

Technology and Children

"We have anecdotal evidence from talking to parents. Every single parent I have spoken to so far is concerned. I have yet to find a parent who says, 'I am really pleased that my kid is spending so much time in front of the computer.' We need to take control of our own lives and society. If we don't, who else will?"

Baroness Susan Greenfield (2010)

Find ways to talk about technology.

- 🔗 Talk about positive ways to get the best out of technology... fight a positive battle not a negative one.
- 🔗 Share your teenager's fascination in cyber technology, but model the sincerity, detachment and willpower that he or she will need. Share your interest and on that basis talk.
- 🔗 Talk to children about the value of time and that technology can save time. But excessive time-wasting through technology is an abuse of a gift.
- 🔗 Talk deeply about the need for sincerity in life, if there is any example of deception, visits to inappropriate sites, etc.
- 🔗 Talk about the differences between innocuous content, less appropriate content, and offensive material that must be shunned.
- 🔗 Help a young person realize that the most important value in life is to have a loving respect for all others. Technology can never be used to undermine this.

The challenge... be closer to your kids than the competition.

- 🔗 Parents can be in the dark about what their children are doing, how they are spending their time, who is with them in the chatroom, what influences are coming into their lives. If they do not know these deeply influential things in the lives of their children, parents are not in the game.
- 🔗 Without parental advice, some children lack the experience to use technologies without entrenching bad habits.
 - Habits of insincerity and deception.
 - Habits of idle curiosity ... mindless mouseclicking.
 - Addictions to late night gaming, pornography, or hypercritical chatter.
 - Habits of nastiness to others. There is widespread concern in society about abuse of technology by teenagers, especially cyber bullying, hate websites, anonymous harassment, etc.
- 🔗 The highly addictive or obsessive take up of new technologies is by its repetitive nature very habit forming. We are not seeing the full impact of this yet.

Are you in the conversation? Do you know who and what are in your teenager's life? A parent cannot force his or her way into a fifteen year old's world... it is a matter of building habitual, open, trusting communication based on affection.

Young people need clear guidance from their parents. To be able to think for themselves, young people need to have a very clear sense of what is right and what is wrong.

- 📡 Establish house rules. We do not use mobiles in the home... if called we offer to ring back on the landline. Mobiles don't interrupt meals and face to face conversations. We plan our TV viewing. We don't watch TV alone late at night.
- 📡 User pays is a good mobile telephone policy.
- 📡 Unmask the marketing. Technology marketing pressures children to be champion consumers, placing far too much emphasis on conformity to peer behaviors and expectations. Ultimately it is all too easy to create needs for oneself. Just because one can afford something doesn't mean it is really needed. Do we teach children to identify the real needs in their lives?
- 📡 Give clear internet criteria. Access the net in open family areas. Do you know what sites your son or daughter is visiting? It is not a question of not trusting, rather of realizing that children can find themselves under pressure they may not be able to cope with. Parents have a duty not to allow damaging inputs into the mind of an impressionable young person.
- 📡 Teach what is unethical about hacking and breaching copyright.
- 📡 Address the inappropriateness of the smutty banter on some FM stations, and the raunchy lyrics of some songs. Explain how these attitudes and values are damaging.
- 📡 Teach clear chatroom criteria. Only closed groups of friends, no excessive time wasting (be specific), always use your own identity, no negative comments about third parties, post no messages that you would not be happy to see published in tomorrow's newspaper.
- 📡 Chatroom and internet technology lends itself to anonymity and false identities. It is a world with the illusion that one need not be responsible for one's own actions, or that words are not something that we have to be too concerned about. Teach children to take personal responsibility for thoughts, words and actions.
- 📡 Help your son or daughter recognize that sincerity and willpower are success factors for life and relationships, and that willpower is developed in many associated areas... getting up on time, not complaining, studying hard, etc.



Parents guard against technology hazards: stay connected