



## Having the conversation: Strategies for effective communication with adolescents about their social media use

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STAR Conference

May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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## AGENDA

1. Current trends in adolescents' use of social media
2. Influence of social media use on adolescent suicide risk
3. Strategies for social media monitoring for reducing risk among vulnerable youth

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## SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND COVID-19

During the pandemic, media use among teens increased at a higher pace than it has over the four years prior to the pandemic

**FIGURE A. Total entertainment screen use among tweens and teens, per day, 2015 to 2021**

Group	2015	2019	2021
Tweens (8- to 12-year-olds)	4:36	4:44	5:33
Teens (13- to 18-year-olds)	6:40	7:22	8:39

Common Sense Census, 2022

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# DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL MEDIA USE ACROSS GROUPS

- Age
  - 8 to 12-year-olds: 38% use social media, 18% use it daily (5% increase since 2019)
  - 13 to 18-year-olds: 84% use social media, 62% use it daily (~stable since 2019)
- Sex, Race/Ethnicity, Income

TABLE 17. Social media: Enjoyment, frequency, and time spent among teens, by demographics, 2021

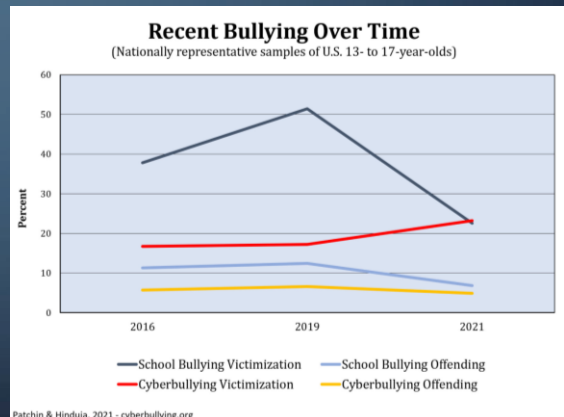
Among 8- to 18-year-olds	Gender		Race/Ethnicity			Family income		
	Boys	Girls	White	Black	Hispanic/Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
<b>Enjoyment:</b> Percent who enjoy social media "a lot"	27% <sup>a</sup>	42% <sup>b</sup>	30% <sup>a</sup>	51% <sup>b</sup>	36% <sup>a</sup>	37%	35%	33%
<b>Frequency:</b> Percent who use social media "every day"	57% <sup>a</sup>	68% <sup>b</sup>	64%	68%	60%	46% <sup>a</sup>	66% <sup>b</sup>	65% <sup>b</sup>
<b>Time spent:</b> Average daily time spent using social media ...								
• Among those who use	2:04	2:16	2:05 <sup>a</sup>	2:50 <sup>b</sup>	2:19 <sup>ab</sup>	2:33 <sup>a</sup>	2:19 <sup>a</sup>	1:50 <sup>b</sup>
• Among all	1:20	1:36	1:23	1:50	1:38	1:25 <sup>ab</sup>	1:39 <sup>a</sup>	1:14 <sup>b</sup>

Common Sense Census, 2022

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# NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING COVID

- Online hate speech and cyberbullying have risen considerably
  - 34% of Black youth "often" see racist comments
  - 44% of LGBTQ+ youth encounter homophobic/transphobic comments
  - 30% of females encounter sexism and 35% experiencing body shaming
- Misinformation
- Social comparison



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# POSITIVE USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING COVID

- Connection to friends, especially important during the pandemic
- Identity formation
- Minoritized youth finding shared connection
- Creative expression & sharing
- Learning, staying informed
- Activism/community engagement
- Entertainment, e.g., watch parties

**“Social media has made me feel less depressed because I can connect with people. When I feel alone because of the pandemic, I can go onto Instagram or Snapchat and talk with friends and see what they are doing. Then I see that we are all in this together and everyone is having a hard time, not just me.”**

—15-year-old boy

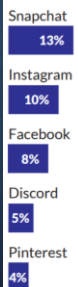
Among the things 8- to 18-year-olds learned how to do online during the pandemic ...

- Crochet
- Juggle
- Do nail art
- Do needle felting
- Build a Lego car
- Build a computer
- Practice yoga
- Make origami
- Do BMX tricks
- Learn a new dance
- Fix a go-cart
- Do card tricks
- Make jewelry
- Build a playhouse
- Make doll furniture
- Make a worm farm
- Make a sweet potato pie
- Make homemade frosting
- Build a marble run
- Sew a stuffed turtle

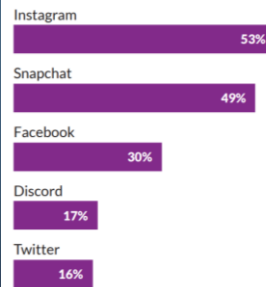
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# MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

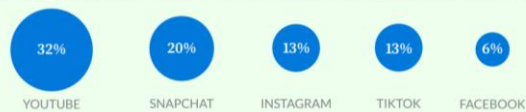
**FIGURE D. Top social media sites among tweens, 2021**  
Percent of all 8- to 12-year-olds who have ever used ...



**FIGURE E. Top social media sites among teens, 2021**  
Percent of all 13- to 18-year-olds who have ever used ...



If you had to pick one site you didn't want to live without, which would it be?\*



Common Sense Census, 2022

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## INSTAGRAM

### What is it?

- Social image-sharing platform with built-in options for filtering/editing photos & videos

### How do teens use it?

- Space to connect with in-person friends or follow accounts that align with interests, celebrities, etc.
- Rinstas – “real” public-facing account, highly curated vs. Finstas – “fake” private account with close friends, reflect true self

### What are its features?

- direct messaging, feed & stories, disappearing messages (viewed once), public or private accounts

### What are its age recommendations?

- Intended for users age 13+, no age verification process to download
- Common Sense Media recommends 15+

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## INSTAGRAM: SECURITY & MONITORING

### What can teens do?

- Limit or turn off notifications
- Set account to private
- Add 2-factor authentication
- When needed, unfollow, block, or report ([How to report](#))

### What can parents do?

- Supervision – new feature
  - Requires agreement from parent & child
  - Allows parent to view & set time limits on use
  - Allows parent to see who the teen is following & who is following them

<https://help.instagram.com>

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## SNAPCHAT

### What is it?

- Messaging app for exchange of pictures or videos with filters, lenses, and effects, some that disappear

### How do teens use it?

- Most often used to stay connected with friends, make plans, etc.

### What are its features?

- Direct messaging - individual & group texting, can set a time limit until image disappears
- Stories – record of the day, disappears after 24 hours
- Discover – offers content created by celebrities, news & entertainment outlet
- Snapstreaks- special emojis & stats appear in response to repeated snaps among 2+ users
- Snapmaps – displays location on a map in real time to friends

### What are its age recommendations?

- Intended for users age 13+, no age verification process to download
- Common Sense Media recommends 16+

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## SNAPCHAT: SECURITY & MONITORING

### What can teens do?

- Put snapmaps into “ghost mode” indefinitely
- Let snapstreaks go
- Set account to private
- Send every snap with the idea that someone may take a screenshot
- When needed, block, unfollow, report ([How to report](#))

### What can parents do?

- No option for parents to see their child’s activity
- Alternative review privacy settings with teen:
  - “Who Can...” – where to control who can see location & view stories

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## TIKTOK

**What is it?**

- App that supports watching, creating, and sharing of user-generated videos

**How do teens use it?**

- Viewing/sharing content created by themselves or others, i.e., celebrities/influencers

**What are its features?**

- Videos: “For You” Feed & “Follow” feeds, Duets
- Organized by hashtags, often correspond with challenges, memes, or current events
- Direct messaging – individual & group

**What are its age recommendations?**

- <13 can't post videos or comment, content curated for younger audience, 13-15 – accounts are private by default, 16-17 – can livestream & use direct messaging, no age verification
- Common Sense Media recommends 15+

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## TIKTOK: SECURITY & MONITORING

**What can teens do?**

- Limit or turn off notifications
- Set account to private
- Unfollow, block people, or report ([How to report](#))

**What can parents do?**

- Family Pairing
  - Screen time management
  - Restricted mode (blocks mature content)
  - Restrict who can message or turn off messaging completely
  - Talk about how to deal with [challenges](#)

<https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/safety>

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## DISCORD

### What is it?

- A place to share interests in subject-specific groups (servers)

### How do teens use it?

- Connect with friends in private/invite-only servers or connect with online friends/strangers around topics of shared interest (e.g., gaming, music, anime, etc.)

### What are its features?

- Servers – communities oriented around a certain topic, each with their own set of rules, can be private (requiring an invite) or public, operate by text or voice
- Direct messaging – text and video-based chat features for individuals & groups

### What are its age recommendations?

- Intended for users age 13+, no age verification process to download
- Common Sense Media recommends 13+

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## DISCORD: SECURITY & MONITORING

### What can teens do?

- Only participate in private servers
- Only accept friend requests from in-person friends
- When needed, block, delete, report ([How to report](#))

### What can parents do?

- No options for parental controls
- Review privacy settings together
  - Activate “keep me safe” on Safe Direct Messaging
  - Limit direct messaging and friend requests
- [Talk to teens about dealing with online predators](#)

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## FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE NOT A STRONG PREDICTOR OF WELLBEING

Most large-scale studies with youth have found frequency of social media use has little impact on adolescents' mental health and wellbeing.

\*Also see: Odgers & Jenson, 2020

**The association between adolescent well-being and digital technology use**

Amy Orben & Andrew K. Przybylski

*Nature Human Behaviour* **3**, 173–182 (2019) | [Cite this article](#)

17k Accesses | 345 Citations | 2453 Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

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[Matters Arising](#) to this article was published on 17 April 2020

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**Abstract**

The widespread use of digital technologies by young people has spurred speculation that their regular use negatively impacts psychological well-being. Current empirical evidence supporting this idea is largely based on secondary analyses of large-scale social datasets. Though these datasets provide a valuable resource for highly powered investigations, their many variables and observations are often explored with an analytical flexibility that marks small effects as statistically significant, thereby leading to potential false positives and conflicting results. Here we address these methodological challenges by applying specification curve analysis (SCA) across three large-scale social datasets (total  $n = 355,358$ ) to rigorously examine correlational evidence for the effects of digital technology on adolescents. The association we find between digital technology use and adolescent well-being is negative but small, explaining at most 0.4% of the variation in well-being. Taking the broader context of the data into account suggests that these effects are too small to warrant policy change.

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## FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE NOT A STRONG PREDICTOR OF WELLBEING

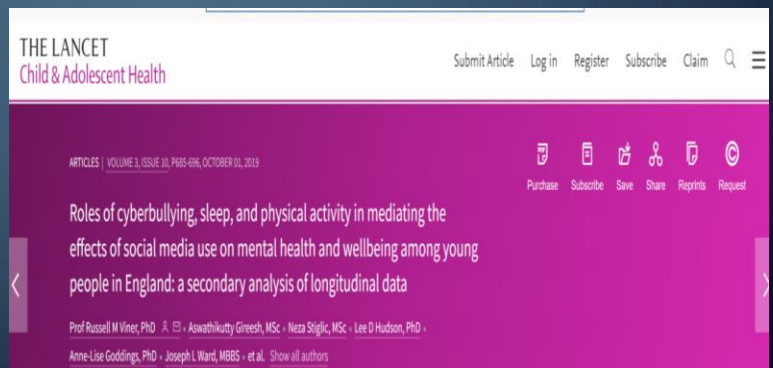
Although usage of social media has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, data suggests it is not associated with increases in depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation among teens over time.



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## NATURE OF TEENS' SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERIENCES ARE LIKELY MORE MEANINGFUL TO MENTAL HEALTH THAN USE

Social media experiences may be more influential to youth mental health than amount of social media use.



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## Investigating Influence of Social Media Experiences on Youth Suicide Risk

	Biernesser et al, 2020 Systematized Review	Biernesser et al, 2021 Focus Group Inquiry	Nesi et al, 2021 Meta-analysis
<b>RISK FACTORS</b>			
Heavy/frequent use	X	X	X
Problematic use	X	X	X*
Cyberbullying/ peer victimization	X	X	X*
Exposure to self-harm/ suicidal content	X	X	X*
Nighttime-specific use		X	
Negative upward social comparison		X	
Thwarted belongingness/ social isolation		X	
<b>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</b>			
Social connectedness	X	X	
Peer support	X	X	
Social engagement		X	

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## POTENTIAL FOR DIFFERENCES ACROSS GROUPS

- More research needed on demographic & psychological characteristics that could contribute to vulnerability or protection
- High risk youth may have added vulnerabilities as well as added opportunities for support

### Vulnerabilities

Risky online behaviors (e.g., talking to strangers, disclosing personal information)

Exposure to harmful content (e.g., self-harm)

Internet harassment & cyberbullying

Addictive internet use

### Opportunities

High in online health information seeking

Likely to seek emotional support on social media

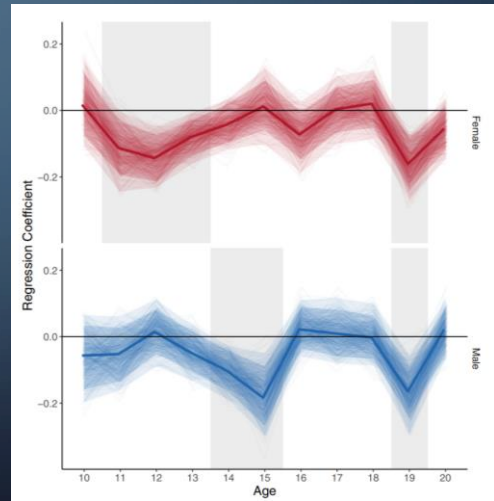
Participation in online friendships is prospectively associated with decreases in suicidal ideation

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## POTENTIAL FOR DIFFERENCES ACROSS GROUPS

- Analysis of large longitudinal datasets from UK (17,409 youth, ages 10-21) observed distinct developmental windows of sensitivity to social media in adolescence when higher use predicted decreases in life satisfaction one year later.
- Windows occur for:
  - Males at ages 14-15 and 19
  - Females at ages 11-13 and 19



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## SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH



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## STUDY EXAMINING YOUTH & PARENTS LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING



Ana Radovic



Gerald Montano



Liz Miller

*Biernesser, Montano, Miller, Radovic. Social Media Use and Monitoring for Adolescents With Depression and Implications for the COVID-19 Pandemic: Qualitative Study of Parent and Child Perspectives. JMIR Pediatr Parent. 2020 Dec 8; 3(2):e21644.*

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## STUDY EXAMINING YOUTH & PARENTS LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING

### Participants and Setting

- Youth, ages 13-20 (N=31) and their parents (N=30) were recruited from clinical treatment settings for depression in Pittsburgh area
- Youth: ages 13-20 (mean=16 years), 78% female, 87% White and 13% Black
- Parents: ages 37-55 (mean=46 years), 83% female, 91% White, 9% Black

### Data Collection

- Aimed to explore perspectives of adolescents with depression and their parents regarding use and monitoring of social media
- Individual qualitative interviews (parents and adolescents were separate)

### Data Analysis

- All data were recorded and transcribed
- Individual parent interviews were analyzed using content analysis
- Parent-child matched pairs (N=21) were analyzed using dyadic analysis

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## CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Themes related to monitoring were conceptualized using constructs from Stattin and Kerr's work which hypothesizes three primary sources of parental knowledge:

1. Adolescents' voluntary disclosure of information with their parents
2. Parents' solicitation of information from their child
3. Parents' use of control (e.g., setting rules or limitations)

Kerr & Stattin, 2000 & 2010 29

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## DYAD-LEVEL RESULTS

Topic	Agreement	Parent's Perspective	Adolescent's Perspective
<b>Social media as a form of expression</b>	Disagreed	Inconsequential, interferes with other activities <i>"But why do you have to tell everybody? Like why? I don't get it."</i>	A forum for honest expression of emotions <i>"Because it's your Twitter, so you can just say how you feel."</i>
<b>Talking about depression on social media</b>	Agreed	It's better to talk offline, to parents. <i>"If they feel that way, he should come to his mother or father...."</i>	It's not a good idea. What will others think? <i>"I don't want everybody to know my business."</i>
<b>Talking with strangers online</b>	Disagreed	Worried about safety & privacy <i>"How dangerous it is, some of these people are older..."</i>	Talking to strangers is normative <i>"You want to have so many friends on there you just add whoever."</i>
<b>Parental monitoring</b>	Disagreed	Tried to protect their child and maintain their relationship <i>"She's 16, so I'm sure she doesn't appreciate, you know, me watching everything she does. But she understands."</i>	Dissatisfaction with monitoring when excluded from the decision-making <i>"It kind of makes me irritated. I'm 16, almost 17, and I feel like I should be old enough that she doesn't have to follow everything I do."</i>

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## STUDY 2: INDIVIDUAL PARENT INTERVIEW RESULTS

SOURCES OF PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE	BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES
<p>Adolescent's Voluntary Disclosure</p> <p>Open conversations were seen as the best way to contribute to adolescent disclosure</p>	<p>+ Adolescents at times opened up organically about social media experiences</p>
<p>Parental Solicitation</p> <p>Directly solicited about social media use when concerned</p> <p>Indirectly solicited without the child's knowledge</p>	<p>+ Offers viewpoint on child's emotional state that can open opportunities for dialogue</p> <p>- Disclosure may be selective</p>
<p>Parental Control</p> <p>Control was typically enacted through restriction of social media sites either as a means of discipline or to protect from perceived harm</p>	<p>+ Selective need for protection</p> <p>- Limited parental knowledge Potential for parent-child conflict Adolescent secrecy</p>

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## TAKEAWAYS

This research suggests need to:

- understand the specific context of adolescents' social media use and parents' perceptions toward monitoring
- aid families in finding a middle ground between parents' need to protect and adolescents' need for autonomy



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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE & MONITORING



2018 (ongoing)



2019



2021

Common element across recommendations: open conversation

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## FOSTER OPEN DISCUSSION IN SAFE, AFFIRMING SPACES AND RECOGNIZING DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT

- Active, supportive discussion > restriction at reducing incidence of media-related risks (Chen & Shi, 2018)
- Curate a safe & affirming space where teens feel comfortable opening up
  - LGBTQ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year.
  - Helpful Resource: [Trevor Project: How to be an ally](#)
- Discussions should be developmentally appropriate
  - younger adolescents may need guidance on appropriate media use
  - older adolescents may need someone to calmly listen, validate, and offer support

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## GUIDANCE FOR TEENS ABOUT SAFE SOCIAL MEDIA USE



- Check your mood before going on social media
- Don't compromise your identity, especially on public sites
- Build a positive online reputation
- Avoid telling others where you are at all times
- Prioritize friends who supportive and unfriend/block/unfollow friends who can be toxic
- Develop a relationship with a parent/trusted adult to talk with about online experiences

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## GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS ABOUT HAVING OPEN CONVERSATIONS WITH TEENS



- Talk to adolescents about the places they feel supported and safe online and times when social media can increase stress
- Ask young people how the people they follow or interact with online the most make them feel
- Reserve judgements about screen time
- Pay close attention if an adolescent is already struggling offline
- Be prepared for younger adolescents to enter social media earlier than planned
- Consider ramifications of phone removal

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## GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL & MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



- Responsibility to build an awareness of social media trends and uses
- Recognize positive and negative aspects of social media use
- Aid families in appropriate monitoring of social media based on child's developmental stage & mental health vulnerability

### School professionals

- Offer education & support on strategies for safe & healthy social media use and effective monitoring strategies

### Mental health professionals

- Address social media during assessment and safety planning and help families find a middle ground with monitoring

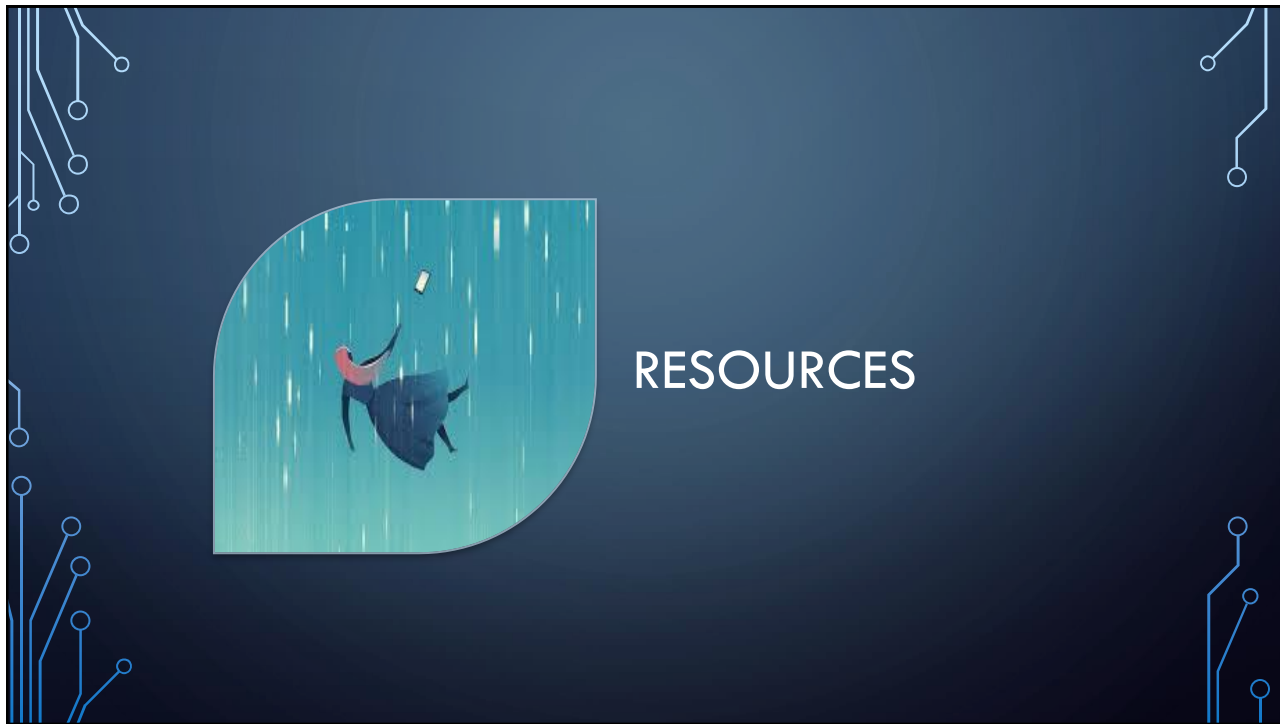
[Helpful Resource: AAS Tipsheet](#)

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## WHAT ABOUT PARENTAL CONTROLS?

- Younger adolescents or those who are developmentally less mature often benefit from parental monitoring. See options [here](#).
- What to keep in mind:
  - **Be open** about parental controls, if used, and discuss why and how they will be used. Adolescents feeling their privacy was invaded is associated with secrecy and deficits in family functioning.
  - **Be supportive.** Supportive parenting facilitates adolescents voluntarily discussing challenges with parents, whereas unsupportive parenting + control strategies are associated with increased depressive symptoms.
  - **Be aware** that any parental control option is not full proof.

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## RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING VULNERABLE YOUTH

#chatsafe

[Young Person's Guide for Communicating Safely Online About Suicide](#)

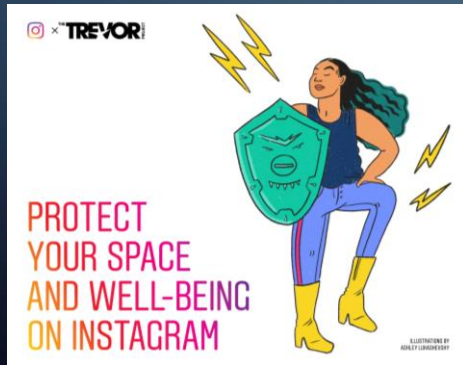
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# RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING VULNERABLE YOUTH

Trevor Project

[Protect Your Space and Well-being on Instagram](#)



Center for Countering Digital Hate

[A Practical Guide for Dealing with Hate Speech](#)



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# EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

*Interactive lessons and activities for all students! 🎓*

## Digital Citizenship Curriculum

Use digital citizenship lesson plans to address timely topics and prepare students to take ownership of their digital lives. Browse lessons by grade and topic below, or see an [overview of the curriculum](#).

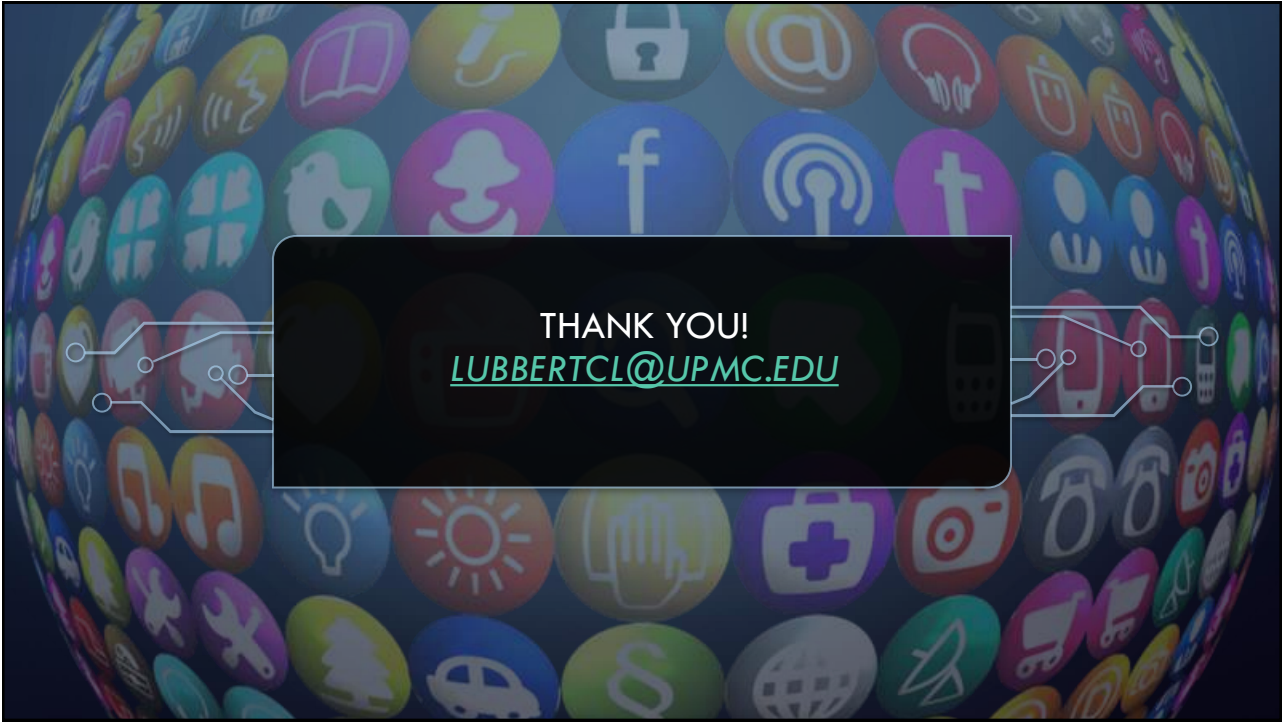
Filter by grade All grades ▾

Media Balance & Well-Being	Privacy & Security	Digital Footprint & Identity	Relationships & Communication	Cyberbullying, Digital Drama & Hate Speech	News & Media Literacy
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<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/curriculum>

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## RESOURCES FOR RESPONDING TO CYBERBULLYING

- For Pennsylvania:
  - [Pennsylvania Bullying Prevention Consultation Line](#)
  - [Safe 2 Say](#)
- Other resources: [Stomp Out Bullying](#)

↻ Follow-up on a tip
⚠ Submit an anonymous tip online

# SAFE2SAY

**SOMETHING**

**1-844-SAF2SAY**

723-2729

**GET THE APP**

**WHAT IS SAFE2SAY SOMETHING?**

**FOR STUDENTS**

**FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

PA BULLYING PREVENTION Consultation Line

866-716-0424

The Pennsylvania Bullying Prevention Consultation Line is a toll free number available to school staff, students and parents across the commonwealth.

The Consultation Line offers discussion of effective strategies and resources available to deal with school-based bullying. Messages can be left 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and will be returned Monday-Friday during normal business hours.

pennsylvania

Department of Education


HIGHMARK FOUNDATION

CHPPD

Child Protection

For more bullying prevention information, please visit the PA Department of Education website.

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**NATIONAL**  
**SUICIDE**  
**PREVENTION**  
**LIFELINE™**  
**1-800-273-TALK**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

## RESOURCES FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741-741
- Trevor Project: Call 866-488-7386 or Text START to 678-678
- Trans Lifeline: Call 877-565-8860
- Re:Resolve Crisis Network: 1-888-796-8226

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CYBERBULLYING

- Cyberbullying Research Center: (Resources for teens/youth, parents and educators) [www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org)
- StopBullying.gov: (Tips and resources for teens, parents and educators) [www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying](http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying)
- PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center: (Resources and support for parents of children with disabilities, as well as, information regarding bullying and cyberbullying) [www.pacer.org/bullying/info/cyberbullying/](http://www.pacer.org/bullying/info/cyberbullying/)
- Anti-Defamation League: (Resources, education and support to combat anti-Semitism, bigotry, discrimination and injustice, includes resources for bullying and cyberbullying) [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)

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## RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

- Common Sense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org>
- Connect Safely: <https://www.connectsafely.org>
- Kids and Tech – resources from the American Academy of Pediatrics  
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Tips-for-Parents-Digital-Age.aspx>
- AT&T Secure Family: (App that tracks location, limits screen time and filters web and app use) <https://www.att.com/security/secure-family-app/>
- OnGuardOnline: (FTC's free online tips and resources for parents and educators)  
[www.consumer.ftc.gov](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov)

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## RESOURCES FOR TEENS

- A Thin Line – developed to empower teens to identify, respond to, and stop the spread of digital abuse <http://www.athinline.org/>
- That's Not Cool – provides tools to help teens navigate digital communication in relationships <https://thatsnotcool.com/>

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## RESOURCES FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

- The Trevor Project: (Crisis intervention and suicide prevention resources for LGBTQ young people) [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)
- GLSEN: (Resources for teachers and allies to create safe learning environments for LGBTQ students) [Homepage](#) | [GLSEN](#)
- LGBT National Help Center: (Hotlines, peer support, and moderated youth chat) <https://www.glbthotline.org/>