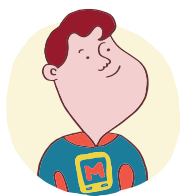


# CLIQUE CLICK



PROTECTOR



ROLE MODEL



TRUTH SEEKER



VALUES COACH



LINESMAN



VISIONARY

BRINGING UP CHILDREN  
IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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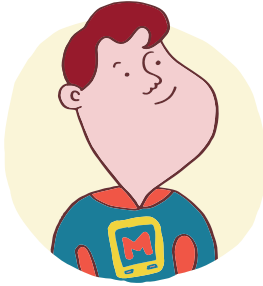
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# FOREWORD

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Dear Parents

This digital age brings with it tremendous opportunities and risks. The online world is especially rich with content for learning, socialising and entertainment. As your child learns to access, use and create such content, it is important that they do so safely and responsibly.

This handbook, provided by the Media Literacy Council, aims to help you in your online journey with your child. It is a useful resource to help answer some questions that you often ask - When is a good time to introduce devices to them? What happens when the child indulges in excessive gaming or social media use? How can we teach them to be more discerning with online content they come across?

While the handbook offers practical tips to help build resilience in your children, it is necessary to give them the space to explore and make sense of this digital world. After all, as digital natives, our children on their own must graduate into confident online users eager to harness the opportunities in the digital world.

As we think about how we can raise our children to be good digital citizens, bear in mind that the best environment for them to learn is in their own homes. So let's continue to be good role models for our children as we embark on this digital journey with them!

Sincerely,

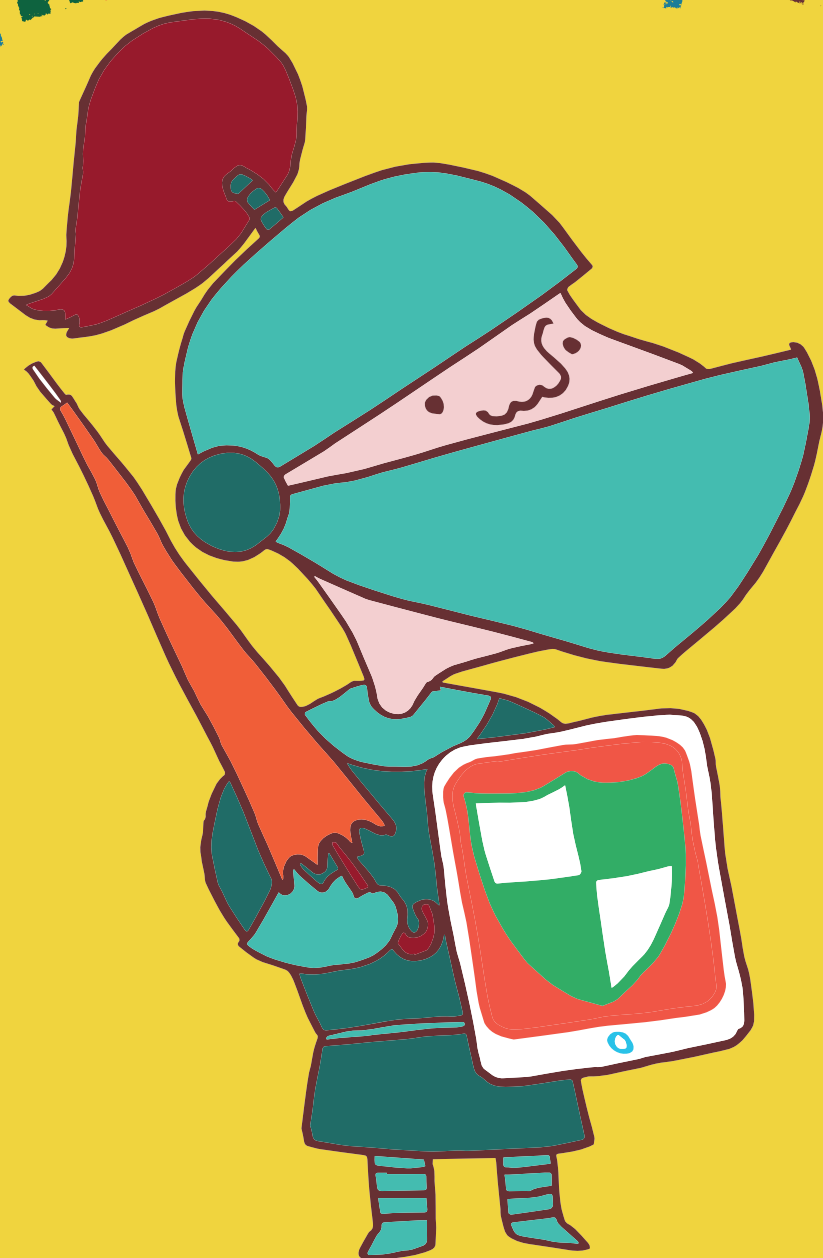
A handwritten signature in dark red ink, appearing to read 'Lock Wai Han', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lock Wai Han

**Chairman**

**Media Literacy Council**

# THE PROTECTOR





# THE PROTECTOR

## Teaching Safety on the Internet

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9-year-old Suri and her classmates frequently talk about Disney princesses and boy bands at school. Her classmates like to make up rhymes and tease one another on being “boyfriend” and “girlfriend”. One day Suri was at home in her room using the iPad. Being curious and influenced by her peers, she went to Youtube to search for “how to kiss”. The search results came up with different videos of men and women in various positions, kissing. As Suri was watching a video of a kissing scene, her father came into the room. He was shocked, angry and embarrassed at the same time and promptly confiscated the iPad. He told Suri “You’re not allowed to use YouTube ANYMORE!”

## REALITY

As parents, we want to protect our children from negative online experiences and unhealthy content, but a total ban on the usage of technology is not going to work. It will only cause the child to find ways around the ban and hide from rather than confide in the parent. As a protector of his child, Suri’s father could have used the situation as a teachable moment to talk to Suri about healthy boy-girl relationships, and be an “askable” parent to address Suri’s questions and curiosity.

The online world today is the children’s new playground. They hang out there to play games, make friends, discuss homework, look for information and stay connected. Like at all playgrounds, children may be exposed to undesirable behaviours, vulgar language and mix with the wrong company. There are also bullies and predators lurking around.

# Social Media Sites

## that Children and Teens Are Using

Children today access the Internet from many different entry points – desktops, laptops, smart phones, and tablets.

In the real world, we protect our children by alerting them to risks and teaching them how they can protect themselves. We set up rules which we expect our children to obey.

In the online world, because it is porous and anonymous, it is even more important that we know how to protect our children while empowering them to harness the advantages of the Internet.



### **SOCIAL NETWORKS**

Sites that allow individuals to set up a profile and connect with friends or strangers, depending on their privacy settings.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Google+



### **BLOGGING SITES**

Sites for individual or group of users to record their opinion, information on a regular basis.

Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr



### **MICROBLOGGING SITES**

Sites or applications that individuals publish short updates to anyone who subscribes to receive it.

Twitter, Facebook



### **MEDIA SHARING**

Sites for individuals to post various media like videos and pictures and allows other users to comment.

YouTube, Flickr, Instagram



### **INSTANT MESSAGING**

Cross-platform instant messaging to individuals or groups at one go. Users can send text, videos, audio messages and pictures.

WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Telegram

# REFLECT

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How do you keep your children safe online and help them make wise choices?

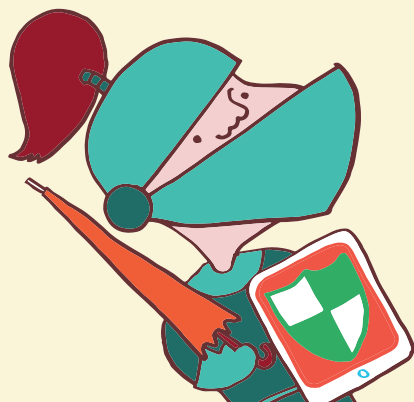
Do you know your child's **online habits** – the sites they visit, the games they play, who their online friends are?

Do you set **house rules** on Internet usage?  
*(e.g. Do not respond to offensive or unknown emails, chats or any other communications).*

Are you **friends** with your child online?

*(Tell your child they should add you if they have nothing to hide)*

Do you set up **filters** and **anti-virus** software?



# RESPOND

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Curiosity is a wonderful trait in a child, and like in Suri's case, the Internet can easily feed a child's curiosity. Children today are very comfortable and proficient in using, playing and communicating through digital devices. But as parents, we need to realise that proficiency does not equate to wise and safe usage. They are children after all - skilled technically, but still developing in maturity, thought process and decision-making skills.



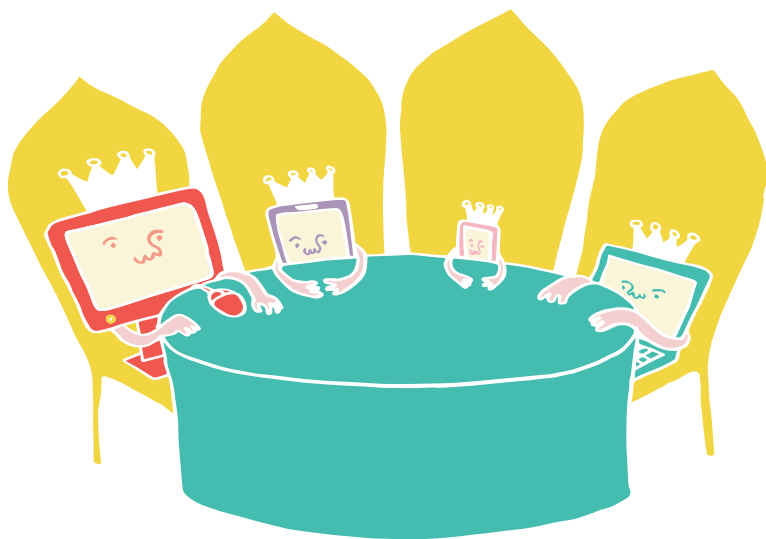
## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW & DO

- Keep the computer in a common area so that you can monitor your child's Internet activity. This applies to their usage of laptops, tablets and mobile devices.
- Avoid giving primary school children personal mobile devices with Internet access.
- Use safe search setting for children or use parental controls to prevent exposure to inappropriate content.
- Start with limited access to the Internet (the younger they are, the less access), then give them rules to follow to earn your trust.
- Explain to your child the rationale and reason for the rules and instructions you have set in place.
- Be an approachable and "askable" parent, make use of teachable moments when your child confides in you.



## WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW & DO

- Never share personal information, videos, photos with people he doesn't know well and has never met in person.
- Never add as friend someone he doesn't know in real life (explain to them about fake identities and online predators).
- Never share his passwords and always set his profile to "private" or "friends only" so his personal information is kept safe.
- Never open emails from strangers. It may contain viruses that can harm a computer.
- Say "no" to meeting strangers.
- Immediately tell you or a trusted adult if he encounters something nasty, or makes him feel uncomfortable when he is online.





## SET UP PARENTAL CONTROLS

Internet filters, safe settings, and web restrictions programmes are collectively known as Parental Controls. These tools help parents monitor and restrict their children's Internet access where necessary.

### How to turn on Parental Controls for a Standard User Account (Windows 7 onwards):

1. Make sure each child has a standard user account and you are the Administrator user account.
2. Click on the **START** button, click **Control Panel**, then click **Parental Controls**.
3. Select your child's user account and click **On**.
4. Once you've turned on Parental Controls for your child's user account, you can adjust the individual settings that you want to control like:
  - a. **Web restrictions**
  - b. **Time limits**
  - c. **Games**
  - d. **Allow or block specific programmes**

# Safe Settings

Safe settings on search engines help minimize exposure to sexually explicit and excessively violent material as well as those flagged as ‘inappropriate for children’. Enable safe settings to prevent your child from accidentally stumbling onto such content.

## GOOGLE SAFESEARCH

[www.google.com/preferences](http://www.google.com/preferences)

## YAHOO SAFESEARCH

<http://search.yahoo.com/preferences/preferences>

## YOUTUBE SAFETY MODE

Scroll down to the bottom of the Youtube page.

Click the drop-down menu in the “Safety” section.

Select the “On” option to enable this feature.

**Note:** Safe settings need to be set for every browser and for each device. You’ll also need to sign in to your Google, Youtube and Yahoo accounts to enable the settings.

# Internet Filters

- Internet Access Service Providers (IASPs) can provide filters for both fixed and mobile broadband, and mobile phones.
- When enabled, access to inappropriate sites are seamlessly screened.
- Service may come bundled with broadband subscription.

**Contact your IASP today to find out more!**

# YOUR TOOLS AND ACTIONS IN SELECTING APPROPRIATE MEDIA FOR YOUR CHILDREN



## SHARE RECOMMENDATIONS

Speak to other parents and share media recommendations suitable for children and the family.

## SET PARENTAL CONTROLS

Use tools like Internet filters, safe settings, web restriction programmes for your devices.



## READ MOVIE AND MEDIA REVIEWS

Various websites offer film and book reviews written with children in mind.

Kids in Mind

[www.kids-in-mind.com](http://www.kids-in-mind.com)

Common Sense Media

[www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org)

Parent Previews

[www.parentpreviews.com](http://www.parentpreviews.com)

## CHECK MEDIA RATINGS

Know the type of content and language your child may encounter in a film. Check out the Infocomm Media Development Authority's films classification database on ratings and descriptions.

<https://app.imda.gov.sg/Classification/Search/Film/>





# WATCH WHAT YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING, ONLINE OR OFFLINE



## **GENERAL**

Suitable for all ages.



## **PARENTAL GUIDANCE**

Suitable for all, but parents should guide their young.



## **PARENTAL GUIDANCE 13**

Suitable for persons aged 13 and above but parental guidance is advised for children below 13.

**NC16**

## **NO CHILDREN UNDER 16**

Suitable for persons aged 16 and above.

**M18**

## **MATURE 18**

Suitable for persons aged 18 and above.

**R21**

## **RESTRICTED 21**

Suitable for adults aged 21 and above.

Watch out for these rating symbols for Films, Videos and TV programmes. Viewers can also easily differentiate the green advisory ratings from the orange age-restricted ratings. So, make an informed choice today and choose content suitable for you and your family.

# THE ROLE MODEL



# THE ROLE MODEL

Being a Role Model - The Best Way to Teach



## DADDY

(Overheard) Dad playing game on smartphone. 8-year-old daughter, "Dad, are you addicted to Candy Crush?" :-s - #DadSeriously #RoleModel about half an hour ago via web • Singapore



## MOMMY

(Overheard) 6-year-old to mother, "Mama, put the phone AWAY!" #DistractedParenting 10 min ago via mobile • Singapore

## REALITY

It's ironic: Technology and gadgets allow us to stay connected 24/7, but we're often guilty of ignoring or not giving our full attention to the immediate people around us.

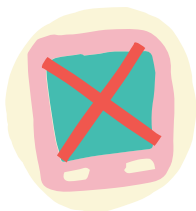
"Put the phone AWAY!" That 6-year-old is also talking to you.

"But I'm reading the news on my phone." "I need to respond to my boss' email and calls immediately." "I can multi-task well."

The problem is, children won't rationalise as adults do. When a child sees a parent constantly using the phone or computer, he might believe that the phone or computer, work or whoever is on the line is more important than he is. It's a subtle message of rejection; it can make a child feel invisible.

Over time, he will start to wonder and be curious about the draw and attraction of these media devices that are captivating his parents and which would later be used as substitutes to unmet attention and affirmation from his parents.

# Children Do What Children See



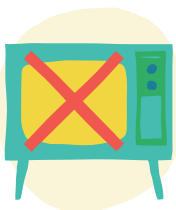
Children who had “**neglectful**” parents (defined as low control and low emotional warmth) spent up to 30 additional minutes a day watching television, playing a video game or being engaged in some other form of “**screen time**”.

*Journal of Early Child Development and Care, 2012*



Parents can foster empathy and prosocial development by modelling **prosocial behaviour**, expressing compassion for others and discussing moral beliefs and values.

*The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Vol 2: Self and Other*



Boys whose parents watch more than 4 hours of **television** a day are 10 times more likely to have the same **habits** as their parents as compared to those with parents who rarely watch television.

*Dr Aric Sigman, biologist and member of the British Psychological Society, 2012*



Lack of parental self-control, being a reactive parent, can create self-control problems in children.

*Dr Steven Richfield, child psychologist and author of The Parent Coach*

# Are You a Good Sharent?

The age of social media has birthed a new hobby – *sharenting* – parents who blog, tweet and post photos and videos of their children on social networking sites.

As we create a digital footprint for our children, we need to be careful about how that footprint is seen in the future. A photo of a naked baby or a tantrum-throwing toddler may seem cute now but will it lead to teasing for our child when they are older? Or will excessive sharing lead to strangers identifying our children and contacting them?

Be a good sharent and practise the following:

## PRIVACY

Adjust privacy settings on social media and allow only trusted audiences to view posts.

## SAFETY

Don't post personal information (e.g. birth certificates, passports) or geo-tagged photos that can reveal their locations (e.g. school, home, tuition centres).

## APPROPRIATENESS

Before posting, ask yourself if your kids will feel embarrassed or upset when they see your posts, now and in the future.



# REFLECT

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For your child's and your own emotional and social development, parents need to commit to having tech-free space in the family. Like it or not, you are your child's tech role model. Children need to see their parents use technology in responsible ways. They take their social cues not from what parents say, but from what they do.

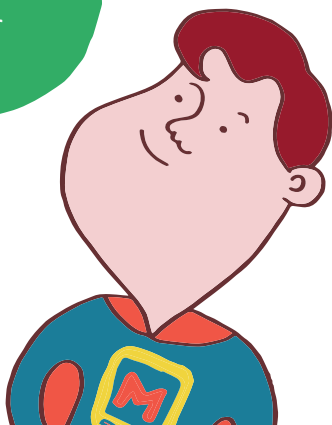
During **dinner** with your family, are you tempted to answer an email, text a message, answer a call, post a comment, even when it is not urgent?

Are you on the computer/gadgets when you can be **bonding** with your child?

Are you sharing **information about your child** that may impact them later in life?

Have you set up a Facebook account for your child who is **below the minimum age requirement**?

Does that tell your child it is ok to lie?



# RESPOND

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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW & DO

- Whenever possible, (e.g. mealtime) put away all media devices and catch up on each other's day. Teach your child to connect by connecting with him.
- Show your child that it is possible not to be overly dependent on gadgets (addicted).
- When you share posts about your child, don't upload anything that may embarrass them in the future.
- Don't post anything your child has shared with you in confidence.
- Think before you post. If you say something nasty or irresponsible, what will your child think of you?
- To better protect your child's privacy, ensure your social network account settings are set such that only trusted audiences can view.

# THE TRUTH SEEKER





# THE TRUTH SEEKER

## Cultivating a Critical Mindset

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A researcher from the University of Connecticut directed students to a website he created (<http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus>) with fictional information about an endangered Pacific Northwest tree octopus. It detailed the creature's appearance, habits, history, how it was endangered, and even had photographs of various species of the tree octopus. The students believed the fictitious information, and insisted on the existence of the octopus, even after researchers explained that the information had been made up.

## REALITY

Children today have access to a global internet library. Our children commonly use the Internet to search for information, for their homework, school projects or simply for fun.

They may come across advertisements, websites with extreme views, fake information, and online scams – all with the aim of influencing their opinion and getting them to take a course of action.

Our children need to learn an important life skill – the ability to manage and sift through the barrage of information to get to the truth. The key to this is by adopting a critical mindset and asking the right questions.

# Tips on Teaching Kids About Information Literacy

## **CREDIBILITY: WHOSE SITE IS THIS? WHO IS SPEAKING?**

- Consider if the page is a commercial site that could be trying to sell something, or a personal site which contains opinions rather than facts.
- What's the point of view of the website? Are there other views which are missing?
- Is it backed up by facts or is it just people giving their opinions? Can you detect bias in the information?
- Is the information verifiable on other sources and sites?



## **MULTIPLE SOURCES: IS THE INFORMATION CURRENT AND VERIFIABLE?**

- Some information is time-sensitive. Check the dates the information was published.
- Are there any links or footnotes to other reliable sources?
- Check multiple sources by clicking into the various links, not just the first link on a search engine.
- Compare information on at least 3 different websites.



# Too good to be true?



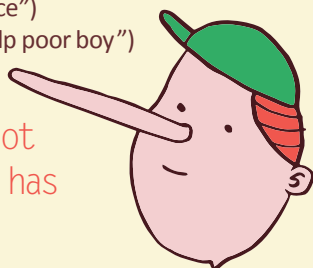
Just because a website is professional-looking doesn't mean the information on it is necessarily correct. Show your children that pictures and images they see online may not necessarily be real or true as they can be altered using software (e.g., search for Dove Ad - *The Evolution of Beauty*, which shows how images for advertisements are touched up with the aim of enticing a buyer).



Teach your child to be alert both online or offline. Conmen and scammers prey on:

- Gullibility ("click to win")
- Greed ("Buy now for low price")
- Kindness ("Share this to help poor boy")
- Fear ("Do this or else....")

More importantly, teach your child not to use or pass on information that he has not verified and is unsure about.



## Useful Info and Educational Sites for Kids

[www.gameclassroom.com](http://www.gameclassroom.com)

Offers informative ways for students to build on what they learn in school.

[www.smithsonianeducation.org/students](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/students)

Resources for students on topics like history, science and cultures.

[www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com)

Offers students information on science, math, history.

# REFLECT

---

The ability to tell right from wrong, fact from fiction, is a life skill that every child should have especially in the digital age. Are you showing your child the ropes?

Are you tempted by “too-good-to-be-true” **deals** on the internet?

Can you further check and verify before you buy?

Do you **cross-check** across multiple sources to verify the information?

A **fact** is verifiable. An **opinion** is what someone thinks.

Can you tell the difference so you can make an informed decision?

Are you aware of your own **biases**? People often seek information to confirm their biases instead of looking at information objectively.



# RESPOND

---



## WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW & DO

- Always be a skeptic when it comes to online information. Ask questions about what they are reading. (e.g. Is this website credible? Can I trust it? Is there another point of view which is missing?)
- Compare information on at least 3 websites.
- Pictures and videos can be doctored with software; so just because they see it, does not mean it's true.
- Beware of freebies, prizes, get-rich-quick deals or gifts offered by websites or strangers on social network. If something seems too good to be true, it usually isn't true.
- Always have a critical mindset when evaluating information, including advertising messages.



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW & DO

- Use teachable moments (news articles, photos and videos) to point out dubious information and scam tactics.
- Be a good role model in how you seek and process information.

# THE VALUES COACH



## THE VALUES COACH

### Instilling Values for Long-term Benefits

---

For 9 year old Aisha, school was a nightmare. She was continually taunted and called names by her peers in school. These comments made their way to online social media sites. Her mother only realised something was amiss when she noticed Aisha faking sickness in order to skip school.

**Many children won't tell their parents about negative online experiences because they worry their parents would overreact or they would get into trouble. *Norton Online Family & School Report, 2011***

In another school, 12-year-old Gayle hung out with friends that were considered “cool”. They picked on Peishan, a girl who was big built and had acne. “I called her fat and ugly. We sent her text messages and called her names. We bullied her so much, and we felt so cool.” Gayle’s mother found out when she read some text messages in Gayle’s mobile phone and confronted her about it.

### REALITY

Bullying in school has not changed. The only difference now is its mode. In addition to the classroom and playground, bullying has now entered a child’s home – cyberbullying.

Unfortunately, the impact is worse for victims of cyberbullying because:

- The scale, speed and reach of technology make words and pictures remain permanently online.
- There is a larger online “audience” which makes it more embarrassing.
- There seems to be no escape, since the taunting follows the victim home; cyberbullying can happen anytime, anywhere.
- Adults may not be able to intervene as the bullying takes place online where adults cannot see.

# The New Face of Bullying

**Cyberbullying** is a deliberate and intentional attempt to cause physical, emotional and psychological harm to others through the use of the Internet and/or other digital technologies. This includes:

- Using email, online message boards, chat rooms, mobile phones or social networking sites to post cruel messages.
- Sending rude, offensive or threatening messages.
- Sending unpleasant, offensive photos, images and videos.
- Deleting a victim's name from groups or ignoring their messages on social network sites.

Children who are “different” (for example, physically challenged or come from a different background), are more likely to be bullied.

Research has found that the following factors also contribute to cyberbullying on social media:



Lack of parental supervision and involvement



Overly-permissive parenting  
(including lack of limits and accountability for children's behaviour)



Modelling of bullying behaviour by parent or sibling



Boredom



Amusement



Friends who bully or have positive attitudes about violence



# Why Kids Do What They Do

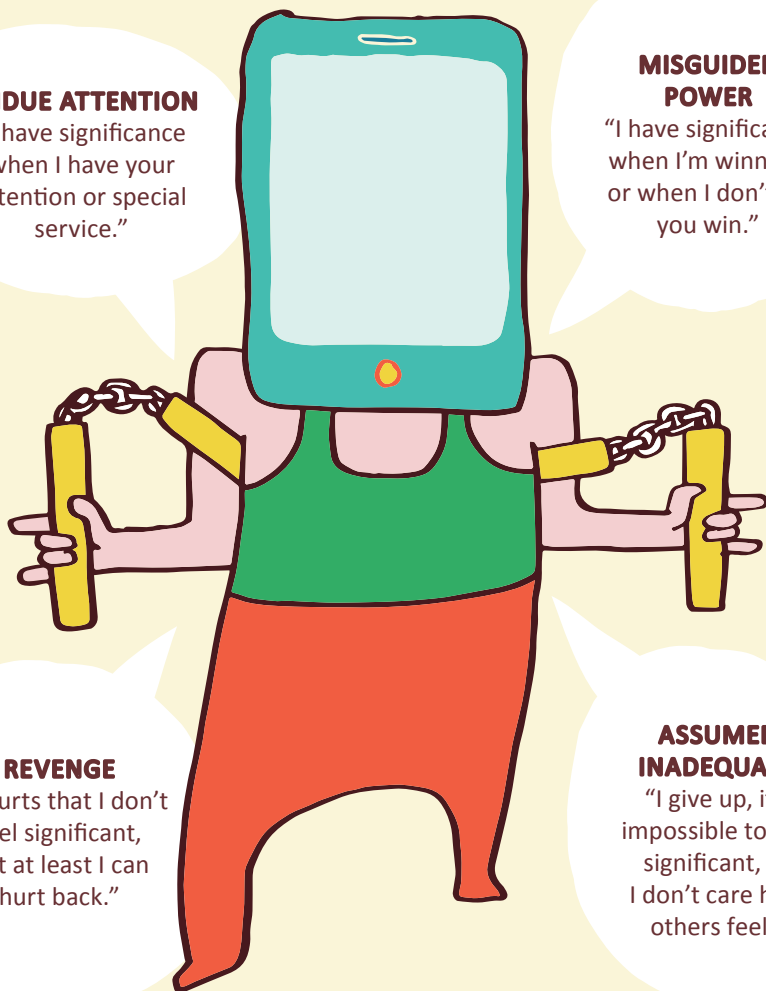
Often, children become bullies because they have unmet needs and they act out in ways to fulfil these needs. Whether they bully at the playground or online, the motivations are the same:

## UNDUE ATTENTION

"I have significance when I have your attention or special service."

## MISGUIDED POWER

"I have significance when I'm winning, or when I don't let you win."



## REVENGE

"It hurts that I don't feel significant, but at least I can hurt back."

## ASSUMED INADEQUACY

"I give up, it's impossible to feel significant, so I don't care how others feel."

Source: Alfred Adler, Psychologist and Rudolf Dreikurs, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry

# REFLECT

It is not uncommon for children in Singapore to have tuition teachers, sports coaches, dance coaches, memory technique coaches, etc. But do your children have a values coach? The truest goal of education is *knowledge plus character*.

**“To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”**

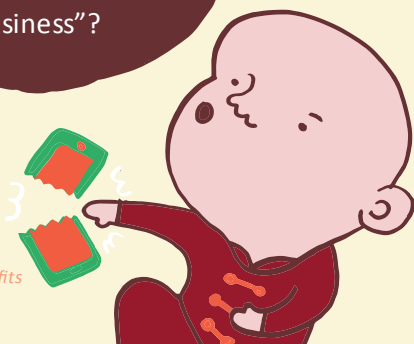
*Theodore Roosevelt, Former President of USA*

Have you discussed **bullying** with your children?  
Do they know of victims and perpetrators?

Do you act **appropriately** online?  
Do your posts show **respect** for others?

What are your **family values** that help develop positive behaviour in your children?  
How do you **teach** these values?

If your child tells you his friend is being bullied – will you show your child how he can **help** his friend or do you tell him to “mind his own business”?



# RESPOND

---



## WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW & DO

### **If your child is a victim**

- Report any abuse or misuse of social media to you or to their teachers.
- Keep screenshots, text messages, emails or any evidence of cyberbullying.
- Do not engage in any online quarrels.
- Stop responding or communicating with the cyberbully. Block the bully.

### **If your child is a bully**

- It's time to find out why he acted out - is he seeking attention from you?
- Teach your child empathy and respect for others.
- Be firm that his behaviour is unacceptable and would be penalised if he does not stop.



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW & DO

- Don't overreact, scold your child or say "I told you so".
- Don't immediately take away his online access. Understand the situation first.
- Give him your time and affirmation. Listen to and acknowledge his feelings.
- Be part of his network! Take the opportunity to check his online updates.
- Understand that sometimes parents can make the situation worse by intervening. Role-play with your child on how he can handle the bully.

# What's in it for your child?



## RESPONSIBILITY

Being **accountable** for his words and actions.

- Teach your child that there are **consequences** to every action, even online.
- Help him know that he has the **choice** to do good and right online.

## EMPATHY

Not doing to others what he doesn't want done to himself.

- A child with empathy will be able to **make friends** easily.
- Teach him to **think** before posting online remarks or sending text messages by asking questions like "Would this hurt anyone's feelings?" "Is this true?" "Is what you're saying helpful or necessary?"



## INTEGRITY

Able to do the right thing in the right way; has **moral character**.

- Model **integrity** to your child – tell the truth, be honest, keep promises.
- Even when everyone is doing something, especially if it's wrong, your child does not have to join in.



## RESPECT

Able to show respect towards others.

- **Model** this by showing respect to your child – don't shout, threaten or label your child; allow your child to share his perspective and feelings. Expect him to show respect to other family members likewise.
- Teach your child how to resolve conflict and manage his **emotions**. Have conversations like, "What do you do when other kids have things you want but won't give it to you?", "What can you do when you think you're right and others are wrong?"
- Teach your child to respect **differences**. There is no need to call his friend names if he disagrees with him.

In January 2014, the Ministry of Education rolled out a curriculum on Cyber Wellness in Character and Citizenship Education that focuses on the development of 21st century and social-emotional competencies in the use of Information Technology. Visit <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-and-emotional-learning/cyber-wellness>



# THE LINESMAN



# THE LINESMAN

## Balancing Between Boundaries and Freedom

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Ryan was an intelligent 12-year-old who excelled in his studies. He was introduced to a game by his friends and started spending more than 6 hours every day playing the game – DOTA2. As both of his parents were working and he was largely unsupervised at home, he started playing as soon as he got home from school.

As a result of his gaming addiction, his online character leveled up in the virtual world, but his grades declined in the real world. Once, his father woke up at 1am and saw that the light in Ryan's room was still switched on. He found Ryan absorbed in the game. Angry, he immediately unplugged the computer and told Ryan to go to bed.

Did Ryan's father do the right thing? How would you handle such a situation?

## REALITY

"Just a while more", "One more level and I'll stop". If you're a parent of a child who plays online or mobile phone games, you will be familiar with such phrases. Ryan's parents were unaware of his gaming addiction until his grades took a dive.

Your role as a parent is to be like a linesman in a soccer game. As with all sports, there are rules to the game. The lines around the field mark the boundaries players can freely play within. The role of the linesman is to ensure that players keep within the boundaries and rules of the game.

Rather than demanding what they can or cannot do, give children age-appropriate choices, and co-opt them into setting boundaries and rules which they can abide by.

# Gaming isn't all that bad...



Provides children with an opportunity to find common ground with other children when socialising, especially for boys.



Some games can help develop 3D perspective, reading skills, problem-solving skills and collaboration skills.



Provides parents with an opportunity to bond and interact with their children as they play together. Parents can also teach their children about teamwork.

## But watch out for some types of games

- Many games incorporate gambling situations and games of chance into the playing experience. These gambling situations are usually optional for the player but they are designed to entice the player to earn rewards quickly and level up in the game.
- There are many money-free gambling simulation games available online where the chances of winning tend to be higher. These may give children the impression that it is easy to win in such gambling games, and they may bet with real money more readily in future.
- Due to the convergence of gambling with digital media, it is easy for children to start playing such games or experience gambling online at a young age.
- Some video games (e.g. Video Poker) may appear to require skills like strategy or decision making, but these games incorporate the element of gambling in it. As such, children who play these games may unintentionally be exposed to gambling, and progress to actual gaming later on.



# Why we game...



## MMORPG

Massive multiplayer online role playing games like League of Legends and Defence of the Ancients require multiple gamers playing as a team. Players perceive their relationships with one another as real and meaningful.

## DESIRE FOR SOCIAL BONDING

Due to the nature of the current social culture children live in, the Internet, social media and games are a key medium for them to socialise. It would be difficult for them not to engage in it as they may unintentionally be socially excluded.



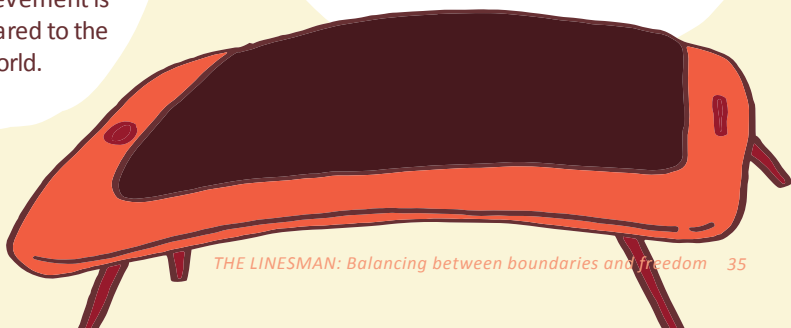
## SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

As gamers level up in the process of the game, their game characters become more powerful, or they receive certain game rewards (e.g. power boost, special game items). There is instant gratification, and gaining achievement is faster compared to the real world.



## PEER PRESSURE

There is peer pressure to use the latest social media tools and play the latest games on the Internet and/or mobile phones. There is also unspoken pressure not to let one's team mates down when playing MMORPG games, making it hard to stop.



# Free Games? Think Again

Monetisation in games often comes in the form of free-to-play (F2P) online or mobile phone games. These games aim to entice players to spend real money through the following ways:



**PROGRESSION OF GAME.** F2P games usually appear to be skill-based (e.g. Candy Crush Saga) or fun games (Plants vs Zombies). A player starts at low levels of the game which are easy to accomplish. As a player progresses up the levels, the game gets increasingly difficult. Players who want to progress on are tempted to spend money to “get help” in the form of game coins, gems, special moves or power-ups. Many children end up spending hundreds of dollars just to level up in the game.

**EMOTIONAL CONNECTION.** There are games where a child can raise a digital pet, build a farm, village, restaurant, etc. In the course of the game, if a game pet dies, players with an emotional connection to the game tend to spend money in order to save the pet.

# REFLECT

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How can parents be a linesman to strike a balance between control versus freedom, and giving children choices?

Do you know what **games** your child plays?

Do you weed out those with gambling simulations?

Do you know that the earlier and longer you use tech devices as a baby-sitter, the higher the risks of **addiction** as your child grows?

Do you set **limits** on the amount of time your child can spend playing games or how much they can spend to level up?

Are you being a good **role model** in monitoring the amount of time you spend playing on the computer?



# RESPOND

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While time spent on the computer can be productive, compulsive usage can interfere with daily life and relationships. Help your child balance life online and off.



## WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW & DO

- Online gambling and gaming can be as addictive as alcohol or drug addiction.
- In any game of chance, the more he gambles, the greater the chance of losing. It is not possible to predict the results of a game of chance.
- Many F2P games are designed to entice players to spend money and time in order to level up and progress in the game.
- Have a balance of indoor and outdoor activities – for every 1 hour of screen time, have 2 hours of outdoor play or physical activity.
- Homework should be completed first before playing games.
- Some children are inspired by professional gamers. Help them understand that pro-gamers are just like sports athletes, who balance their playing with rest and other activities in order to perform well.



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW & DO

- Set clear rules and time limits on your child's media usage. When he keeps to it, praise him for his self-discipline. Always praise and encourage self-control.
- For young children, plan a schedule for who gets to use the computer/phone at what time and for how long, what they can and cannot do (e.g. parental supervision needed when using YouTube).
- For older children, have a family meeting and, together with your children, set rules on the use of the computer. Decide on the consequences together with your children to get greater buy-in and responsibility on their part (e.g. Rule: gaming allowed only after homework is completed and for a maximum of \_\_\_\_ mins/hours. Consequence if rule is broken: Cannot play games for \_\_\_\_ day/s).
- Write these family rules down and display them clearly in the home.
- Both parents must be consistent in enforcing the consequences when rules have been broken.
- When children protest or throw tantrums when they are not allowed to play, point them back to the rules that have been discussed or spelt out. Never give in to a tantrum-throwing child; he will only continue to use tantrums to get what he wants. Make it clear that if he throws a tantrum, he will not get to use the computer/phone at all.
- If your child learns discipline when young, the risk of addiction is less when he is older, and it will be easier for you to manage his playing later.
- Select games that involve two or more players to encourage cooperative play and make gaming a family activity.
- Set parental controls and passwords to prevent purchases in games.
- Encourage and support your child's participation in other activities like sports, music, or the arts.

# THE VISIONARY



# THE VISIONARY

## Technology as Tools

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Her table is cluttered with wires, motors, resistors, a soldering iron and other gadgets and tools. She's an inventor, an online celebrity and she shook the hand of the President of the United States at the White House Science Fair. All in a day's work for an 11-year-old.

Sylvia Todd has more than 1.5 million YouTube views of a science series she produces and hosts. Her passion was first sparked off when she and her father attended an event for inventors and their projects. Her father began videotaping Sylvia's demonstrations. It started off as something fun they could do together.

Her YouTube series is a family affair. Her parents brainstorm and contribute ideas, although she still comes up with most ideas herself. Her dad works on scripts with her as well as takes on the role of cameraman.

Sylvia uses puppetry, music, her home lab and technology to demonstrate how things work. She makes science fun by having fun herself.

## REALITY

When asked about his involvement in encouraging Sylvia's passion, Mr Todd replied, "Your kid says they want to do something, and parents always say, 'Later.'" To many parents, 'later' means never. This is something Mr Todd is deliberate in not doing.

Mr Todd sees the importance of being intentional and involved in encouraging his daughter's aspirations. For the Todd family, it is 10% technology, 90% passion and family fun!

Unfortunately, for too many families in Singapore, technology seems to be taking on the role of "babysitter" and "entertainer" rather than tool. Whining or tantrum throwing, children's cry of "I'm bored," "I don't know what to do," and "I want the phone" are instantly gratified or quickly shushed with a gadget.

# WE'RE LIVING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Study of children 2 – 5 years old:

## TECH SKILL

Know how to operate a computer mouse **69%**

**63%**  
Turn a computer on and off

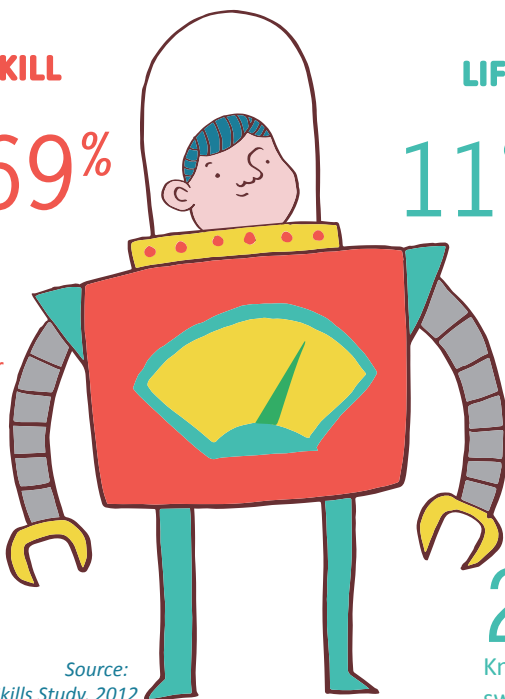
**58%**  
Play a basic computer game

## LIFE SKILL

**11%** Can tie own shoelace

**37%**  
Can write first and last name

**20%**  
Know how to swim unaided



Source:  
# AVG Digital Skills Study, 2012

In a study\* conducted by Dr Catherine Steiner-Adair, clinical instructor in the department of psychiatry at Harvard – where she interviewed 1,000 children between the ages of 4 and 18 to find out how technology was impacting their relationships, social and emotional lives – the findings were not comforting:

- Technology is becoming a kind of “co-parent”.
- Too much screen time is impeding childhood development.
- Parents’ obsession with their devices is harming communication with their children.

Source: \* *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age*, 2013



# TECHNOLOGY/GADGET USAGE FOR YOUR CHILD

## Younger than 2 years old

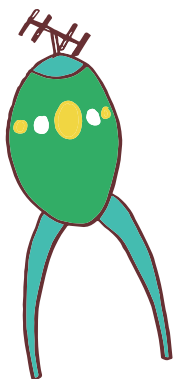


**TECH:** Not recommended other than video chatting (younger than 18 months). Parents of children (18-24 months) should co-watch high-quality programmes.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Self-soothe. If you give a young child a screen (TV or phone) when he is frustrated, you're teaching him how not to calm himself down. Your baby's brain should be the stimulant, not the screen.

**RISK OF EXCESSIVE USE:** Exposing young children to technological devices (e.g. smart phones) too early increases the desire to own one at an early age, increases dependency on the use of the phone for stimulation, and decreases the child's interest in other forms of play and development areas.

## 2 - 5 years old



**TECH:** Limit to 1 hour/day of high-quality programme. Co-watching is encouraged.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Body movement, language, literacy, play. This kind of brain development is acquired through outdoor play, building, dancing, skipping, colouring – a multisensory engagement rather than passively receiving from a screen or swiping a finger.

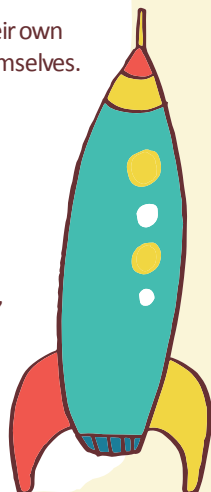
**RISK OF EXCESSIVE USE:** Children become less creative, less patient to sit still and pay attention. When children are used to interacting with a screen that provides instant gratification and stimulation, they do not develop their own thinking and mental capability to find answers for themselves.

## 6 - 12 years old

**TECH:** As a family, discuss the specifics of your child's technology usage (e.g. duration, type of games allowed), rules and reasons. Consider drawing up a family tech agreement for all to sign.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Gross motor skills like balancing, running, jumping; fine motor skills like handwriting, hand-eye coordination, social/emotional management, thinking skills, decision making.

**RISK OF EXCESSIVE USE:** Higher risks of addiction, stumbling upon harmful content, meeting online predators, obesity, and myopia. Furthermore, children will lack the opportunity to develop empathy and social skills needed for face-to-face communication.



# REFLECT

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Visionary parenting is parenting for the long term. It is about knowing what kind of person you want your child to become and being intentional in your parenting now. Just as the African proverb goes, “The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now.”

How have you used technology as a tool to do fun things **together** as a family?

Do you teach your child **values** and **life skills** that will help them navigate both the digital and physical worlds?

Do you use “screens” (TV, phone or tablet) as a type of co-parent or babysitter instead of **spending time** with your children?

How would you define **success** as a parent?



# RESPOND

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## WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW & DO

- Cultivate other interests and hobbies.
- Use technology in support of other hobbies and sports (e.g. use the Internet to research on a hobby/sport).
- He/she should be able to put away the gadget when told to.



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW & DO

- Spend time and bond with your child doing non-tech things, e.g. walks, reading, playing board games. Children with a more balanced lifestyle will minimise potential addictions in the future.
- Use technology as an aid (not entertainment) to spur and cultivate your child's aspirations, interests and learning.
- Set aside a regular tech-free day/week. You can also declare a tech-free hour each evening.
- Work with the school to find out more about the e-learning tools used and encourage and participate with your child to use those e-learning platforms.

# HOW TO ENGAGE

## SQUIRMY KIDS IN PUBLIC PLACES

Parents may find it a challenge to get their children to stay at the dinner table to finish their food, sit still in the MRT or bus, or stop siblings from squabbling in the backseat of a car. Many parents resort to handing their children a smart phone or tablet to keep them quiet.

Rather than disconnecting with them and letting them connect to their digital playground, Dr Rebecca Chan, Director of Parenting Academy and an Early Childhood Education lecturer, suggests parents try the following simple but effective methods with young children:

### 1. SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



Commercially available or simple creations by the parent and child on a note pad. This activity is good for visual discrimination, developing concentration in spotting similarities and differences.

### 2. "I SPY"



With preschoolers, parents can say "I spy" a specific object, colour, lines, shapes, forms, etc. The child has to look around and search for those things mentioned by the parent. This helps develop environmental and aesthetic awareness.

### 3. SKETCH PAD & MARKERS



When going out with your child, bring along a small sketch pad and writing instrument (e.g. thin coloured markers or pencils). These can fit easily into a handbag or diaper bag. Drawing and doodling induce thinking and creativity.

#### 4. "SHOOT!"



Parent and child take turns to choose a number. For example the child says "8", and then parent and child say together "One, two, three, SHOOT!" On "shoot", the parent and child hold up as many fingers on one hand as they desire. The goal is to add up the number "8" as the sum of all the fingers parent and child hold up. They play until they reach the goal of eight.

By the time children are 9 years old, they are beginning to be more self-conscious and may not like too much parental attention in public places; they are also more independent.

For 7 to 12-year-olds, parents can try the following methods:

#### 1. STORY BOOK READING OR E-BOOK



Encourage children to carry a story book whenever they go out. This can help cultivate a habit of reading. Using e-books (like Kindle) is also a good way of leveraging on technology and parents have better control compared to smart phones or tablets.

#### 2. AUDIO BOOK/DEVICE



There are audio books and audio devices (e.g. reading pen) that parents can purchase from stores or borrow from the National Library Board. These audio stories are interesting and engaging and are good for children to pick up listening and expressive language skills as well as pronunciation.

#### 3. ACTIVITY, PUZZLE, RIDDLE, JOKE BOOKS



Word puzzles or Sudoku are fun and can give children a mental workout. Children at this age also like riddles and jokes. There are joke and riddle apps that parents can download and take turns with their children to test each other's wits.

# HELP CENTRES

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If your child needs help or counselling with online addiction or bullying issues, contact:

**TOUCH Cyber Wellness**

Blk 162 Bukit Merah Central

#05-3555, Singapore 150162

Tel: 6273 5568 | Fax: 6271 5449

Email: [cyberwellness@touch.org.sg](mailto:cyberwellness@touch.org.sg)

**Marine Parade Family Service Centre  
(Cyber Counselling Programme)**

53 Marine Terrace

#01-227, Singapore 440053

Tel: 6445 0100 | Fax: 6446 0100

Email: [metoyou@mpfsc.org.sg](mailto:metoyou@mpfsc.org.sg)

**National Addiction Management Service**

Buangkok Green Medical Park

Block 9, Basement, 10 Buangkok View

Singapore 539747

For enquiries: 6389 2000

All Addictions Helpline: 6-RECOVER (6-7326837)

Email: [nams@imh.com.sg](mailto:nams@imh.com.sg)

**Project 180 (Youth Services)**

Blk 145 Simei St 2,

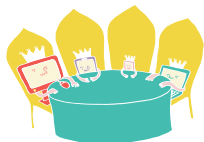
#01-06, Singapore 520145

Tel: 6787 1125 | Fax: 6787 9943

Email: [project180@fyys.org](mailto:project180@fyys.org)

# BE A SMART DIGITAL PARENT TODAY

## A Checklist for Parenting Young Children in the Digital Age!



The internet is increasingly an important part of our daily life. For our children, that's where they socialize, look for information and find entertainment. How we can, as parents, help our children harness the possibilities of the digital playground and yet stay safe at the same time? Here are some simple tips!

## SETTING UP A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

We have given our children smart phones, laptops, and tablets to explore the digital world. But how are we protecting them against malware and viruses? Or against inappropriate content which they may stumble on or actively seek out?

### What you can do to create a safe and healthy online environment

- ☐ Install the necessary security tools like anti-virus and firewall to protect all your internet enabled devices.
- ☐ Use parental control tools to help manage your child's internet access:
  - ☐ Install internet filters to block out websites and content that are unsuitable for your child. Ask your Internet Service Provider (ISP) for more information.
  - ☐ To prevent excessive use, some tools allow you to set a time limit on your child's access to the internet.
  - ☐ Set up safe search mode on search engines and on YouTube to prevent exposure to inappropriate content. Look for 'Safe Search' online to learn how.
- ☐ Teach your child to set up strong passwords (at least 8 characters with lower and upper case, numeric and symbols) and never to share their passwords.
- ☐ Teach your child to recognize and avoid internet scams. They shouldn't click on pop-up advertisements or open emails from unfamiliar sources. If an advertisement promises something that sounds fantastic, then it is probably a scam.
- ☐ Introduce these rules:
  - ☐ How much time your child can spend online or playing games. (The American Academy of Paediatrics has recommendations for different age groups. Refer to [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) for more information.)
  - ☐ Never click on in-app game purchases unless your permission has been granted. You may also deactivate any auto-sign-in that facilitates in-app purchases.
  - ☐ Make known the consequences if rules are broken and be consistent in enforcing them.



## HELPING YOUR CHILD BE “STREET SMART” ONLINE

Just like how we teach our child to be alert to dangers and risks in the physical world, we need to help them navigate the online risks to personal safety, security and privacy. This means imparting valuable skills such as critical thinking and inculcating best practices so that they can be “Street Smart” online.

### ✓ How to bring up online “Street Smart” children

- ☐ While it is not advisable for young children (under 13) to be on social networks, all children move on to socializing on social networks at some point in their lives. Teach your child these best practices when sharing online:
  - ☐ Don't share personal information (e.g. address, daily schedule and contact number), password, photos and videos publicly online.
  - ☐ Say 'No' to meeting strangers online. They should never add people they don't know in real life as friends online.
  - ☐ Show empathy when interacting online. Be responsible and show respect. Don't hurt others online.
  - ☐ Respect the privacy of others by not sharing their friends' photos or posts without their permission.
- ☐ Teach your child to protect their digital reputation – that means to always think twice before posting anything as it can haunt them later.
- ☐ Teach your child to always verify online information by checking across multiple sources. If unsure, don't pass the information on as they may be spreading rumours.
- ☐ Use teachable moments (news articles, photos and videos) to point out dubious information and scam tactics.
- ☐ Let your child know that they can tell you or a trusted adult immediately if they encounter someone nasty or content that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- ☐ Don't over-react or remove your child's internet access if they confide in you. Understand the situation and help them manage.



# PARENTS ARE THE BEST ROLE MODELS

Children need to see their parents use technology in a responsible and safe way. They take their social cues not from what you say but what you do. A positive home environment and a strong parent-child relationship are the best safeguards against any risk, online or offline.



## ✓ You are your child's best role model

- ☐ Show your child that you are not controlled by your device. Keep phones and tablets away at mealtimes and catch up on each other's day. This not only strengthens your bond but it also instils the right values in your children.
- ☐ Are you socializing and posting responsibly on social media? Remind yourself to think before you post. Set a good example by being a responsible communicator.
- ☐ Are you over-sharing on social media? Protect your child by not sharing information, posts and photos that may identify them or embarrass them in the future.
- ☐ Besides role-modelling, take steps to minimise your child's potential addiction to the internet in the future:
  - ☐ Stop using the digital device as a babysitter – Engage your child in other ways instead.
  - ☐ Encourage your child to strike a balance on the time spent online and offline.
- ☐ Most important of all, engage your child frequently, build trust and strong bonds while they are still young and willing to listen to you.

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal yellow lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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We also want to acknowledge and thank West View Primary and TOUCH Cyber Wellness for their support and contribution.

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#### **About Media Literacy Council (MLC)**

The Media Literacy Council works in partnership with industry, community and government to champion and develop public education and awareness programmes relating to media literacy and cyber wellness. In an increasingly interactive and participatory media landscape, the Council seeks to cultivate and encourage the public to become discerning media consumers with the ability to evaluate media content effectively, and use, create and share content safely and responsibly.