

Parental strategies to support young people online

July 9 2015, by Lelia Green



Prof Green says Parents should try to teach children respect online and the courage to walk away from a heated exchange. Credit: Desirae

Since 2006 I have been part of a network of more than 100 international researchers, now involving more than 30 countries, examining young people's lives online and their parents' struggles to keep them safe and support a balanced life.

Over that time I have also seen my own [children](#) move from their teen years into adulthood.

What parents do can and does make a difference to the risks that [young people](#) run online, and to how they cope with difficulties that might arise.

It helps them grow into tomorrow's skilled and confident internet-users.

Summarising all those years of work and research, my recommendations are:

- Start early: Children are never too young to think safety first. Make [digital technologies](#) a part of [everyday life](#) and use digital technologies with your children. It is OK to give a bub a tablet for a few minutes in a bus queue, or while you catch a quick coffee with a friend, but most of the time use the technology with your child and get to know what they like. Younger children appreciate rules and boundaries and can understand why they are in place. This is the age group best suited to filters and adult locks and if they grow into teenage years knowing that the internet has some dark places they are more able to make wise decisions for themselves.
- Review your own behaviour. Model the behaviours you want your children to learn, and do this early on. If you don't want children taking their phones and tablets to bed, where they may spend the rest of the night on a social network, get into the habit of leaving technology in the lounge room to charge overnight. If you want to make a rule that there is no screen use for an hour before bedtime, make sure that that is the rule you follow too.
- With [older children](#), try to trust that your early foundations will make a difference. Negotiate with them as they chafe against restrictions. Give way on occasions but keep the channels of

communication open. Older children are sometimes risk takers. When they try to see where their personal boundaries lie, they sometimes come across startling and disturbing internet materials. This is the time when risk can turn to harm. If you want to build resilience instead, encourage young people to talk through their reactions, help them to put what they see and experience into the wider context of everyday life.

The biggest risk run by the majority of children is not stranger danger, or even pornography: it is being bullied, and taking part in bullying. Both can harm a child and both are facilitated by online technologies.

Try to teach children respect online and the courage to walk away from a heated exchange.

It is not necessary to have the last word, it is enough to know that too much has been said already.

If you are shown the material and it is disturbing, take a copy and refer it to the schools involved.

The chances are that they have anti-bullying processes in place and are able to resolve the situation more effectively than unsupported parental intervention.

Finally, celebrate your children's online achievements. Video gaming is an extraordinarily skilled activity.

Fanfiction writing hones imagination, creativity and composition. Strong social networks help kids build the friendships links which will support them throughout their lives.

Be delighted with your child's progress.

Take pride in their accomplishments... but try not to congratulate them on their social media.

Provided by Science Network WA

Citation: Parental strategies to support young people online (2015, July 9) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-07-parental-strategies-young-people-online.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.