



separation anxiety

Untethering your teen from social overload

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TEENS BY NATURE ARE “ADDICTED” to their social networks. But, has your teen’s social media use crossed the line from normal to atypical? Addiction is usually triggered by emotional stress, says Amanda Deverich, LMFT, Williamsburg Counseling.

“It is tough to determine if your child is soothing with social media due to emotional stress or if the use is normal adolescent identity formation seeking connection and affirmation from peers,” Deverich says. “Nonetheless,

parents should be on the lookout for excessive use, devotion and response to social media.”

Social media use is a problem if it interferes in other areas of your child’s life, such as if she:

- Isn’t completing homework, chores or other responsibilities.
- Isn’t getting enough sleep.
- Experiences excessive social drama, including bullying and social isolation.

Take these steps to prevent social media from dominating your child’s life.

facebook

has 1.5 billion users

Set boundaries

First, explain that social media use is a privilege and will be rescinded if abused. Decide ahead of time when and where your child can log in to her accounts. Consider creating “no-tech zones” in your home, like around the dinner table or at bedtime.

“Parents can readily leverage social media time for chore completion, dinner participation and happy attitudes,” Deverich says. “An abuse of social media privilege should result in strict monitoring with a gradual release of freedom followed by random checking.”

To further control social media use, set passcodes on your computer that require you to sign your kids on to their accounts.

Educate yourself

Even if you don’t plan to be an active participant on social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter, sign up for an account to help yourself learn the ins and outs of how the sites work.

Role model healthy online behavior

Show your child your accounts and talk about what kind of information you feel is appropriate to share and how often you post and check in. Also, keep in mind that many social media platforms require that users are at least 13 years old, in accordance with the “Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act.” Don’t allow your child to lie about his age.

“Doing so will make it much more difficult to get them to take you seriously later when you talk with them about good practices for crafting their digital identity,” says social media researcher Anand Rao, Ph.D., associate professor of communication, University of Mary Washington.

2.7 billion

internet users worldwide

8.3 hours

spent on facebook per month

Monitor social media use

Collect your kids' passwords. Since they can set comments and photos to post without you seeing them, randomly log into their accounts to check on their activity.

"Don't worry about being a stalker," Deverich says. "Parents are not stalkers. They are parents!"

Encourage offline interaction

Make sure your teen is involved in extracurricular activities that create opportunities for face-to-face interactions. Nurture a wide range of communication practices beyond social media, such as making phone calls to friends or writing letters to relatives.

"Social media is a wonderful complement to their offline lives, but only if they work to also maintain those offline connections," Rao says. "Stay involved, talk with your teens and help them build life skills that will benefit them for years to come." 📱

internet quick facts

snapchat
has 4.6 million users
+
350,000,000
photos are shared daily

instagram
has 150 million users
+
55,000,000
photos uploaded daily

twitter
has over 500 million users
+
9,100
tweets every second

Other apps to check out include Whisper, Tinder and textPlus. Popular teen apps change quickly. Watch, listen and learn. Talk to your kids about using social media responsibly and with integrity. Use news stories and TV shows as opportunities to start conversations about online behavior.

popular teen apps



1/ snapchat

Photo-sharing app that vanishes from the friend's screen after one to 10 seconds depending on the amount of time the sender sets. Exercise caution as recipients can easily take a screenshot of a photo and circulate at will.



2/ instagram

Photo and video sharing app that allows users to apply filters to photos and share through social networks. Change default settings to private and disable geo-location which make it easy for predators to map where your child typically hangs out.



3/ kik

A messenger app where users text and share photos with each other one-on-one or in a group. Set privacy settings and block unknown individuals. Avoid posting usernames on public social networks that can attract unwanted attention from child predators, Internet trolls and cyberbullies.



4/ twitter

Registered users post up to 140-character text messages called tweets. Set up privacy options in account settings to approve or deny follower requests.



5/ ask.fm

Anonymous ask and answer platform. The site is ripe for abuse as users can anonymously harass, bully or post sexually explicit questions on other user's profiles. 📱

