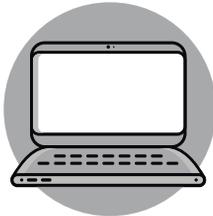


# PARENTING MATTERS: TECHNOLOGY

☐ MIDDLE SCHOOL ☐

## LIFE LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE...

Devices have become the most valuable commodity in the Middle School hierarchy. Middle Schoolers climb the social ladder through Snapchat streaks and Instagram likes. Choosing whether or not to “like” a crush’s photo or jump into a social media squabble is a source of daily anxiety and stress. Motivated by acceptance, they may try on several different digital identities based on the latest trending websites, apps, and crowd sourcing from peers and strangers.



# YOU CAN HELP GUARD THEIR HEART BY...

## KNOW:

All middle schoolers are different! Keep in mind that age, personality, maturity, and interests will affect the way that your student engages with technology. Your student may struggle in ways that their siblings, friends and neighbors don't. Be sure to tailor your expectations to your individual student and be aware of their unique traits and behaviors.

## EXPECT:

There will be pushback! When you set and enforce expectations, your student will not likely surrender their screens easily. Technology is a huge part of Middle School culture, so when they are separated from their screens, they can feel alienated and outcast. They will become more focused on exploring and fitting in. They no longer trust you inately, so you will have to work on mutual trust. Expect to reiterate your family technology expectations (maybe more than you think is necessary) and to explain how those expectations help honor your values.

## PREPARE:

There is a strong likelihood that your student has engaged in some type of unhealthy behavior online. They may have seen pornographic images, been bullied (or bullied someone) online, or shared something that they should have kept private. Chances are, they are afraid to tell you because they are afraid of your reaction. Prepare for these moments so that you respond in a caring, thoughtful and level-headed way. Enter these conversations with grace and be sure to stay calm. Handling these issues well can establish positive and constructive communication patterns for the future.

## TALK:

Communicate consistently with your Middle Schooler! Ask them what they are encountering online and answer any questions they may have. Technology is here to stay. You can't avoid it but you can talk regularly and openly about it. Ask direct questions and repeat them consistently every few weeks. Together as a family, explore ways that you can positively influence your community and your world using technology. Use tech resources such as devotions and scripture apps to talk about God together in your home.

## YOUR NEXT STEPS ARE...

Setting up technology expectations can be intimidating and overwhelming. It might even be awkward to discuss certain topics. The conversations you are having with your student are becoming more critical. Bring up topics such as self image, communication boundaries and safe web habits. These conversations are healthy and necessary steps for raising safe and technology savvy teenagers. Bring these things up around the dinner table, on the way to practice, or during one on one time. The following 8 questions are great ways to start the discussion.

### 8 Critical Questions

- When was there something was posted online that made you feel valued?
- If you were to stumble upon a pornographic or inappropriate image online, how would you respond?
- What are healthy and safe profile settings online?
- Has there ever been a time where someone picked on or devalued you through a social media/online post?
- How can we use technology as a family to bond more together?
- What is an example of a safe way to communicate something personal online?
- How can we create healthy boundaries for our devices in our home?
- What is an example of something inappropriate to share online?

Setting up technology boundaries in this phase is critical. Your student might have access to a device for the first time or they are engaging with apps in a new way. Use these questions as a platform to create a Family Technology Contract (refer to the first resource on the back page) to help every member of your family uniquely commit to using tech wisely.

## ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

### *Psalm 28:7*

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.

God gives us the unique role of leading our children - that can be super intimidating. For many this role can seem like more of a burden than a blessing. But you don't have to do it alone. You have the Lord to guide you and the church to support you. When you feel lost or overwhelmed, rest in the fact that God is your strength and your shield, protecting and guiding you. Trust in him in all things. When you struggle to set and enforce technology expectations, turn to scripture and lean on the Lord and on your Church.

## RESOURCES...

### > Web

***CommonSenseMedia*** (search: *Family Media Agreement*) • Technology Contract

***ChildMind.org*** (search: *when to get a phone*) • Brain Development and Behavior Research

***FocusontheFamily.com*** • Books, Articles and Other Resources

### > Books

***Right Click: Parenting Your Teenager in a Digital Media World*** by Kara Powell, Art Bamford, and Brad M Griffin

***Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*** by Adam Alter

***The Tech Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*** by Andy Crouch



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