Social Media

3 Red Flags Every Parents Should Know

Extracted from Common Sense Media Article By Christine Elgersma

It can be hard to keep up with the latest apps that kids are using. Just when you've figured out how to talk to your kids about *Facebook*, they've moved on to *Instagram* or *Snapchat*.

If you know what to look for, you can help your kid avoid some common social media pitfalls such as drama, cyberbullying, and oversharing.

Talking about using social media safely, responsibly, and respectfully is the best way to help your kid identify and avoid red flags.

Also, if they need to talk to someone but it's hard to talk about a problem (especially with you), give them opportunities to share with other safe, trusted people.

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AGE-APPROPRIATE CONTENT

Friends can share explicit stuff via messaging (for example, sexting), but the bigger concern is whether an app features a lot of user-generated content that isn't appropriate to your kid's age. Your teen may not even need to follow users who are posting explicit stuff to come across it.

What Can You Do?

- Ask your child whom he/she follows, and ask to see what's being posted.

- Use the app yourself and get a sense of what comes up in an average feed then try searching for content you're concerned about and see how easy it is to find.

- Make sure your child understands the risks involved and that they know how to block and report other users if necessary.

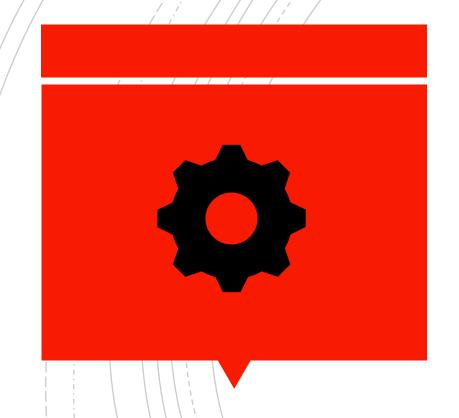# "TEMPORARY" PICTURES AND VIDEOS

Compromising pictures and texts get kids in real trouble because they believe what they're sending is private and will disappear.

What Can You Do?

- Let your kids know that nothing they send is truly temporary, and it's easy for others to share what you've sent.

- Because it's often hard for kids to really consider consequences, and they might think it won't happen to them, it might be worth sharing some of the recent cases of kids getting in legal trouble because of "disappearing" pictures.

DEFAULT SETTINGS

Every phone has a settings menu. Knowing what's in the settings menu and how to navigate through it can be the difference between access to your child and their protection/privacy.

What Can You Do?

- Know what's available in the app and set limits around purchases.

- Many apps allow a user to have a public or private profile, only shared with friends; however, some apps are public by default, which means that a kid's name, picture, and posts are available to everyone.

- As soon as you download the app, go into the settings to check the defaults. If a kid is using the same program on a browser, check there, too.

- Wherever you go, there you are -- and your social media apps know it. Though you may only indicate a city or neighborhood in a profile, allowing location identification often means that you're tracked within a city block, and your posts may include your location.