iKEEPSAFE

Parent Tips
for Encouraging Healthy Content Choices

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Create a healthy content environment in your home.

The most important tip for fostering healthy relationships with technology in the household is to **establish yourself as a trusted and supportive listener**. We are all able to help youth develop the resilience and skills to navigate the digital environment successfully, despite the social, psychological, and physiological challenges brought up by the violent and sexualized content freely accessible and highly visible to youth online.

Top 10 tips for encouraging healthy content choices

1. Be a trusted and supportive listener.
2. Implement and continuously reinforce the ACT acronym (Alert, Close, Tell) as a family rule.
3. When you learn a child is interacting with harmful content, take time to collect yourself and avoid reacting negatively or with heightened emotion.
4. Reaffirm your child's decision to tell you when they see unhealthy content: "Good job telling me. I know this takes courage and you have made a wise choice. Please tell me if something like this happens again."
5. Avoid punitive punishments that may discourage youth from coming to you for help or to report a traumatic experience.
6. Monitor young children's digital activity and slowly increase online autonomy with age.
7. Start early with education about the sexualized and violent digital content they will stumble upon.
8. Prepare youth for seeing sexualized content online by educating them about sexual health from an early age.
9. Teach youth that nothing online is private. Allow use of digital devices only in public, family spaces – not private bedrooms.
10. Ask your child about their friends' exposure to sexualized and violent content. Doing so will demonstrate that you can talk about these topics calmly, and will open the door for future discussions.

Discuss openly with your children that others may encourage secrecy or say not to tell a parent or adult about sharing or using unhealthy content. Talk to your child about how pornography can cause them to feel curious. They might also feel confused, embarrassed, or troubled. Here are some ways to start a conversation with your child:

- Porn can make you have many different feelings, good and bad, and you may want to keep looking for more. That is called attraction. People are meant to feel attraction to others— especially as they get older. But with porn, you feel attracted to pictures without any relationship or person. That makes you not pay attention to the people around you or not enjoy them as much.
- There is a better choice. When you see porn and if you feel like hiding it, remember: TELL. That will help protect you.

Please watch the *Healthy Content Choices Leader Video*, available at iKeepSafe.org/Scouting, for detailed background and tips.

Why should parents encourage healthy content choices?

The media environment today is significantly different than it was 30, and even 10, years ago. At some point, anyone who uses technology will come across unhealthy content. A great deal of online content is violent and sexualized – and it is important to know that the pornography freely available today is not like what used to be in magazines. Internet users do not have to search long to find what can be shocking sexual violence.

The Three As of Internet Porn:
    Available
    Affordable
    Anonymous

Preparing youth for healthy social and sexual relationships, regardless of when or with whom those relationships begin for them, means developing the skills and habits with technology that will support their healthy development.

Solidifying your Scout's Cyber Chip lessons

Parents can help reinforce the lessons their Scouts learned about making healthy content choices by reading *Faux Paw and a Time to ACT* together with your Scout. This is a great time to have a conversation about healthy content choices.

Work together to come up with a list of rules for internet and media use. Where possible use your child's own words to frame the rules in positive and proactive ways. This list may provide a guide to support this activity:

- I use devices and go online only in family areas.
- I ACT when I see something online that makes me feel uncomfortable or embarrassed.
- I never post photos of myself online, and I tell a parent if anyone asks for photos of me.
- I know that I will never be punished for telling my parents about uncomfortable experiences with unhealthy content.