

PARENT Talk



Adolescents and Social Media

We are surrounded by apps and websites that connect us to people worldwide. Social media allows us to post content, communicate, and share information. There are benefits to social media, such as staying in contact with distant family or finding friends with common interests. However, there are concerns about safety, mental health, and physical health when it comes to teenagers and social media.

Is it that popular?

A recent Pew Research Center study on American teenagers found that*

- 46% of teenagers claimed to use the internet “almost constantly.”
- 95% have access to a smartphone, and 90% have access to a desktop or laptop.
- 9 out of 10 teens say they use YouTube, making it the most used online platform in this survey.
- 63% of teens use TikTok, 60% use Snapchat, and 59% use Instagram.

Concerns

There are some basic concerns when it comes to social media, such as distraction from homework, disruption of sleep, and online predators. As social media has grown, there is now a concern about it affecting an individual's mental health. The U.S. Surgeon General states that there is not yet enough research to state solid connections. However, many believe that social media use can increase the risk of anxiety and depression. This is a concern since the brain is still developing during the teenage years.

Benefits

There are benefits to social media. For people in a minority group, such as the LGBTQ+ community, it can serve as a safe haven with like-minded people. Social media can let teenagers express themselves, connect with others, learn coping skills, or provide social support they do not have offline.

Safety Tips

1. Determine at what age your child will be allowed to access social media. Not all children mature at the same rate.
2. Check your child's privacy settings on all your accounts and make sure only people that you approve of can view their content.
3. Encourage them not to post their address, school, or other identifying information.
4. Encourage your children to report any inappropriate or harmful content to you.
5. Be cautious of their friend requests, and only accept people they know in real life.

Talking to Your Kids about Social Media

1. Remind your kids that the internet is permanent. What they post can never be permanently deleted; it will exist forever.
2. Keep communication open with your child. They might make mistakes, and that's okay.
3. Be mindful of your approach. Consider the surroundings and the mood that you bring to the conversation.
4. Follow your own rules. Setting a good example for your child(ren) is important.

If You Need Help

If you have questions about social media, reach out to a trusted adult. This could be a parent, teacher, coach, counselor, etc.

*Anderson, M. (2023, December 11). *Teens, social media, and technology 2023*. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/12/11/teens-social-media-and-technology-2023/>

GHS is here to help. For questions about services, call us at 810-257-3705.

For mental health emergencies, call us at 810-257-3740, 24 hours a day. TTY users call 810-232-6310.

