

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.

WHY SHOULD PARENTS ENCOURAGE HEALTHY CONTENT CHOICES?

The media environment today is significantly different than it was thirty, and even ten, 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 the highly regulated content that used to be in magazines. The most popular kinds of internet porn are verbally and physically aggressive towards women, and 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. It is important to note that these skills are important for boys and girls alike; girls are almost as likely to be using porn as boys.

SOLIDIFYING YOUR SCOUT'S CYBER CHIP LESSONS

Parents can help reinforce the lessons their Scouts learned about making healthy content choices by discussing, creating, and keeping household expectations regarding healthy content choices. Reviewing the Healthy Content Leader Video and Public Health Research Summary prepares you to enter conversations about violent and sexualized digital content with helpful background information and strategies. This is key in order to overcome any discomfort yourself, and to minimize the embarrassment and shame felt by your children.

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 know that I will never be punished for talking to my parents about uncomfortable experiences with unhealthy content or sexual situations.
- I use devices and go online only in family areas – not in bathrooms or bedrooms.
- I ACT when I see pornographic and violent content online.
- I never post nude photos of myself online or send them to friends, and I tell a parent if anyone asks for nude photos of me.

Becoming comfortable educating youth about the content they will see online and encouraging healthy content choices as they use technology is a vital responsibility for parents in the digital culture. Emphasize the importance of this skill as it relates to the success of their current and future relationships, including romantic relationships.