

Community Awareness Event

October 27, 2022
Scott Middle School (Multipurpose Room)
2200 Pine Lake Rd., Lincoln
6:30 – 8 :00 p.m.

As parents and educators, our number-one concern is our children. But in today's world of social media and technology, do you know if your kids are truly safe?

Our children are at risk from people who want to do harm and one of the biggest ways they find our youth is through social media.

Stephanie Olson, with The Set Me Free Project, will discuss how we can keep our children safe on social media.

You will learn:

- **How to help your child safely navigate social media and gaming platforms**
- **Current apps - the good, the bad, and the ugly**
- **What the grooming process is and how people who want to do harm use social media to groom our kids**
- **Our kids' brains on social media: The science of social media, how does social media affect kids**
- **Sexual images and social media**
- **How are they at risk and by whom?**

If you have any questions regarding this Community Awareness Event, please reach out to Abbe Edgecombe at aedgecombe@lmep.com or 402-327-6841.

Practice What You Preach...and Teach

We often hear that kids of today are unbelievably rude and disrespectful and/or how so many of them struggle to appropriately socialize with each other. And we as adults are completely baffled by it. We don't seem to understand how kids "got this way".

Yet, when we take a step back and look at the overall climate of the country and how adults act and treat each other over partisan issues or social justice issues, and/or how many adults responded and reacted to a world-wide pandemic and then intertwine those things with social media, news and digital life, it becomes a lot easier to see why kids act and react the way that they do these days.

Good, bad or otherwise, kids learn from watching and imitating adults in their life.

"Do as I say and not as I do", has never really been a very successful way to cultivate long lasting appropriate and respectful behavior from kids or anyone for that matter.

Modeling appropriate and respectful behavior in real life happenings at home and/or school is almost always the best way for kids to learn and apply appropriate/respectful behaviors.

Parents and educators can model and promote respectful behavior by first taking a look at how they interact with other adults and kids alike. When your kids see you talking and responding to others in a calm, respectful manner, especially when you are frustrated, angry and/or have a difference of opinion with someone, they begin to learn and conceptualize how they, themselves, can be respectful in moments of frustration, anger and how they too can respectfully voice their opinions and/or feelings. On the flip side, remember kids are always watching and when kids see adults, yell, criticize and put down others, they inherently learn that modeled behavior.

Schools all across the country utilize the Six Pillars of Character Counts and/or Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculums to help develop, teach, model and strengthen positive, appropriate behaviors and interactions in the learning environment. These kinds of curriculums used in classrooms have shown to help produce better academic results for students as well as foster healthy youth behaviors and peer relationships.

Parents and educators can also make a concerted effort to outwardly acknowledge and praise kids when they are on task, are kind to others, use good manners, show empathy and talk in a respectful manner even when they are upset.

You can visit <https://charactercounts.org> for more information and/or <https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/social-emotional-learning-curriculum> for more information on different Social Emotional Learning curriculums.

Sources:

<https://www.honorablecharacter.com/pages/teaching-kids-respect-in-the-classroom>

www.edweek.org/ew/articles/.../new-effort-to-promote-social-emotional-learning-in.html

<https://scipnebraska.com>

<https://charactercounts.org>

Dealing with Hate Speech in Digital Spaces

In today's world, we are increasingly brought together through digital spaces. Whether it's keeping up with friends on Instagram, playing games with friends on Discord, or just sending TikToks to family, the internet is playing an increasingly larger role in how we communicate with one another. However, this constant connection has also provided opportunity for people to spread hate speech online, and lure teens and young adults into their belief systems, without anyone noticing.

Hate groups and ideologies are provided a very powerful tool by social media. On social media, these apps have a tendency to promote content similar to what you've watched in the past. Because of this, a sort of "pipeline" or "hate highway" can be created. The highway begins with a simply controversial opinion, but watching said video will increase the chance that something more offensive is recommended. Slowly, across a span of weeks or months, a user's feed can transition into regularly showing plain examples of racism or hate speech.

While most adults would be mostly unaffected by this kind of advertising, teens and young adults are especially vulnerable. The reason for this susceptibility is that these hate groups provide a sense of acceptance and identity that a youth may not be able to find elsewhere. The mid-to-late teens is a time of extremely rapid identity growth, and can lead to kids rebelling against what their families and schools typically approve of. Hate groups prey upon this experimentation in order to indoctrinate new members while they are young.

***InternetMatters.org* lists these, among many others, as potential signs of being vulnerable to hate messaging:**

- Struggling with a sense of identity
- Experiencing family problems
- Difficulty with social interaction
- Troubles with low self-esteem

While this is a serious issue to keep in mind, it's important to remember that most content on social media is *not* any type of hate. Almost all users are perfectly benevolent, and using it like anyone else. However, if you're concerned that your child is being influenced by hate messaging, you may find the following resources helpful. They go further into detail on behaviors that may lead youth to hate groups, as well as how to discuss this messaging with a child.

- *InternetMatters.org*: Discusses the warning signs in greater detail, as well as a few things you can do to keep an eye out.
- *Fosi.org*: Discusses how to speak to your child about hate speech, and prepare them for seeing it online.

- *CommonSenseMedia.org*: Further discusses speaking to your child about hate speech, as well as good conversation starters to think about the roles people play in it.

Sources

<https://www.internetmatters.org/connecting-safely-online/advice-for-parents/tackling-the-hard-stuff-on-social-media-to-support-young-people/tackling-hate-speech/>

<https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/talking-your-family-about-hate-speech-online>

<https://www.common SenseMedia.org/articles/where-kids-find-hate-online>

<https://www.science.org/content/article/dark-pools-hate-flourish-online-here-are-4-controversial-ways-fight-them>

Kids and Smartphones: Is My Child Ready?

While many adults can remember life before the smartphone, the same cannot be said for our kids and teens. According to Common Sense Media, children are getting cell phones at younger and younger ages. Based on surveys conducted in 2015 and 2021, the proportion of 8, 9 and 10-year-olds with smartphones has nearly doubled. The percentage of 12-year-olds owning a cell phone jumped from 41 percent in 2015 to 71 percent in 2021. Many parents struggle with how to decide when it is the right time to give kids their own cell phone. Parents may feel pressured by their children to provide them with a cell phone at an early age, but question if their child is actually ready for the responsibility. As with any decision, there are both risks and benefits to consider. With home phones becoming a thing of the past, many parents start to think about providing their child with a phone when they get to the age that they are more likely to be home alone. One of the major benefits that parents often cite is the ability to communicate with children in an emergency situation. While the needs of each family are different, experts agree that when it comes to deciding if your child is ready for a cell phone, age isn't as important as a child's maturity level and sense of responsibility. According to the Childmind Institute, parents should consider their child's level of social awareness and their ability to understand what technology means. When we hand kids a smartphone, we are giving them a powerful tool for communication and parents and caregivers need to consider whether their kids are ready to use a phone responsibly and respectfully. There are certain skills and abilities that are necessary for youth to be responsible cell phone users. Below are some questions to consider that can help parents and guardians consider if they are ready for their child to have a cell phone:



- Do you, as a parent/guardian, have enough time and interest to teach your child how to use a cell phone properly?
- Are you willing to set and reinforce limits on the phone?
- Can your child handle the responsibility of having a cell phone? (i.e. can they remember to keep it properly charged and ready to use, can they avoid damaging or losing it, can they keep track of and respect the limits on the phones plan).
- Will your child follow rules for cell phone use at home and at school?
- How well does your child do with limits on screen time?
- Do you talk to your child about online safety and good digital citizenship?
- Does your child understand what harassment and inappropriate content look like?
- Will they use text, photo, and video functions responsibly and not to embarrass or harass others?

When parents are ready to take that step and give their kids access to a cell phone, experts suggest that the best opportunity for success is to set guidelines and limits up front and establish consequences if these guidelines are not followed. A family media plan can help you get started. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers the following tool to help create your own family media plan.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx>

Below are some additional ideas:

- **Limit the amount of time spent on the phone-** consider no screens for at least one hour before bed, have your child turn their phone in at night so it is out of their bedroom, try “phone free” meals or family times or create a homework zone where phones are put away.
- **Communicate openly with your child about the risks of cell phone usage-** help them understand safe websites, recognize cyberbullying and understand the dangers of sexting and communication with “friends” they have never met in person.
- **Require children provide parents with cell phone, email and social media passwords-** do random checks of text messages and other phone content, educate yourself on the latest apps, consider using parental controls on the phone and apps, be your child’s social media friend to keep tabs on what they are posting.
- **Discourage your child from sharing personal details online-** monitor apps that use location services.
- **Teach your child that text messages are not to be used for important or emotional conversations-** those should still take place face to face.

Having a cell phone comes with a great deal of responsibility. Just as we teach our kids how to ride a bike or drive a car, it is up to parents and caregivers to teach kids how to use cell phones safely and responsibly. One of the best ways parents can do this is by modeling healthy and responsible phone use themselves. Consider your own technology use and work on setting a good example for your child. For more information check out the following resources:

The Family Online Safety Institute <https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting>

Common Sense Media <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/cellphones-and-devices>

American Academy of Pediatrics <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Cell-Phones-Whats-the-Right-Age-to-Start.aspx>

AT&T Screen Ready <https://screenready.att.com/digital-parenting/>

References: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychological Association, Childmind Institute, Commonsense Media, The Family Online Safety Institute

RED RIBBON WEEK

Did you know that **Red Ribbon Week** started in California in honor and remembrance of a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) undercover narcotics officer who was tortured and murdered in the line of duty in 1985? This tragic happening would become the catalyst in a call for action in communities around the country for drug awareness and prevention.

Soon after, in 1988, the National Family Partnership (NFP) would launch the first nationally held **Red Ribbon Week** campaign that spanned all across the nation. NFP's national **Red Ribbon Week** has been going strong for 34 years.

Red Ribbon Week encourages and allows communities and individuals to collectively take a stand in protecting the hopes and dreams of our children through a commitment to drug prevention and education and a personal commitment to live drug free lives.

Each year, the NFP holds a contest that individuals, schools and communities can enter to help determine what the national **Red Ribbon Week's** theme will be centered around. Three 7th graders at Wayland-Cohocton Middle School in Wayland, New York were the contest winners for the 2022 **Red Ribbon Week** Theme. To learn more about the chosen theme, "**Celebrate Life. Live Drug Free.™**" , and how you can enter the contest for next year, you can click on the link below. <https://www.redribbon.org/>

Officially, **Red Ribbon Week** is October 23 thru October 31, 2022. Of course, many schools and organizations commemorate the week at a time in October that fits into their school/organizational schedule.

With that in mind, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) will hold its annual National **Red Ribbon Rally** virtually this year on October 5, 2022 and it will be available throughout the entire month of October 2022. Click on the link below to find out more about the virtual rally. HTTPS://DEA.GOV/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2022-09/2022-RED-RIBBON-RALLY-INVITE_0.PDF

<https://www.redribbon.org/>

<https://scipnebraska.com/>

