PARENT PERSPECTIVE

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FOUR STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE ON DIGITAL RISKS

1) **Talk to your children about what they are doing online and let them know you are watching.** Whether it's hidden usernames and accounts or limited answers, one of the most important things we can do to help our children is educate them. Teach them what is acceptable and not acceptable online.

2) **Teach them about the "Pause and Post" rule.** My theory has always been to teach children that before they post something or send a private message, think about whether they would be comfortable with that message being shared on a huge billboard on a highway for everyone to see. *Even as adults, that is a rule to live by.*

3) **There is no such thing as privacy on the internet.** There is an illusion that DMs or chats in Snapchat are private. But these are the types of messages that are most often shared and used as a form of cyberbullying. Screenshots of private messages have been known to spread faster than wildfire and cause incredible embarrassment and anxiety for kids.

4) **Practice patience.** Take the time to listen and not lecture. Be creative in finding ways to connect with your children. Each child is a unique human with unique needs. Giving them the one-on-one attention they crave often offers an opportunity for them to open up to you. Do not miss out on that opportunity.

While social media apps like TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram have given children an opportunity to connect with their peers virtually, it has also exposed them to the dangers of the online world.

Since the pandemic, there has been:

A **70% increase in hate speech** between kids and teens during online chats.

A **40% increase in toxicity** on popular gaming platforms, such as Discord.

SOURCE | L1GHT Report: Rising Levels of Hate Speech & Online Toxicity During This Time of Crisis

Pre-COVID, most of our children had bedtimes, restrictions around how many hours they could be online, and more rules in place to keep them safe. We parents have been letting our guard down due to exhaustion from our own social isolation, our increased responsibilities in the home, and the impact of at-home schooling and virtual work environments. Bedtime and online time rules have been dropped because parents are concerned about children's isolation.

7 Signs of Cyberbullying

- Sudden decline in grades
- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Showing signs of depression or anxiety
- Significant changes in mood
- Changes in sleep habits
- Increasingly private when using phone, tablet, or computer
- Mood changes after receiving a text

What does this **isolation mean for our children**? How does living in a virtual world impact them? It has directly translated into a rise in the rate of anxiety, depression, and suicide. Some would say that this mental health crisis is its own pandemic.

DID YOU KNOW?

69% of U.S. teens say they use Snapchat.

Active Snapchatters open the app **30 times per day.**

18 billion videos are posted daily on Snapchat.