lines open.** As parents, create an environment in which your children can talk with you candidly about what is going on in their lives, even their virtual lives.



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Parents Matter is published regularly throughout the school year as a service to the parents of students enrolled at Cornerstone Day School. Each issue highlights an important topic for parents with practical suggestions for helping their child continue to grow and overcome their emotional challenges.