

Getting Your Techno Power Back!

I'm just going to say it.

It is irresponsible for you to give your child unsupervised access to a device that allows them free and open access to the world and all of its dark and uninhibited places, without appropriate levels of protective supervision.

All too often, I am having conversations with parents who feel as though they have 'lost control' over their children's level of engagement with technology. This is a concern, because losing control means that you are giving away a level of protection. Nationally, our teens spend 33 hours per week (outside of school) connected. That's almost a full-time job.

Your kids do not need a 30 or 40-something year old friend. It is much harder for you to set protective boundaries if you have a friendship with them. In your home, you are the boss. Your job is to love, nurture, provide, teach values and protect. It does not matter if your child pays for the 'phones or the internet access. Your home, your rules. You are the experienced grown up charged with providing a safe environment.

80% of what most Australian children do online is hidden from their parents and carers. **80%!!**

We have been persuaded into thinking that our kids are entitled to more privacy than we would often allow our - grown up - partners. I have experienced first-hand how this unsupervised access is disaffecting their peer relationships, their self-esteem and their learning. 25% of young Australians are unhappy with their lives and our youth suicide rates are the highest they have been in 10 years.

Unless you know the how to use their devices, where they go on them and who they invite into your house with them, you have no control over who they are spending (significant amounts) time with. This means that you also don't know who is having an affect on their feelings, values and attitudes. You also won't know if your child is not treating others with respect.

Through experience, I have found a couple of ways, which may help you, regain some footing in actively supervising your child's use of technology. They are all very simple and they work. And, please note my use of the words 'actively supervise'! Passive supervision doesn't solve anything! There is no point in reducing their connection time from 33 hours per week to 10 hours per week if you're still not checking what they are doing.

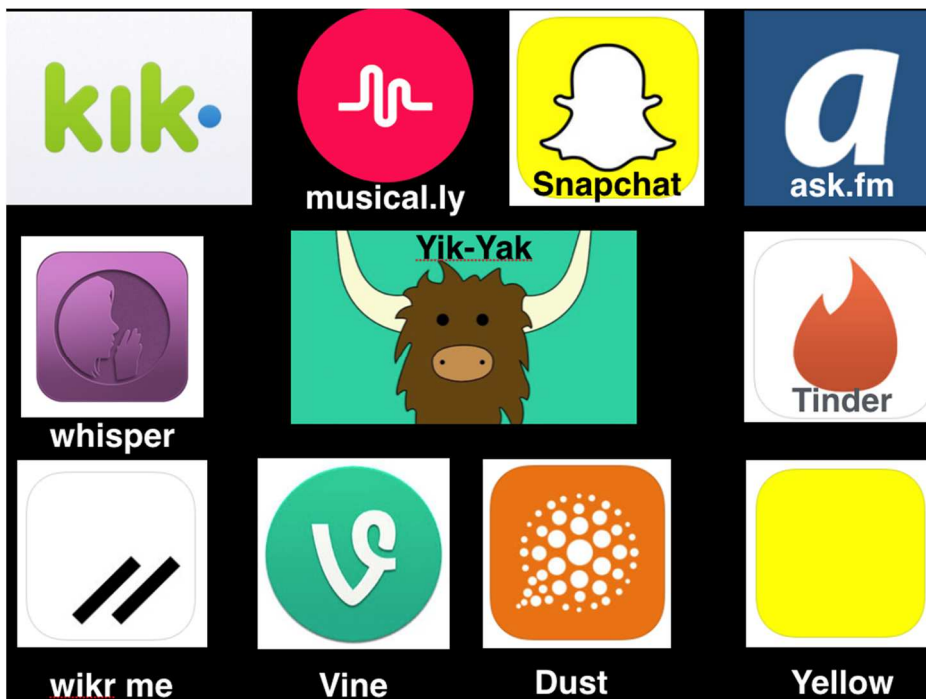
Know which sites your child holds membership to and have the passwords I suggest that if they are a member of ask.fm or use kik, that they need to be taken off it. Your kids do not need to be using anonymous forms of communication. It provides a platform for them to be untruthful and to watch stuff that they need not be watching. Allowing this, takes away their responsibility for anything they may say to others or others may say to them. A lack of consequence for things kids are saying to each other is having disastrous effects on their emotional intelligence.

Know how to change the Wi-Fi password Only let your kids have access to the password when they've done their jobs their homework, or fulfilled whichever responsibilities you need them to. This is the now-day equivalent of my Mum not letting me ride my BMX until I did my jobs! You can Google how to do it, it is very simple. Many, many kids, set alarms and wake up when the grown ups are asleep to access the internet.

Find out what "flavour" your modem is (Belkin or Netgear for example) and search "How to change Belkin modem password." You can change the password every day if needs be. Xbox and PlayStation time is limited by this too.



Know their social networking friends Our children hang out in 'virtual villages'. There are many of them speaking with each other about everything, for hours on end. You need to know who else is having an input into how your child thinks and the concepts they are exposed to. Kids share all kinds of porn, images and messages that we would not approve of. I'm not joking.



These are some of the apps we know are creating trouble in the lives of Australian kids. Google them, read up on them and decide if you think they are safe. The reason they are listed here is because they are problematic. Also look up 'chatroulette'.

Have a central location for computers This is all about active supervision. The dining room table, the breakfast bar, the lounge room; make sure you can see what they are accessing.

Take their 'phones at bedtime Set an alarm on your own 'phone to remind you. If your child makes a fuss about this, you've just answered whether or not they've already been tempted to do the wrong thing. I literally have kids fall asleep in class because they are not getting enough sleep (I don't think it is my teaching!). Kids do not need to be texting or networking with their friends or playing games right up until the second they fall asleep. Their brains need a chance to refresh, which means they need quiet time.

I'm not saying it is easy and I do know how hard it can be. You have to be consistent and strong. Speaking with other parents will also help.

With kindest regards and lots of luck!
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