EHILLS CELL PHONE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Our kids will have to learn to live productive and quality lives in the midst of all the options (good and bad) that technology will offer them. On top of that, we will be hypocritical. One minute we're telling our kids to get off a game site and focus on homework. Five minutes later, we're calling them over to watch a funny YouTube video we saw while "working."

Our generation has the responsibility of learning, on our own, how to handle this new world that our parents never could have imagined—and how to pass it on to our kids. This is not new. Technology is just a new reality to add to the realities of growing up.

It's a lot like teaching a teenager to drive. We tell them to do things we don't do well ourselves—because we love them and want them to be safe drivers.

And just like learning to drive a car, learning to use technology responsibly takes time. They'll make mistakes and we'll need to use those mistakes as teaching opportunities. When it comes to technology, the state doesn't issue learner's permits or require written exams and field tests. We're on our own. So, we've provided this Discussion Guide to help our students earn the "keys" to their technology.

Be a great example.
The best thing parents can do for their students is to be the adults you want them to become. What are some good general rules for you as a parent? Where should your phone sleep? Do you have screen time limits? What are your personal rules for the dinner table or for time with your spouse and/or children?

Don't forget the goal is to simulate the first year of college but with a safety net.

THE UNAVOIDABLE CONVERSATION:

Our natural instinct may be to hand our students a phone and hope for the best. However, the statistics in the world indicate that this cannot be a free reign world for students. Rather than avoiding technology (which is not going to be doable in the long run) or avoiding the conversations around technology, these numbers point to the need to approach technology together. Remember, freedom is learned and earned not a gift when it comes to technology.

- According to the Fuller Youth Institute, somewhere between 4.5% and 24% of students have been bullied on social media.

- According to mom.com approximately 64% of young people, ages 13-24 are actively looking for pornography on the internet during a week. In fact, six-out-of-ten girls and nine-out-of-ten boys have seen porn before the age of 18. 71% of those looking for porn are currently hiding it from their parents/guardians.

- For every additional hour young people spend on social media or watching television, the severity of depressive symptoms increases.

- One study showed that nearly 40 percent of children have received and/or sent a "sext" by the age of 13.

- A Youth in America survey revealed that among other things, it found that 56% of 8- to 12-year-olds and 69% of 13- to 18-year-olds watch online videos every day

- A survey of almost 4,000 children aged between eight and thirteen has found: 43% are speaking to strangers online, with a third of them speaking to strangers every day or at least once a week. A high proportion of boys, including 36% of 8-year olds boys and 43% of 10 year old boys, are playing MA games and being exposed to violent and sexual content that is not appropriate for their age.

- Teens now spend up to nine hours a day on social platforms and the majority of that time is on mobile - 60% of social media time spent is facilitated by a mobile device
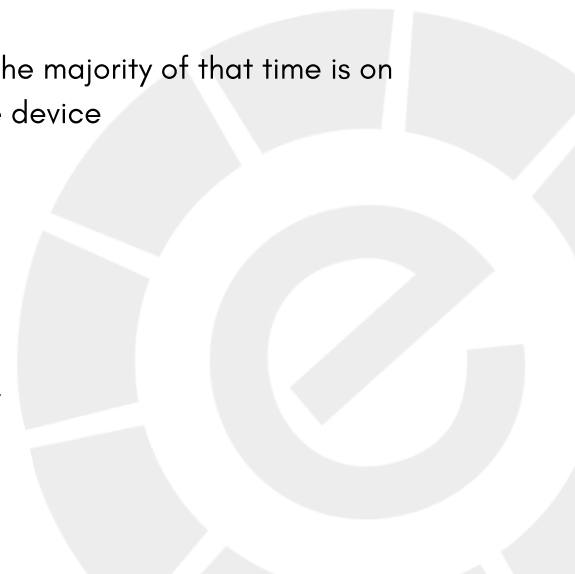
For these and other statistics please check out:

https://internetsafety101.org/Socialmediastats
https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/teenagers-and-technology
https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/viamedia-sticksandphones
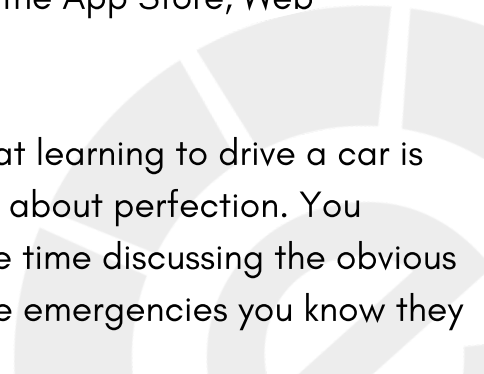https://www.moms.com/statistics-children-watching-adult-content/

TIPS FOR HAVING A GREAT CONVERSATION ABOUT TECHNOLOGY WITH YOUR STUDENT:

- **Technology is a tool not a toy**. This is difficult because we keep games on our phones. Technology is not good or bad, but is capable of much good and much bad.

- **Prepare your student; don't protect them**. This season will be marked by failures, successes, and a slow increase in the freedom and responsibility your student is trusted with.

- **Cast vision for the future**. Your goal is that one day they will have total freedom on their own phone. Why not talk about that?

- **Take the appropriate amount of time**. A smartphone is an "everything." A student who gets a new smartphone isn't ready for everything. Think about adding privileges over time until a student can handle the full power of a smartphone.

- **Prioritize an ongoing conversation above all else**. Rules and punishments are important, but as a student grows in freedom, conversations become most important. If your student isn't talking about something because of rules or the threat of punishment, you may want to rethink your posture.

- **Start with the basics**. Your student can start with calling, texting, and some preselected apps. You should "lock down" the phone in the App Store, Web browsing, and social media in the beginning.

- **Simulate emergency situations**. We all understand that learning to drive a car is about minimizing and/or avoiding emergencies and not about perfection. You should approach technology the same way. Spend some time discussing the obvious challenges with technology. Prepare your student for the emergencies you know they will face.

PARENT TECHNOLOGY WORKSHEET

Throughout the Discussion Guide, you will be prompted to share with your student how you have set wise boundaries as an adult. Before those conversations start, take time to think through these questions and discuss them with your spouse or co-parent.

- Where do family phones "sleep"? Agree on a place that all phones can "sleep" for the night. This should be a central place away from the bedrooms where beeps, rings, and the rattling of vibrating phones won't keep you awake.

- What are the "no technology times" for each member of the family? Apart from sleep times, there are other times when phones should not distract. Discuss mealtime expectations for everyone. Also, discuss driving—whether your student drives or not. Your example will be key during the years leading up to driving.

- Who knows our passwords? Spouses should have no need for secret passwords. This is also true for students and parents. Parents should have access to apps and histories on cell phones until your student is an adult. Discuss how your student should communicate current and changing passwords.

- Is our home network helping or hurting? We should have something that protects our home network. At home, we should all feel safe from danger and temptation, whether on home computers, iPads, iPods, gaming systems, or media devices that connect to the Internet. Research ways to filter and monitor all devices, including those of friends who connect when visiting. One resource that we recommend is Circle, you can find more information at https://meetcircle.com/

- Will you send me a friend request? A member of the family should not be on any social media platform alone. One of the first "friends" you should have is a spouse or parent. Whether the spouse or parent uses the platform regularly is not important. It's important that they have access. your student should communicate current and changing

BEFORE YOU GIVE YOUR STUDENT A PHONE, REMEMBER:

- It's a bad idea to give a student their own phone. It's a much better idea to let your student use a phone that you bought for their use. Therefore, you bought it and you pay the bill. Until they can pay the bill, be clear that you are happy to provide it, but it's actually your phone.

- Set expectations before you give your student a device. Your best bargaining position is before you give the phone. Discuss everything you can before the student has the smartphone.

DEAR EASTERN HILLS STUDENTS,

So, you're about to get a phone. That's an incredible thing and a huge step toward adulthood. We at Eastern Hills are very excited for you. We are also a bit nervous. A smartphone is a serious piece of machinery. It's a powerful tool. It can do a lot of good and, if it's not respected, it can do a lot of damage—to you, your friends, and your family. Think of it like a chainsaw. Or, better yet, think of it like a car. Your parents wouldn't simply hand you the keys and say good luck. They are good parents. The same is true here. You have great parents that want to prepare you well for the future.

So, let's get started.

A smartphone is much more than just a phone. In many ways, it's an "everything." So it's not necessarily a good idea to have full access to it right away. We know that's a bummer, but there is good news. At some point in the near future, you will have full access to this device. That's great news for you. That is also great news for your parents. They dream of a day when you can take care of this on your own. Just not yet. So, from here on, we will discuss each aspect of your smartphone in two phases: "NOW" and "LATER."

This just means you will have to show some responsibility and good judgment in some of the "NOW" things in order to get access to additional features.

First let's talk about technology in general. Your parents, in preparing for this, have worked out some home rules for technology. These are true whether you have a cell phone, a tablet, a computer, a gaming system, or any other device. These are also true for everyone in the home. Technology is a reality we all need to learn to use for good.

We want to cover one thing before you get into the details of "your" phone. And that's just it. Did you notice the quotation marks around the word "your"? That's because, for a while, it's really not yours. Your parents love you and want to prepare you for the future, so they are going to let you use their phone. In fact, they're even going to let you call it "your" phone for now! I hope that makes sense.

CALLING

PARENTS

- Where does my phone "sleep" at night?
- What are the "no technology times" in the house?
- I can always be asked, "Who am I talking to?

NOW

- When can I accept and make calls?
- Who can see my call log? We recommend that, for a while, parents monitor phone use through the phone service provider. This service also allows you to block certain callers, which may be helpful for both of you in the future.
- Do we need code words? Students can use them to communicate information when surrounded by others.

LATER

- As the student matures and demonstrates responsibility in this area, the parent may limit monitoring service with the provider.

TEXTING

PARENTS

- Who can read my text messages?
- Who am I accountable to?

NOW

- Should I delete it? Discuss deleting texts together.
- What does privacy mean? For a season, parents will have access to text-message content.
- Will I get in trouble? Students should not be held responsible for what other people send them, but they are responsible for what they do with it once it is on their phones.
- Discuss "emergency" situations that may happen.
- What about when another student is in danger? What do you do if someone sends you an inappropriate or illegal picture?

LATER

- As a student approaches driving age, model and discuss how to manage technology behind the wheel.
- As the student matures and demonstrates responsibility in this area, the parent may limit monitoring service with the provider.

INTERNET ACCESS

PARENTS

- Who is my accountability partner?
- Who can see my history?
- How can our house be made safer for Internet searches?

NOW

- Which browser is best? Evaluate in Safari is the best or if a different browser would be more appropriate for the time.
- What are the options? Explore the options in your browser to find ways to filter results.
- Explore options like xxxchurch.com and other services that build accountability.
- Discuss when and where exploring the internet is appropriate. Consider limiting data or leaving a phone at wifi only for a time.

LATER

- After a season of good choices with technology, Safari can be enabled with some discussions and limitations.
- Internet histories should be deleted together. Remember, we all make mistakes or can be tempted to visit the wrong places. Our goal is not to eliminate mistakes as much as to keep the conversation open.
- There are some apps and computer programs that monitor phone usage that can be of help here (e.g., PhoneSheriff, TeenSafe, and CircleGo).
- Students should give access to their Internet histories to an accountability partner in addition to their parents. This could be an older friend, a small group leader, or someone the family trusts.
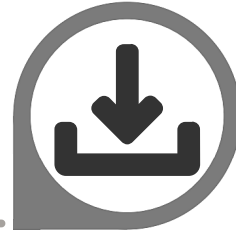
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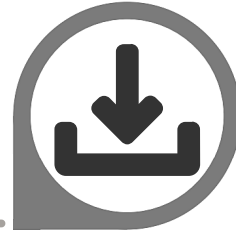
PARENTS

Things we need to understand about social media:

- **It's permanent:** Once it's out there, it's out of your control. You may be held responsible for something you post at age 13 when you're 25. It's not fair, but it's true and should be considered.

- **Content is unpredictable:** No social media platform can guarantee safe content. The content of these sites is created by the crowd. Though there are rules and filters, inappropriate content will often "pop up" and is available to curious participants who will look for it.

- **It impacts self-esteem:** The act of "liking" someone's post or being "liked" is exciting. While it is fun and often positive, it can quickly become a self-esteem issue.

NOW

Social media is here to stay. Students are going to live with social media for the rest of their lives and have to learn how to handle it. However, it's necessary for students to focus on being responsible with calls, texts, and the Internet before starting to build their social media platforms

SOCIAL MEDIA

LATER

After demonstrating wise choices in the other areas, it may be time for your student to start learning to live in a world with social media.

When they do, we recommend one platform at a time and you should be "friends" with full opportunity to observe your student's social media posts and interactions.

Some Things to Discuss:

- There should be no secret social media accounts. You should know the passwords to your student's accounts.

- You should always have family as "friends" on social media (Parents should have an account on any social media platform their student is on.)

- Discuss how many "friends" a student should have. Social media settings should require approval before someone can follow you. No strangers allowed!

- Discuss what to do when (not if) you come across inappropriate content.
  - *Immediately move on.*
  - *Stop following that person right away.*
  - *Do not interact with it.*

- Discuss what bullying and abuse might look like on each of the sites.

APPS
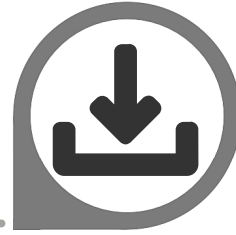
PARENTS

- Who can see the apps I download?
- Who is allowed to know my passwords?

NOW

- Who gives the thumbs-up? Discuss general rules for downloading apps. Discuss the family account and how it works.
- Apps are only to be downloaded together. Discuss what the app is first, do the research, then build parameters together.
- Is there a budget? Discuss the cost of apps and how much a student can spend on apps in a month.

LATER

- As the student demonstrates wise choices, the monitoring and the monthly budget can change.

MUCH LATER

As the student approaches maturity and is allowed to have their own phone, discuss the transition from a family account to a personal account.
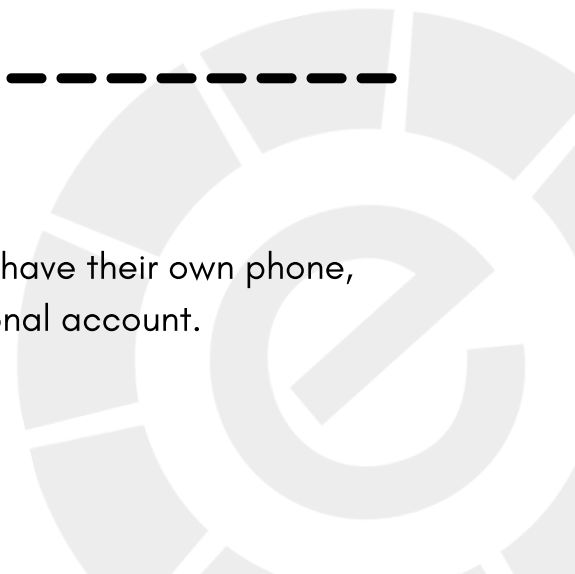
For more tips, tricks, and conversations around technology, feel free to visit:

EHILLS.ORG/FAMILY-RESOURCES

and remember...YOU are the hero in your child's story!