The Dangers of Application Usage, the Internet, and Social Media

Series #3

Communicating with Youth About Social Media

This is the last series for "The Dangers of Application Usage, the Internet, and Social Media." Our last series will provide you with tips on how to communicate with your youth about the dangers of social media and the internet.

There are so many things at youth's fingertips! You might be asking yourself what you can do as a parent to protect your child. Youth crave social interaction more than ever right now. I recommend insisting on transparency with your kids. Find out what apps they have on their phone. Some phones request a fingerprint to get into a phone. Some phones allow parents to give permission when their child wants to download an app. This feature is called parental control. Having a conversation with your child is the first step, then they are more likely to allow you to have safeguards because you have talked about it with them. This could be the first step for setting boundaries with your child's phone.

Another tip is to try talking about what is okay and what is not okay to have on your child's phone. Explain that there are just some things that they do not need to see out there. Having an open and honest conversation allows them to know you are looking out for them and have their best interests in mind.

Is your child not able to stay off apps that are not suited for them? Try taking their phones away. This is harsh, but a necessary consequence. As a parent, you need to be aware of what apps your kids look at, and use, and also educate yourself on what the apps are so you are in the know.

Choosing Your Approach

Parental control apps like Barb help monitor content across several platforms, manage screen time, filter inappropriate websites and set location alerts.

There are also a number of child-friendly smart phones, like the "Gabb Phone Z2" or "Pinwheel" available on the market with no app store access at all. Others provide kid-friendly apps that only parents can add to the device. Do your research, as these constantly are changing and evolving!

Other Useful Information

Apps can be renamed. If your kid knows they've downloaded an inappropriate app, they might try to hide it by renaming it and changing the icon through the Shortcuts app on an iPhone. Once that's done, they can remove the original icon from the home screen. The same thing can be done on an Android phone. Apps can also be hidden. Apps don't have to show up on the home screen. Your kid can cover their tracks by setting up a harmless-looking shortcut, using the App Library, or re-downloading the app on the App Store. Now that you know the workarounds, here's how to spot apps your kid has tried to hide: Open every app. You'll know right away if your child has hidden an app behind a shortcut. Rely on the App Library. On iOS 14 or later, swipe all the way to the right until you see the search bar and a series of folders appear on the screen. In the search bar, type the original name of the app. It'll show up here even if it's no longer on the home screen. Look up apps in the App Store. Anything your kid has previously downloaded will show a cloud symbol instead of the word "GET."