

Parenting and Social Media

😊 *“Love and Logic” to the Rescue* 😊

Though it adds an extra layer to your parenting duties, it's a very smart idea to get a good sense of your kid's online life. Ask kids to give you a “tour” of their social-media world. As they're showing you around, you might hear some of the positive stuff you weren't expecting, as well as some of the problem areas your kid could use help with. Also, add **social media** to the “wellness checks” that you already do. For example, when you ask your kids how they slept and what they ate, ask them how they're feeling about **social media**. Is it mostly positive, helpful, and supportive, or do they want to step back but aren't sure how? Here are some more tips for keeping **social media** a positive for kids:

Encourage self-care. Seeing photos of a trip to the beach your friends didn't invite you to can really sting. If your kid is super bummed or tired of digital drama, suggest they take a break from social media for a while. In fact, if they post a status update that they're taking a break, their friends might be very accepting because they've had similar feelings.

Help kids put social media in perspective. People post stuff that makes their lives look perfect -- not the homework struggles, or the argument they recently had with their parent, or the hours it took to look as good as possible for the camera. Remind kids that social media leaves the messy stuff out -- and that everyone has ups and downs.

Encourage offline activities. In a world where kids could spend their days lying around looking at Instagram, it's doubly important for them to feel as though they're cultivating their inner lives. Prompt them to balance social media with soul-nourishing activities such as hobbies, exercise, reading, and helping others. It's also crucial that our kids learn how to self-reflect and “just be.”

Talk about their feelings. Ask them what it feels like to look at other kids' feeds. Is there a tipping point from when they feel OK-- to when they start to feel bad about their own lives? Encourage them to stop- before that feeling sets in- and do something good for themselves instead.

Let your kids know you're there for them. You may not understand everything about your kid's online social life. But recognizing that this is important to them makes your kid feel valued -- and more likely to come to you when they encounter problems.

Get help. If you see any cause for concern, including mood swings that seem to result from social media, not taking pleasure in activities s/he used to enjoy, and having accompanying symptoms- such as headaches and stomachaches, consider a visit to your kid's pediatrician for a professional opinion.

Steve Rubin (“Mr. Steve”)
Eastside School Counselor

sarubin@sunprairieschools.org Learn More @ www.loveandlogic.com and @ www.childmind.org

