Internet and Phone Safety

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According to a study by Rawhide Youth Services, teens spend 9 hours each day consuming some form of digital content. Furthermore, parents know their children are online, but are unaware of what they have access to and how much of their time is tied to it. On average, parents guessed 3 hours.

The rapid generation of new and trendy apps, games, and websites can make it hard to keep up with all the things kids have access to. Children often don't understand the dangers of the online world and the consequences of certain actions. They need adult help to navigate it with them.

But where do I start? This might be what you're asking yourself if you have never approached the subject before. Establish guidelines with your kids on what sites and apps they are allowed to use and talk through why certain ones are off limits. Setting guidelines that both parent and child feel comfortable with and understand is critical to establishing healthy boundaries. You can also create electronic-free times and spaces in your home. Examples could include at the dinner table to help encourage family conversations or in bedrooms after a certain bedtime to ensure quality sleep.

Although kids might not like it, parents should also monitor online activity by regularly checking devices like computers, tablets, and phones. To help your child understand this seemingly overstepping action, talk through why it is important to keep them safe as opposed to control them. The goal here is to create open, honest conversations with your kids to help them understand the potential risks of online activity.

Kids love when parents take an interest in the things that they do. Before your child is allowed to download a new app or game, download it together and go through it with your child to see how they intend to use it and what content they are exposed to. There might be some apps that sound kid-friendly but really aren't.

If you want to learn more about how to protect your child from online dangers, join Cassidy Lutz for *What the Tech?! Phone Safety for Parents*. This program will be offered in Yates Center on May 22nd, Iola on May 24th, Fort Scott on May 31st, and Chanute on June 5th. There is no fee to attend. Call the office at 620-625-8620 or email celutz@ksu.edu to register.