

# Online Safety for Children & Teens



**We can maximize the benefits and minimize the harms of social media to create safer, healthier online environments.**

## What parents and caregivers can do

### ✓ Write a family media plan

Agreed-upon expectations establish healthy technology boundaries – including social media use. A family media plan promotes open discussion about use and includes topics such as balancing screen time, content boundaries, being kind online, and not disclosing personal information.

### ✓ Create tech-free zones

Use of electronics at night/in bedrooms interferes with sleep and lacks supervision, so consider restricting the use of phones, tablets, and computers through the night. Consider keeping family mealtimes and in-person gatherings device-free to build social bonds and engage in conversation. Help your child develop social skills and nurture their in-person relationships.

### ✓ Report cyberbullying and online abuse or exploitation

Talk to your child about the importance of reporting abuse or inappropriate content, and provide support, without judgment, if he or she tells or shows you that they are being harassed through email, text message, online games, or social media, or have been contacted by someone seeking private images or asking them to perform intimate or sexual acts. You or your child can report cyberbullying to the school, the online platform, and/or local law enforcement.

### ✓ Model responsible behavior

As children often learn behaviors and habits from what they see around them, try to model the behavior you want to see. Parents can set a good example of what responsible and healthy social media use looks like by limiting their own use, being mindful of social media habits (including when and how parents share information or content about their child), and modeling positive behavior on your social media accounts.

### ✓ Work with other parents to help establish shared norms

Support practices, programs, and policies around healthy social media use. Such norms and practices among parents facilitate collective action and make it easier to set and implement boundaries on social media use for children.

### ✓ Teach kids about technology

Help children learn to be good online participants. Discuss the benefits and risks of social media and the importance of respecting privacy. Have conversations with them about who they are connecting with, their privacy settings, their online experiences, how they are spending their time online, and how to seek help should they need it.



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## What young people can do

### ✓ Reach out for help

If you or someone you know is being negatively affected by social media, reach out to a trusted friend or adult for help. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, contact the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by calling or texting 988 for immediate help.

### ✓ Create boundaries to balance online and offline activities

Limit the use of phones, tablets, and computers through the night to enable sufficient and quality sleep. Keep mealtimes and in-person gatherings device-free to help build social bonds and engage in conversations with others. Nurture your in-person relationships by connecting with others and making unplugged interactions a daily priority.

### ✓ Develop protective strategies and healthy practices

These could include tracking the amount of time you spend online, blocking unwanted contacts and content, using privacy and safety settings, learning digital media literacy skills to tell the difference between fact and misinformation, and ensuring you are connecting with peers in-person.

### ✓ Be careful what you share

Personal information about you has value. Be selective with what you post and share online and with whom, as nothing you share is guaranteed to stay private. If you aren't sure if you should post something, it's probably best that you don't. Talk to a family member or trusted adult when you have doubts or questions.

### ✓ Protect yourself and others

Harassment that happens by email, text messaging, direct messaging, online games, or on social media is harmful and can be cyberbullying. If you or someone you know is the victim of cyberbullying or other forms of online harassment and abuse:

» **Don't keep online harassment or abuse a secret.** Reach out to a person you trust, such as a friend, family member, counselor, or teacher, who can give you the help you deserve.

» **Don't take part in online harassment or abuse.** Avoid forwarding or sharing messages or images and tell others to stop when you see it. Another tool is to report offensive content to the site or network where you saw it.

# BE SMART



# BE SAFE



MONOMOY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

