LET'S TALK ABOUT DIGITAL SAFETY SKILLS

Digital devices, apps, and games are constantly changing. Parents being present, supportive, and practicing digital safety skills together with the child is even more important than guidelines for a specific application. Solely restricting or forbidding access to digital devices or platforms does not protect the child in digital environments. Regular discussions held in good faith are more constructive. Parents should start to discuss the different types of content and situations found in digital environments together with the child before the child begins to use digital devices independently.

Children are often very skilled at using digital devices - sometimes even better than adults! However, their social cognitive skills are only just developing, so the presence, guidance, and support from adults through emotionally and socially challenging situations online are essential for the child's wellbeing and development.

Try starting a discussion about digital safety skills with the help of the following questions:

1 What do you like to do in digital environments? What do you find most fun? Would you like to show me?

2 Which do you think are the most important digital safety skills? What advice would you give your friend or sibling regarding digital safety skills? Do you know who to go to for help when needed?

3 Do you know how to take a screenshot on your device? Let's practice together!

Show interest in the child's pleasant activities in digital environments! Ordinary, regular discussions about digital environments create a strong foundation for future, possibly challenging, discussions. Discussions about digital safety skills should always start with nice "green light" content and situations which the child finds pleasant. That way, it will be easier for the child to tell adults about any "yellow" or "red" content or situations which they encounter. You can find Protect Children's digital safety traffic light model here.

Tell the child what they can do if something unpleasant or strange happens in the digital environment. Remind them that they should always tell safe adults about such situations right away. Read our guide for practicing how to take screenshots together here.

TIP!

Play a game that the child likes together on a digital device. When playing, it is easier to naturally discuss the nice things as well as the potential risks, and how to act if the child encounters challenging situations online.

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