

Beaver Family Connections: Social Media & Technology

1/16/18 with Tasha Randall Galardi

Preface: Decisions around social media and technology use is up to the individual family and you should make your decisions based on your own family's needs/situation.

- Technology use is increasing among adolescents and teens. It is getting harder and harder to hold off on getting a phone for your child.
- 93% of 14 to 19 year olds have access to the internet
- People who are more extroverted are more likely to use social media
- People who have more anxious/nervous personalities use social media more than those who are more emotionally stable.
- Teens report more outcomes that are positive from social media than negative.

It is important to keep in mind what is happening developmentally during teenage years.

- This is the time in their lives where they are more likely to be taking risks, trying to figure out their own identity, seek peer approval more, etc.

What the research says:

Negative Impacts:

- Significant reduction in day dreaming/idle time
 - Idle time promotes creativity and empathy
- Emphasis on "likes" has impact on identity development (who they are and how they fit in)
 - False sense of where you fit in relation to others
 - Significance of people you don't even know liking your post-how you become popular/famous. Emphasis is on internet world "friends" vs real world friends.
- Higher risk of depression ("Facebook Depression")
 - Only seeing people who talk about/show how great their life is, people don't often post about the difficulties they experience in life. Teens start comparing their lives to these picture perfect realities that are being shared on social media.
- Cyberbullying
 - Ability to say things to people online that you would never be able to do in person
 - Don't understand the consequences
- Potential of having contact with people they don't know
 - 1 in 6 people report being contacted by someone who made them feel uncomfortable and/or unsafe
- Sexting/Pornography:
 - Teens severely underestimate how easily a naked picture can/will spread and how much it follows them.
- Lack of Privacy- Teens tend to overshare a lot about their life

- They do not always understand who is looking at their information and where it is ending up. Even when they think their privacy settings are set, they are still often sharing their name, birthdate, location, etc. that is still visible to others.
- Sites like Facebook use recent searches and other data to populate their feeds with ads they think they will like, which can be over sexualized or inappropriate and teens are vulnerable to these ads.

Positive Impacts:

- Access to information- not always a bad thing
 - i.e.- health information
 - A teen will often not feel comfortable asking questions about their health (especially sexual health questions), but it is still information they need to be able to access and learn from.
 - As long as they are getting it from the right kind of sources
- Social support
 - Especially those in marginalized/under-represented populations in their communities.
 - There are many support groups/social networks that can help them in forming their identities (an important developmental function of the teen years)
 - Ability to connect with others, get more information, actively explore interests.
- Civic Engagement opportunities- this continues to become more and more popular
- Connection to family and friends
 - Opportunity for daily contact that normally wouldn't be possible
 - Ability to form a bond with you/other relatives that they are more comfortable with
 - For example, there might be some things that they are more comfortable talking about via text than they are in person, and that is okay sometimes
- Educational Opportunities
- Development of creativity that can be produced online/using technology
- Ability to explore their identity development (especially in small communities)- can be a negative as well.
- Facilitate hard conversations
 - Being able to have a conversation via text can allow them to be able to sit with the information and really think about a response and be able to handle their emotions.
 - Do not have to worry about/experience your reaction/emotion to the conversation- provides enough distance that they may be able to be more open and honest
- Kids who have more "likes" have higher self-esteem- this obviously can be a negative for kids in the opposite situation.

Notes from the discussion:

- Setup non-negotiable rules that EVERYONE (you included) follow- Below are some examples that were shared by the group
 - No technology at dinner

- End of night- phone/laptop/tablet/etc. needs to be in a public space
- No technology until homework or chores are done
- Changing wifi password or turning it off when they are not supposed to be using it (i.e. when it is bedtime)
- Having access to their phone/laptop/tablet/etc. anytime you want
- Being friends on any social media they use
 - Helpful to create a culture of being friends with parent of their friends so that they can watch/keep you in the loop if they see something
 - You have to recognize that they are always going to be able to do things you don't know about (online or not), all you can do is inform them about some of the potential consequences that come with some of the more dangerous/inappropriate choices they make
 - Be careful with the information you get from other people, the more they think you are invading their privacy the sneakier they likely will become. You will need to learn to pick your battles...
- According to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, it is illegal for commercial websites and apps to allow children under age 13 to open an online account without verifiable parental consent.
 - Helpful information to have if your child keeps asking when they can have their own accounts.
 - Walk through the setup process of the accounts so that you can explain the privacy settings/create your own rules about what is allowed to be shared.