

# **INFORMATION DU CONSTABLE**

## **Martin Boileau lors de la présentation aux parents :**

### **Online Safety & Mental Wellbeing**

*Information, tips and suggestions for Parents*

---

#### **What makes Social Media so attractive to our youths?**

Social media sites are powerful communication platforms both for personal and interpersonal. The reasons for their increasing popularity are many...

- **Provides Platform To Express Oneself Without Inhibition:** The humongous attraction of social media sites is perhaps mainly due to the absence of fear factor which usually engulfs us in real life.
- **Provides Anonymity:** Social media sites have become attractive because people who are otherwise unsocial or reticent can now communicate with others without any reservation. You can take on any avatar or persona and mingle among the socially adept.

- **Gives a feeling of being social without being social:** Our children are bombarded with messages from every corner – online media, television, movies, videos and songs. This multidimensional attack on human mind has surprising consequences. Individuals, especially youngsters, tend to freely forge friendships on social media sites while they may dislike real communication with real people. These hands off relationships seem to provide the same mental satisfaction as would real, flesh and blood affairs.
- **Provides Opportunity To Interact Without Prejudices:** Despite all the talk about equality of race, color, rank and social status, we are still living in a world of prejudices. The real world remains the same even as it changes. On the other hand, it doesn't matter what you wear or what you look like when you are interacting on a social media site. This is another reason why social media sites are attractive because they are free and provide freedom.

## **10 Reasons Why Today's Teenagers Are So Anxious...**

### **1. Electronics offer an unhealthy escape.**

Constant access to digital devices lets kids escape uncomfortable emotions like boredom, loneliness, or sadness by immersing themselves in games or by chatting on social media. And now we're seeing what happens when an entire generation has spent their childhoods avoiding discomfort. Their electronics replaced opportunities to develop mental strength, and they didn't gain the coping skills they need to handle everyday challenges.

### **2. Happiness is all the rage.**

Happiness is emphasized so much in our culture that some parents think it's their job to make their kids happy all the time. When a child is sad, his parents cheer him up. Or when she's angry, they calm her down.

Kids grow up believing that if they don't feel happy around the clock, something must be wrong. That creates a lot of inner turmoil. They don't understand that it's normal and healthy to feel sad, frustrated, guilty, disappointed, and angry sometimes, too.

### **3. Parents are giving unrealistic praise.**

Saying things like, "You're the fastest runner on the team," or "You're the smartest kid in your grade," doesn't build self-esteem. Instead, it puts pressure on kids to live up to those labels. That can lead to crippling fear of failure or rejection.

#### **4. Parents are getting caught up in the rat race.**

Many parents have become like personal assistants to their teenagers. They work hard to ensure their teens are partaking in many activities and make it their job to help them build transcripts that will impress a top school. Indirectly they send the message that their teen must excel at everything to ensure successful life.

#### **5. Kids aren't learning emotional skills.**

We emphasize academic preparation and put little effort into teaching kids the *emotional* skills they need to succeed. In fact, a national survey of first-year college students revealed that 60 percent feel emotionally unprepared for college life.

Knowing how to manage your time, combat stress, and take care of your feelings are key components to living a good life. Without healthy coping skills, it's no wonder teens are feeling anxious over every day hassles.

#### **6. Parents view themselves as protectors rather than guides.**

Somewhere along the line, many parents began believing their role is to help kids grow up with as few emotional and physical scars as possible. They became so overprotective that their kids never practiced dealing with challenges on their own. Consequently, these kids have grown up to believe they can face and cope with the realities of life.

#### **7. Adults don't know to help kids face their fears the right way.**

At one end of the spectrum, you'll find parents who push their kids too hard. On the other end, you'll find parents who don't push kids at all. They let their kids opt out of anything that sounds anxiety-provoking.

Exposure is the best way to conquer fear but only when it's done incrementally. Without practice, gentle nudging, and guidance, kids never gain confidence that they can face their fears head-on.

#### **8. Parents are parenting out of guilt and fear.**

Parenting stirs up uncomfortable emotions, like guilt and fear. But rather than let themselves feel those emotions, many parents are changing their parenting habits. So they don't let their kids out of their sight because it stirs up their anxiety, or they feel so guilty saying no to their kids that they back down and give in. Consequently, they teach their kids that uncomfortable emotions are intolerable.

## **9. Kids aren't being given enough free time to play.**

While organized sports and clubs play an important role in kids' lives, adults make and enforce the rules. Unstructured play teaches kids vital skills, like how to manage disagreements without an adult refereeing. And solitary play teaches kids how to be alone with their thoughts and comfortable in their own skin.

## **10. Family hierarchies are out of whack.**

Although kids give the impression that they'd like to be in charge, deep down they know they aren't capable of making good decisions. Kids need their parents to be leaders even when there is dissension in the ranks and when the chain of command gets muddled or flipped upside down their anxiety skyrockets.

# **Why Middle School Kids are just not ready for Social Media**

A Tween's midbrain is reorganizing itself and **risk taking** is high and **impulse control** is low. Many child psychologists and school resource counsellors report there is no worse time in a child's life to have access to social media than middle school. Here are some reasons why:

- **Social media was not designed for them.** A tween's underdeveloped frontal cortex can't manage the distraction nor the temptations that come with social media use. While you start teaching responsible use of tech now, *know that you will not be able to teach the maturity that social media requires.*
- **Social media is an entertainment technology.** It does not make your child smarter or more prepared for real life or a future job; nor is it necessary for healthy social development. It is pure entertainment attached to a marketing platform extracting bits and pieces of personal information and preferences from your child every time they use it, not to mention hours of their time and attention.
- **A tween's "more is better" mentality is a dangerous match for social media.** Do they really have 1,456 friends? Do they really need to be on it 4 hours a day? Social media allows (and encourages) them to overdo their friend connections like they tend to overdo other things in their lives.

- **Social media is an addictive form of screen entertainment.** And, like video game addiction, early use can set up future addiction patterns and habits.
- **Social media replaces learning the hard social "work" of dealing face-to-face with peers,** a skill that they will need to practice to be successful in real life.
- **Social media can cause teens to lose connection with family and instead view "friends" as their foundation.** Since the cognitive brain is still being formed, the need for your teen to be attached to your family is just as important now as when they were younger. Make sure that attachment strong. While they need attachments to their friends, they need healthy family attachment more.
- **Social media use represents lost potential for teens.** While one can argue that there are certain benefits of social media for teens, the costs are very high during the teen years when their brain development is operating at peak performance for learning new things. It is easy for teens to waste too much of their time and too much of their brain in a digital world. We know from many studies that it is nearly impossible for them to balance it all.

## **6 Horrifying things people can find out about your kids online...**

**You have passwords and firewalls, blocks and safeguards. But your children still may be under attack from smart and sneaky online predators.**

1. **Exact location** - Instagram hashtags and location features (eg. Location tag on photo) may seem cute to add to a photo, but they also tell anyone exactly where your child is. (Don't divulge locations and disable location settings)
2. **Full name and birthday** - Many sites, incl gaming websites, ask for your child's name and birthday to login. Online hackers receives those two pieces of knowledge, he can begin to unlock your child's world. If you're a blogger, and if you often write your child's full name, you may be to blame too. (Use Initials or nickname for your child).
3. **Interests and hobbies** - If your child loves soccer or a famous artist/band and talks about that online, predators may find out. Hot topics can reveal a lot about your child and skilled hackers can utilize that and lure your child. (Monitor activity)
4. **Schedules** - When your child gets home from school at the same time each day and logs on to the computer, people on the other side of that computer will know. If you post online about weekly traditions or picking up your child at 3:30 every day, you increase the chance of personal invasion. Once someone knows your child's name, school and pickup time, the situation becomes a lot more dangerous. (Check yourself)

5. **Photos** - People post hundreds of photos at every hour of the day, but someone online may take these photos and reproduce them. Some even alter the photos. If a skilled hacker is deep into your personal or your child's life, they may overtake their identity and your family, and they'll use it to their advantage by way of extortion and coercion. (Sextortion is at an all-time high and there is no easy way to stop it)
6. **Secrets** - If your child shows signs of bullying or trouble at home, the online world will find out. Maybe your child went to a friend's house after school and got caught up in drinking, viewing inappropriate photos or bullying. Somehow, these things can leak into the virtual world. You may be the one to discover your child's secrets simply by searching her history and friends. (Instead of snooping around, talk to your child about his/her online activity).

## 9 Tips for parents with pre-teens / teens:

- **1) On why parents should learn new technologies:**
  - ✓ Parents need to tech-up in order to properly monitor their kids' cyber life. Most won't surpass their kids when it comes to technology, but try to be on the same page with them instead of looking the other way or claiming ignorance about all things digital. Jump in and learn the basics of the Internet; read articles, take a class, and talk to other parents.
- **2) On age-appropriate technology usage:**
  - ✓ For the younger kids, use parental controls on the computer. If you buy a cell phone, ensure that it is a child-friendly device with restrictions on who can call or text them.
  - ✓ For the older children, have regular conversations with them about their online use and clearly tell them your values and expectations. Use monitoring software if you suspect your child is getting in over his or her head. Restrict the times in which they can use their cell phones and keep an eye on . . . Facebook or other social networking profiles.
- **3) On children posting photos:**
  - ✓ Ideally, children should not post pictures on the Internet at all but if you trust them to do so, follow up and ensure the photographs are appropriate in nature.
- **4) On what constitutes the biggest online safety risk:**

- ✓ The biggest risk for kids? They give away their heart to people who don't deserve it. Online communication promotes something called 'hyperpersonal communication,' where we tend to disclose things much deeper and much faster online than we would face to face.
- ✓ Part of this is due, especially in the case of young teens, to the way we tend to idealize the person on the other end. Because we don't get many non-verbal cues, we assume the other person is more like what we want rather than what they really are.
- ✓ As a result, kids share too much, get too close and end up getting hurt. So instead of worrying about predators who will come and take our kids from their beds, we need to worry more about our kids walking out the front door – right into the arms of the predator.

➤ **5) On when to start letting kids use the Internet:**

- ✓ Every child is different and will express interest at different intervals, just like learning to crawl or walk. As you see their comprehension and maturity level of the Internet grow, continue working with them side by side to open new areas, discuss Internet safety and put rules in place. When our children are learning how to walk, we slowly open more areas of our home for them to navigate through as they are ready. The same rings true for the online world

➤ **6) On how kids should respond to cyberbullying:**

- ✓ As difficult as it may be, encourage your child to stop reading, walk away from the computer and re-enforce the need to talk about it. Most teens will not discuss with parents for whatever the reason, but reaffirm the fact they are not alone and other trusted adults can help as well.

➤ **7) On choosing an online name:**

- ✓ When networking online, it's better to use your first name only – or better yet, use a nickname that your friends recognize. In some cases, individuals may consider altering the spelling of their name or leaving out letters.

➤ **8) On agree on a game plan**

- ✓ Use the [InternetSafety.com Gameplan™](http://InternetSafety.com) (similar to a contract) to formally agree on your family's guidelines for using the Internet. Post them near the family computer as a reminder. Ensure that your kids know to never share personal information on the Internet and that they should tell you about any online activity or contact that makes them uncomfortable

➤ **9) On keeping communication lines open:**

- ✓ Having ongoing conversations with your children and teens about what is going on in their lives will keep you close to your children and they will be more likely to reveal problems as they come up. Be sure to talk about the positive things as well as the problems. Daily discussions are ideal, but if you cannot do that, do what you can.

## Tracking Apps/Programs (if desired)

A good way to keep tabs on your child's social media activity is through

- [WebSafety.com](https://www.web.org/) or [bark.us](https://www.bark.us/) are apps that let you monitor what your child does on their mobile phones and tablets.
- Or visit this website for other great suggestions:  
[https://www.parents.com/parenting/technology/best-apps-for-paranoid-parents/?slideId=slide\\_bc7492e1-60b3-4b8d-8248-c7ef643822ae#slide\\_bc7492e1-60b3-4b8d-8248-c7ef643822ae](https://www.parents.com/parenting/technology/best-apps-for-paranoid-parents/?slideId=slide_bc7492e1-60b3-4b8d-8248-c7ef643822ae#slide_bc7492e1-60b3-4b8d-8248-c7ef643822ae) (Don't focus on the "paranoid parent" comment in this link as it's not about being paranoid but rather getting/being involved.)

## Want and need to learn about social media?

- <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/> We believe that through our engaging Online Safety training resources for school staff, parents and children, we can make a difference.
- Lynda.com (<https://www.lynda.com/Social-Networks-training-tutorials/67-0.html>) will walk you through some of the basics and get you to a comfort level you require to ensure you have a little more confidence to discuss the dos and don'ts with your children. Please be aware there may be a cost associated to some parts.

- YouTube also offers free tutorial sessions on most social networking sites.
  - (Eg: Google - youtube Instagram tutorial)

## Great online resource websites for parents

- A good place to start with some basic safety aspects is [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org).
- A better site to stay current with the latest in online technology is [www.mediasmarts.ca](http://www.mediasmarts.ca) : (Digital-media-literacy/e-tutorials/parent-network-social-media-your-kids-workshop)
- The best Online resource for Canadian parents is: [www.protectchildren.ca](http://www.protectchildren.ca) or [protectkidsonline.ca](http://protectkidsonline.ca)

**Relatable Online Articles:** All of these are well worth reading or viewing!

- <https://deeproootsathome.com/kids-bored-entitled/?fbclid=IwAR2ejPeXOJDRa5fZbCJGidEBZZvt6Ecl8G0h9bv-jij4HaAUu0eeeQWdPA4>
- <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-excessive-screen-time-could-play-role-in-development-delays-in/?fbclid=IwAR22uqeUnKchBC6noCI5f40695KKrISMHiY84PqOrWoWLozBbiw0ytRIKWg>
- <https://www.macleans.ca/society/the-collapse-of-parenting-why-its-time-for-parents-to-grow-up/>
- [https://qz.com/527652/parents-let-your-kids-fail-youll-be-doing-them-a-favor/?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=qz-organic&fbclid=IwAR16rLJmiZ-CtOdIwNsYvI1\\_aGqu\\_XJDPV47bfHZPVaDF7-En1UszkOb1ds](https://qz.com/527652/parents-let-your-kids-fail-youll-be-doing-them-a-favor/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=qz-organic&fbclid=IwAR16rLJmiZ-CtOdIwNsYvI1_aGqu_XJDPV47bfHZPVaDF7-En1UszkOb1ds)

- <https://www.westartnow.org/blog/2019/1/13/we-put-her-phone-to-bed-and-were-shocked-by-what-she-said>
- [https://www.macleans.ca/society/how-the-smartphone-affected-an-entire-generation-of-kids/?utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_source=Facebook#Echobox=1547677475](https://www.macleans.ca/society/how-the-smartphone-affected-an-entire-generation-of-kids/?utm_medium=organic&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1547677475)
- <https://www.theoutbound.com/brynn-schmidt/why-kids-need-wilderness-and-adventure-more-than-ever>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ0NaJznznc>
- <https://www.waituntil8th.org/blog/2018/11/12/middle-school-misfortunes-then-and-now-one-teachers-take?fbclid=IwAR3zFfHRddmi0JreSCbTFfULnzOctBZuPTnD79PA64l68FvBdecjsLwalQg>