


How to Talk to Parents about Social Media

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What is Social Media?

-  Social media are computer-mediated technologies that allow the creating and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks



Case #1

- 🌐 During a well-child visit for 9-year-old Nicky, he asks, “I want a YouTube account but mom says to ask you. I want to show people my moves on Minecraft. Can you tell my mom that it’s cool?”
- 🌐 How do you respond?

Type #1

- Public
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Twitter
 - YouTube
- By default, anything anyone posts is public
- Option to make things private
- Able to be monitored by parents




Type #2

- 🌐 “Private” apps
 - 🌐 Snapchat
 - 🌐 Telegram
- 🌐 Posts vanish after being viewed
- 🌐 Pro—child can share things without them ending up on search engines or seen by unscrupulous people
- 🌐 Con—someone can easily take screenshot and post it

Type #3

- 🌐 “Anonymous” apps
 - 🌐 Secret
 - 🌐 YikYak
- 🌐 Completely anonymous posts—no way to track back to person who posted
- 🌐 Cyberbullies can thrive without repercussions

Benefits of Social Media for Children

-  Learn how to communicate in today's connected world
-  Find and share news and information
-  Be creative and share things they've made

Challenges of Social Media for Children

- 🌐 Parents should be vigilant in monitoring child's posts
- 🌐 Teachable moments related to cyberbullying
- 🌐 Children have to learn that what they post online can hurt others
- 🌐 Digital empathy is much harder to teach than empathy in real life

Passwords

- 🌐 Parents should have passwords to their children's accounts
 - 🌐 Just like you have the right to look under the mattress, you should be able to look at their inbox
 - 🌐 Don't necessarily have to hover but you should have the ability in case something happens

Disable Comments

- If children post their own work, disable comments
 - They might be disappointed not to be able to get praises
 - But they also won't get mean comments

Case #2

- 🌐 You are at a family dinner when your 12-year-old bursts out, “I really hate it when you post pictures of me without asking.” Taken aback, you realize that you have posted pictures of her since she was a baby.
- 🌐 Was that wrong?

Disconnect

- 🌐 Recent study:
 - 🌐 Children age 10-17 were “really concerned” that their parents posted about them online
 - 🌐 Parents much less worried
- 🌐 Children thought 3x more than parents that there should be some rules about what parents could post about their children online

Disconnect

- 🌐 What parents consider “cute” could be perceived as “embarrassing” for child
 - 🌐 Pictures while sleeping
 - 🌐 Complaints of behavior
- 🌐 Schools are being careful not to identify students by name in social media (i.e., newsletters, etc.)

Case #3

- 🌐 Jack (age 12 years) and Jill (age 13 years) are brought in by mom for well-child visits. While you get the history from mom, both are on their smartphones. You realize that they're texting each other and giggling over something.
- 🌐 What do you say (if anything)?

Texting

- 🌐 50% of American teenagers send over 50 texts/day
- 🌐 One-third send more than 100 texts/day
- 🌐 Two-thirds say that they would be more likely to text a friend rather than email or call
 - 🌐 54% text their friends daily, but
 - 🌐 33% talk face-to-face to their friends daily
- 🌐 Americans between 8 and 18 years spend on average 7.5 hours of screen time a day

Friendship Changes

- 🌐 Research question:
 - 🌐 Does social media make children more connected and supportive of their friends? Or
 - 🌐 Is quality of friendships diminished because of lack of regular face-to-face time
- 🌐 Findings: too early to tell
 - 🌐 Elements of both observed in preliminary studies
 - 🌐 Could be more helpful for shy children

Case #4

- 🌐 Mom brings in 14-year-old Cameron for a well-child visit. She expressed that she is concerned that Cameron is spending too much time on his phone and that his self-esteem has lowered tremendously over the first half of the school year.

Social Media and Teens

- 🌐 Indirect (asynchronous) communications
- 🌐 Teens are lacking crucial social skills
- 🌐 Believe that calling is more “intense” than social media
- 🌐 Higher rates of anxiety and lower self-esteem

Mental Health Issues

- 🌐 Children believe they don't deserve friends
- 🌐 Girls compare themselves to other girls
- 🌐 “likes” = popularity
- 🌐 Boys compete for attention
- 🌐 Children “gang up” against each other

Cyberbullying


- Cyber or electronic bullying is a form of bullying
- There are differences between cyberbullying and other “traditional” forms of bullying:
 - Difficulty of determining what constitutes *repetition* and *power imbalance* online
 - Frequency
 - Disinhibition
 - Accessibility

Summary

- 🌐 Social media is here to stay
- 🌐 Parents have to learn new strategies to teach their children how to deal with it
- 🌐 Pediatricians can support parents in teaching their children, but we have to understand this stuff first!

Discussion Questions

Scenario #1

-  Vinny is an 9 year old boy in 4th grade who comes to you for a well-child visit. Mom says that some of his friends have started getting cell phones for their birthdays and she asks you what is the youngest age you would recommend for a child to have a cell phone.

Scenario #2

- 🌐 Nina is a 10-year-old girl who comes in for a well-child visit. She says she wants to have her own Instagram account like her 13-year-old sister. Mom asks what you think.

Scenario #3

- 🌐 11 year old Johnny is brought to you after his mother became concerned that he is increasingly withdrawn and has been acting out more. After some careful probing, you find out that he is being cyberbullied online by other kids in his school who thinks he's a wimp and acts like a girl. Mom asks you what she should do.