

Is Your Child Showing WARNING Signs?

Technology may be a problem for your child.
Look for these signs:

- Addiction
- Bullying
- Anxiety
- Mistakes that have led to contact with disturbing images, ideas, or people

You know your child better than anyone.

Teenagers don't know as much as they think they do. Your wiser understanding is needed.



Your child is a teenager. Some behaviours are expected:

- Challenging our and others' ideas and decisions or rules
- Becoming more independent
- Secrecy
- Curiosity relating to adult topics
- Feelings of a right to technology
- Increased influence by their peers
- Self-awareness and believing they know all they need to know
- Increased online confidence

These behaviours may have been indicators for concern regarding technology and its risks in younger children. These same behaviours may not be related to technology at all in a teen and may not be a cause of undue concern.

You know your child best. Look for patterns.

The indicators below may or may not be linked to technology but **should never be discounted**. Look for patterns. Stay involved.

UNHEALTHY GAMING BEHAVIOURS:

- Increased aggression, particularly straight after using technology

- Frustration, particularly about not being able to use technology
- Aggression or anger when spoken to regarding what's occurring online
- Preoccupied thoughts of the game they've just played and when they can get on the game again (They talk about the game when not on it.)
- Lying about how long they play games
- Missing meals to play or talk online
- Unusual fatigue (may be a sign they are sneaking online at night)
- Headaches (from poor posture on technology)
- Insistence they have the right to use devices and software programs they choose

CYBERBULLYING/GROOMING/PORNOGRAPHY:

- Avoiding others or isolating themselves in order to use technology
- Tries to conceal what they are doing
 - Passwords they don't share
 - Locked doors
 - Sneaks technology after lights out/technology off times
- Fear to use technology
- Becomes more withdrawn
- Does not want to speak about technology
- Unusual website history
 - Suspect site visits or search words (yes, you can and should check their browsing history regularly)
 - Blank history (if they have worked out how to erase the history)
- Talks about new online 'friends' (people they have never met, people giving them 'gifts' online, for example, in games)
- Uses language that is unusual for their age (swearing, sexual, negative) (Teens particularly focus on the negative language as a sign of mental wellness.)
- Asks questions about things or topics that seem unusual/unexpected
- Nightmares
- Change in behaviour or demeanour (withdrawal, sadness, anger, lack of eye contact, not wanting to be around people, not wanting to go to school)

- Befriending and associating with people with different moral values to those of your family
- Befriending and interacting with others online who are older than them
- Insisting that those on the Internet understand them better than anyone else

Notice any of these?

As a parent:

- Keep communicating with your child. It is making a difference.
- Communicate with others, including parents, friends, and relations, for support (especially if your child is in a dual home environment; make sure the other parent/carer understands your concerns).
- They may/will push against the rules. It is important to remain consistent
- Discuss your decisions and rules with your teen. Involve them as much as reasonable. They may not like it, but they will understand once explained.
- Encourage some technology free time—**not as a punishment**. Find something fun to do as a family that takes you all out of the house and into the sun/forest/snow/park. Do something together with NO technology. Keep it light. Do something your child really enjoys (or used to enjoy).
- **You still have the right to say no when it comes to technology.**
- Understand that some teenage behaviour can be misinterpreted; it may not be of concern. (Seek assistance—many of the fact sheets in this tool will help you to consider the options.)

Play detective. Keep it safe and supportive. Your role is to identify the cause of the problem and help your child address it. You need to be their safe place to fall, not their inquisitor or punisher.

*Your child is not safe just because they are in your home.
Online, your child is accessible to millions of adult strangers and teenagers, some of whom are capable of cowardly hate online.
Don't let technology addiction, cyberbullying, or online predators into your home.
Be vigilant. Act swiftly.
You are responsible for the rules and the solutions.*