

Six Ways to Stay Responsible on Social Media



With seemingly endless streams of tweets, Instagram photos and Facebook feeds society can seem glued to their cell phones. Social media is ingrained in our everyday lives from the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep. In 2019, 42% of the population, or 3.2 billion people used social media daily. That translates to millions of posts and photos being shared and re-shared every day. Social media is most prevalent in the lives of younger generations, with 90.4% of Millennials reporting to use social media compared to 77.5% of Gen X and 48.2% of Baby Boomers.

We consume news and entertainment, connect with friends and family and share our opinions through our many social channels. However, It can be easy to get caught up or lost in all of the information out there. Sometimes it's difficult to decipher what's true or untrue, or what's real or fabricated.

It's important that we connect, share and learn with social media, but it's also important that we do these things responsibly. Here are some practices to follow in order to remain responsible with your social media use.

Think about future implications of what you post. What we post never truly goes away on the internet, so it's important to take a second look at why we are posting something. Many times we snap a picture, write a clever caption and then click "post" without thinking of the future implications of what we post. When looking for jobs, employers can search a potential employee and find many things about their life (good or bad), or when tensions are high, it's easy to post something hurtful or harmful to someone. Really consider why you are posting something and the future effects it could have on your life or the life of someone else.

Make sure you're following reputable news sources. In the age of "fake news" we are bombarded with hundreds of news stories every day, some accurate some not so accurate. Make sure the news sources you're following are either verified or have reliable and fact-checking journalists with good reputations. Don't take everything you read at face value, and make sure you have all of the facts straight before you share or comment on a story.

Be mindful of the time you're spending on social media. On average, we spend 2 hours and 22 minutes on social media every day. Logging the time we spend on each of our social media apps can be a helpful way to breakdown and better understand how much time we are spending staring at our devices. If you feel that you're spending too much time scrolling through Facebook or Instagram, consider setting limits for yourself.

Understand you're often seeing highlight reels. Many people share their accomplishments and milestones on social media, and that's a great thing! Sharing our successes because we're proud and want to show that to the world can make us feel good

and validated. However, it's also important to understand that no one's life is as perfect as it may seem on social media. Social media tends to be a reel of our life's highlights as we don't share the difficult times. It's easy to compare ourselves to others, especially when we are going through tough times. But remember everyone goes through ups and downs and social media doesn't always accurately represent that.

Follow the THINK Model before you post.

T- is it Truthful?

H- does it Help?

I- does it Inspire?

N- is it Nice or Necessary?

K- is it Kind?

Keep a close eye on your child's social media. Decide with your child when it is ok for them to make a social media profile and sit down to help them create it. Monitor who they follow and who is following them, as well as who they may be chatting with. Turning on strict privacy settings will allow you to control who can see your child's information or posts. Keep an eye on what they are posting, making sure that they don't share too much and are following the THINK model.

Learn more about character education.