

Tips and Conversation Starters for Families

BALANCE: IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT TIME

Digital balance considers both the **quantity** and the **quality** of children's online time. Two important questions to ask yourself about the amount of time your child spends online are:

1. "Does it keep my child from completing their responsibilities?"
2. "Is it affecting my child's physical or emotional health?"

If the answer to either question is "yes", your child may need stricter online time limits. If the answer to both questions is "no", ask yourself about the quality of your child's time online. Helping young people strengthen interpersonal relationships and explore interests is one of the key benefits of online learning.

You can also help them by connecting their online activities with their offline interests. For example, after watching a clip of a football game, you and your child could try to copy the moves as you kick the ball around outside.



START A CONVERSATION ABOUT BALANCE:

- Do you ever feel like you spend too much time online? Why or why not?
- What are some offline activities you wish you had more time for?
- What are some online activities you wish you had more time for?

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YOU ARE WHAT YOU VIEW/SHARE/POST

Digital or online identities are versions of ourselves that exist online. Young people may have online identities similar to their offline identities or completely new ones. Some young people change identities based on who they are interacting with. For example, they may use one identity for friends and another for family — it's normal. Even offline, young people and adults may modify their behavior when interacting with different groups of people. However, those with a healthy sense of self demonstrate the same core values in every interaction.

You can help your child develop a strong online identity by identifying the core values important to your family together. You may also want to ask your child about the values they've formed from their own experiences. Talk with your child about how to apply their values consistently and be their authentic self online, even when it's complicated.

START A CONVERSATION ABOUT DIGITAL IDENTITY:



- Do you ever post something online because you want people to see you a certain way?
- Do any of your friends act differently in person than they do online? How do you feel about that?
- I understand that you may have more than one identity online. Would you be comfortable with me seeing all of your online identities?

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MAKE A PLAN TO BOUNCE BACK

Resilience skills are an essential part of digital wellness. They empower young people to manage negative situations and emotions. One way to help your child build resilience skills is to develop plans for dealing with situations they may face online. For example, ask your child what they would do if peers commented negatively about a photo they shared online. During the discussion, you can validate their feelings while helping them come up with a response that doesn't make the situation worse. By going through scenarios in advance, you can help your child feel more confident that they can handle any situation that arises online.

Being able to identify supportive relationships is another vital resilience skill. Having these discussions shows your child that you are there to listen and support them while they are online.

START A CONVERSATION ABOUT RESILIENCE:



- Sometimes I worry about what you may face online. Can we discuss some different situations and how you could respond?
- Would you feel comfortable talking to me about problems that could happen online?
- When we feel strong emotions, it can be hard not to react immediately. What are some steps you can take to get control over your feelings before acting?



Activities for Families

PREPARING FOR RESILIENCE

When young people encounter difficult situations online, they may not know how to respond. This activity will help your child learn how to make healthy choices online by encouraging them to think about the potential outcomes of their decisions.

1. Ask your child: **How would you feel if these things happened to you while you were online?**
 - Someone posts an embarrassing photo of you.
 - Someone posts something that makes you feel uncomfortable, such as mean comments about a group of people.
 - Someone posts a mean comment about something you shared online.
 - Someone posts something you disagree with. For example, they say a song you like is stupid.
2. Tell your child: **You may not be able to control how you feel, but you can control what you do and how you respond to negative comments. You should try to make decisions that will have positive outcomes.**
3. Start a document and at the top, write or have your child write, **“When something or someone upsets me online, I can choose how to respond. I can...”**
 - Work with your child to brainstorm a list of actions they could take. Then, go down the list and discuss the positive and negative outcomes of each action. Use color coding or a symbol to distinguish actions with positive results from actions with negative consequences.

EXAMPLE:

When something or someone upsets me online, I can choose how to respond. I can:

- Take a deep breath or do something else until I calm down, Then respond.
- Get support from family and friends.
- Respond with something mean.
- Pick a fight offline.
- Block or report it.

NOTE: An action that has a clear positive outcome to you, for example, your child coming to you for support, may look different to your child. Some young people worry that going to their parents/guardians for help will result in a negative outcome — being banned from using a website or platform. If you try to understand each other's perspectives, you can work together to identify the healthiest outcome in each situation. For example, help your child understand that coming to you for support builds trust and could result in more freedom online.

Activities for Families

PLANNING FOR DIGITAL WELLNESS

Digital wellness skills can help young people make internet-use a healthy and balanced part of their overall lives. This activity will help your child create a plan for digital wellbeing that encourages healthy, balanced use.

1. Tell your child: **It's important to me that your time online is healthy and balanced. Can we work together to come up with a plan to help you use the internet that way?**
2. Use the "A Plan for Digital Wellness" worksheet to assist your child in developing a digital wellness plan. Help your child feel ownership of the plan by listening to their input for the plan's guidelines. Also, let your child help determine the consequences (if any) for not following the plan.

Parent Worksheet

A PLAN FOR DIGITAL WELLNESS

Follow the prompts in each of the four sections to create a plan to help you and your family use the internet in a healthy and balanced way. Don't forget to add guidelines specific to your family.

SECTION 1: WHO

These guidelines are to help me stay safe while interacting with people online.

- ① What are our rules about talking with and/or accepting people we don't know offline as friends?

- ② Here are three adults that I can ask for support if I am bothered by something online:

- ③ Create your own guidelines:

SECTION 2: WHAT

These guidelines are to help me find content online that is appropriate.

- ① What are our family's rules about the kind of content we look at online at home? In other people's houses?

- ② If I am at a friend's house and they visit content online that our family doesn't allow (e.g., games, videos), I will:

- ③ These are two steps I can take if I see content online that bothers me:

- ④ Create your own guidelines:



Parent Worksheet

SECTION 3: WHERE

These guidelines are to help me find time to connect with my family and recharge offline.

① Our family will have device-free meals _____ times a week.

② We will keep devices out of the bedroom after _____ o'clock.

③ Create your own guidelines:

SECTION 4: WHEN

These guidelines are to help me balance my responsibilities with time spent online having fun.

① I need to complete these responsibilities before going online for fun:

② If I have completed my tasks, I can go online for _____ (minutes/hours) a day.

③ Create your own guidelines:
