



JULY 1, 2025

KNOW! TO DISCUSS YOUTH SAFETY ONLINE

**WORRIED ABOUT
YOUR CHILD ONLINE
THIS SUMMER?
YOU'RE NOT ALONE.**

With more free time in summer, kids often spend extra hours on their phones, raising concerns about cyberbullying, screen overuse, and inappropriate content. While social media has risks, it also lets youth explore interests, connect, and express themselves.^{2,3}

Technology changes fast, but you have an expert in how youth use social media – your child.

Most teens recognize the pros and cons of social media, and many welcome breaks from their phones.⁴

This summer, start open and supportive conversations about social media, mental health, and setting healthy boundaries together.

KNOW! HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

There's no perfect script, what matters is starting the conversation. Choose a calm moment, stay curious, and keep it a dialogue, not a lecture. These open-ended questions can help spark meaningful conversations with young people.

Start with your own habits. Try asking:

- "How do you feel when I post a photo of you online?"
- "Have you ever felt like I was distracted by my phone during our conversations?"
- "Sometimes I feel like I'm on my phone too much. Do you ever feel that way too?"

Break the ice with real-life moments. Try:

- "Have you ever had a really good or really bad experience on social media?"
- "I saw a trend online yesterday. Can you explain it to me?"
- "Have you ever seen something online that made you uncomfortable or confused?"

Talk about privacy and safety awareness. Ask:

- "What do you know about keeping your data safe online?"
- "Have you ever been contacted by someone you didn't know online? What did you do?"
- "What do you do when you see upsetting or hateful content online?"

Explore mood and mental health. Try:

- "How does social media make you feel most of the time?"
- "Does social media ever affect your mood or mental health?"
- "Have you ever posted something you later regretted? How would you do it differently next time?"

Encourage thoughtfulness online. Ask:

- "How should behave online? Should it be different than in-person?"
- "If you could change one thing about social media, what would it be?"
- "How do you decide what to trust online?"

Celebrate the positives. Try asking:

- "What are your favorite things to do online?"
- "What's the best part of social media? What's the worst?"
- "Who are your favorite creators or communities online?"

KNOW! HOW TO RESPOND

"You're always on your phone, too. Why shouldn't I be on mine?"

Try: "That's fair, I'm on my phone a lot. I've noticed it doesn't always feel good. How about we set a goal together to have more tech-free time?"

Tip: Create a shared media plan together. Check out the AAP's family media plan [here](#) or start small with screen-free dinners or weekend walks.

"All my friends are on social media. If I'm not, I'll be left out."

Try: "I get that. It's a big part of staying connected. Tell me more about how you and your friends use it. What parts of it feel most important?"

Tip: Validate their social needs and collaborate on boundaries that work for both you

"I know more about social media than you do. Why should I listen to your advice?"

Try: "You're right – you've grown up with social media in a way I didn't. I'd love for you to teach me more about how you use it. I also have life experience that might help if things get complicated."

Tip: Let them teach you something new about social media regularly, introduce you to a new creator, trend, or editing tool.

"I want to spend less time on my phone, but it's really hard to stop."

Try: "I understand. It's designed to keep us hooked. I'm proud of you for noticing. What might help? Maybe we can try something together."

Tip: Set small, shared goals, like a 30-minute phone break after school.

"Social media isn't as bad as you think. Why do you only focus on the negative?"

Try: "You're right, it's not all bad. I worry because I care, but I'd like to learn what enjoy. Show me something cool you've seen recently."

Tip: Celebrate positive online experiences. Make it a tradition to share favorite online finds each week.

"They're already collecting my data, so what's the point of trying to stop it?"

Try: "I hear you. It can feel overwhelming, but small steps still help. Let's check your privacy settings and talk about ways to stay in control."

Tip: Take simple steps to boost privacy. Check [out these privacy tips](#).

RESOURCES

- [Family Media Plan | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [7 Tips for Protecting Your Privacy Online | Future of Privacy Forum](#)
- [Online Safety Tips for Teens | North Carolina Department of Information Technology](#)
- [Talking to Your Kids About Social Media Safety | Community Choice PEDI](#)

*Numbered sources are hyperlinked

Scan for additional
Know! Prevention
Tips for Everyone:

