ONLINE SAFETY: LET'S TALK IT OUT

Connecting Families to Navigating the Internet Together

A family quiz to talk about our online relationships

Who are the friends you confide in most online?
What are their usernames and how did you meet?

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FRIENDS:

1. Online friends can feel just as real and close as our in-life daily friends. Getting to know them is important to keeping open communication between kids and adults! It helps everyone get to know each other's friends and their interests!

LEARNING EACH OTHER'S INTERESTS IS PART OF BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS:

2. Getting to know new friends is exciting! Sometimes the best parts of friendship are those first few times we speak or hang out, even if it's just online! How did you get to know your online friends? What are your favorite things about them that made you want to talk to them?

What are your favorite things to learn about new people? How did you find that out information?

HOW DO I KNOW WHO I'M TALKING TO ONLINE?

3. In the physical world, it's a easier to identify that people are who they say they are. We don't need a photo to verify if someone is in front of us. On the internet, people often have profile pictures or offer to share photos to prove who they are! How do your online friends prove who they are to you? Have you seen actual photos of them or have they asked you for them?

Has anyone shared photos with you or asked to create photos, videos, with you or for them? Why?

LEARNING HOW TO TALK ABOUT MY TIME ONLINE:

4. Sometimes at home, we will ask each other *"how was your day?"* or *"what did you do today?"* Just like we want to learn about our family and friend's daily lives, we can do the same for our internet life! Asking about your day isn't to set you up for punishment, but because it's important to know if we can help each other through problems that might show up!

What ways do you want to share about your internet life? By texting, talking over dinner, or writing out your answers?

BULLYING CAN HAPPEN, IN OUR REAL LIFE AND INTERNET LIFE:

Can you talk about a time someone bullied you and how that made you feel? Did your online friends help you or go along with it?

5. *None of us are strangers to bullying.* We have seen it happen to friends, had it happen to ourselves, and sometimes bullying on the internet can be worse because multiple people in a game or chat can team up against us. It's important to share those experiences because if we keep them inside, we can start to feel even worse or think we deserve the bullying.

WHEN HAVING FUN DOESN'T FEEL FUN: THREATS OR HARASSMENT ONLINE

6. Even in the physical world, kids and adults can have moments where they do not feel safe. Crimes, accidents, or moments where we thought we might get harmed can happen anywhere, even the internet. People can make threats online or make us feel unwelcome. If this happens to you, it's not your fault, but it's important to talk to someone about what happened.

Has anyone online made threats against you or your friends? How did that feel and how did you handle it?

WORKING TOGETHER: ONLINE SAFETY AS A FAMILY

Writing things down helps us see and remember them! Where could you put some internet safety rules that everyone can see?

7. Just like when you learn a new game, it's important to know the rules. To be safe on the internet, we need to have rules too. If we don't, sometimes we can end up getting hurt. What are some safety rules that you think you could come up with as a family to feel safer together about spending time on the internet?

Thank you for trusting us and helping us learn about your friends! Let's do this again soon!

CONVERSATIONS THAT PROTECT: A QUESTION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Helping to start the conversation: Online Friendships

None of us are strangers to the dangers of the internet. Many of us are trying our best to navigate a complex and changing online atmosphere in an effort to keep the children safe as they explore the world of online gaming and social interaction. Many experts agree that the truest pathway to online safety is to not allow children to have internet access, a sentiment many of us widely share. But with technological advances even in our school systems, we are hopeful that this questionnaire will help parents foster conversations around true internet safety, allowing children to vocalize their online activities, encouraging families to create open and transparent internet guidelines, conversations, and communication about who is on the other side of the screen.

> It is important to allow the children to write or speak about who their online friends are so we can observe their interactions.

OPENING THE CONVERSATION (BUILD TRUST FIRST)

1. Keep them talking! Share some names of your own online friends or favorite social media platforms. This shows them that we too enjoy using the internet and it is safe to openly share about our interactions.

THINGS TO CONSIDER OR ASK IN THIS CONVERSATION:

· What do you think kids your age are dealing with online that adults might not fully understand?

· What apps or platforms feel the most social or important to you right now?

· Have you ever seen or heard of someone getting into trouble online in a way that surprised you?

ONLINE INTERACTIONS & BOUNDARIES

2. In this guide, we ask the children about the process of verifying who their online friends are. This is especially important to understanding how children are exchanging that information; whether through photo sharing, video call, live stream, etc. As guardians, this helps us to learn and identify the content, information sharing, and nature of these online interactions.

> Listening to these answers is needed to see if the child's internet activity needs reform, more education or stricter monitoring.

THINGS TO CONSIDER OR ASK IN THIS CONVERSATION:

· How do you decide who to trust online?

· Do you think people online are always who they say they are? Why or why not?

· What kinds of messages or requests feel like red flags to you?

· Has anyone ever asked you for something online that made you uncomfortable—even a little?

· What would you do if someone asked for a photo, video, or personal information?

CLOSING THE CONVERSATION:

3. Keeping an open dialogue is the first step towards strengthening the child's situational awareness and transparency about their internet activity. Thanking them for participating, giving praise and noting their efforts to speak helps them feel safe to share. Setting a goal for participation in weekly or monthly internet check ins can also give them a sense of pride and achievement for being open and honest.

> Applauding kids participation and efforts is key to building their self confidence and sense of security.

THINGS TO CONSIDER OR ASK IN THIS CONVERSATION:

• Is there anything online you've ever worried about but weren't sure how to bring up?

• What questions do you have about online safety that adults don't usually answer well?

• Thank you for talking to me, when would you like to do this again?

ONLINE SAFETY: NOW WE'RE TALKING!

Navigating the need for friendship and how to put guidelines in place.

A family quiz to talk about our online relationships

SHARING ABOUT OURSELVES WITH OTHERS:

What kinds of information about yourself do you share? What types of things about yourself do you feel safe to share? Why?

1. It's natural when we are making friends to talk about each other! That's how we get to know their likes or dislikes or even if we are compatible as friends! But how do we know when sharing is crossing the line? Too much information at first can lead to unsafe behaviors, so how do we pick and choose what is safe to share?

MIRRORING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE HELPS US STAY SAFE:

2. When we meet people outside the internet, we don't usually give them our address, photos, or share the things we are worried about other's knowing. This is to protect us from people who might have bad intentions. The same is true about the internet! Bringing things into conversation slowly helps develop relationships slowly to see if we trust the person we are sharing with!

At what point in your online friendship did you feel safe to share about yourself? Why did you feel comfortable sharing?

HOW MUCH SHARING IS TOO MUCH SHARING?

Have any of your online friends pressured you to answer any questions you didn't feel comfortable answering?
If so, how did you feel about that?

3. If someone walked up to you and asked you a lot of questions in a row, it might feel uncomfortable or you would wonder why they are asking! That is a healthy response! When this happens on the internet it can feel less uncomfortable because the person on the other side is not standing right there making us feel pressured to respond. That doesn't mean we should open right up without practicing the same cautions we would face to face. If someone gets angry at you online for not answering, that is a behavior to be concerned about! Has this happened to you?

WHEN SHARING GOES TOO FAR, KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE:

4. Getting to know each other often requires asking things like "what's your favorite color?" or "how old are you?". These things are normal and when it happens online, that's normal too! But how do we know when the wrong questions are being asked? When people online start pressuring us to prove our answers or when they make us feel like we aren't sharing enough, that's not a normal response! If they are asking you to share too much, how would you handle that conversation?

Have you ever caught your online friends in a lie? Or have they asked you to keep a secret for them? How did you respond to them?

WHY WE PRACTICE HEALTHY INFORMATION SHARING:

How do you make sure your online friends are being honest? What steps do you take to figure out if they are telling the truth?

5. I'm sure you already know that there are people online who pretend to be someone they aren't, but do you know why that happens? Sometimes people might not feel they are good enough so they make up a fake identity to hide behind or they might be pretending because they don't want others to know the real them. And some people do this because they are looking to hurt others. This is why it matters what we share and how we share it!

IT'S OKAY TO HAVE BOUNDARIES WITH OUR INFORMATION:

6. If you knew that someone was going to take a picture of you and share it around the school making fun of you, you probably wouldn't give them your picture! The same is true about the internet! Having a talk with your parents, friends, or people you trust about what is safe to share can help protect us online. What are some things you know you should NOT share online?

Mistakes can happen and sometimes we open up to the wrong people. Do you have people you feel safe to come to if you might have shared the wrong thing? Who are they?

SAFETY PLANS ARE NOT FOR PUNISHMENT, BUT FOR PROTECTION:

Why did you choose your safe people? How would you feel safe to tell them if you had concerns about your online friends?

7. Having a plan for talking to someone you trust if you find you have shared information with the wrong person is really important if we are going to use gaming or social media! Opening up about when someone shares uncomfortable things or moments with us can be a part of that plan too! Even if the person who shared too much is you, it's okay to tell a trusted person in your real life. Talking, writing, calling- these are all ways we can reach out to the safe people in our life to get help!

Thank you for helping me to understand your online relationships! Let's do this again!

CONVERSATIONS THAT PROTECT: A QUESTION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Navigating the need for friendship and how to put guidelines in place.

It's really important as we move forward that we allow children and teens the space to share without fear of punishment. That doesn't mean that we give them free reign to behave however on the internet, but it's up to us to teach them and explore what safe sharing is and how to identify when their online interactions may be crossing a line and heading into dangerous territory.

As you reflect on their answers, please take a moment to share with them when you yourself may have told the wrong person too much and how you dealt with that. Being a mirror for them helps build trust and show that even adults can make mistakes and yet, those mistakes did not destroy your life. Since online grooming and extortion/sextortion is rooted in secrecy, allowing them to see you open up about your own experiences can also help alert your child that you are the safest one for them to open up to if something goes wrong.

> It is important to allow the children to write or speak about how they are getting to know their online friend's story. This makes them feel as if their online friends matter to you as well.

OPENING THE CONVERSATION (SAFE SHARING TOPICS):

1. Write out a list of healthy questions and topics and keep it in a visible area. This establishes household boundaries and also helps navigate what is and is not appropriate to share (location, school name, etc). Update that list or revisit it as a family each time you fill this out, establishing new conversation guidleines.

THINGS TO CONSIDER OR ASK IN THIS CONVERSATION:

- Why does my child choose to share these things about themselves? What are they seeming to want others to know or understand about themselves?

- What type of ways are they sharing this information? Private messages, voice, video, or in public forums online?

- Have we addressed what to do if someone is pressuring them to share too much? What is our action plan?

NAVIGATING ONLINE SHARING AS A HOUSEHOLD:

2. Just because we have these talks doesn't mean any child can fully grasp the seriousness or devastating impacts of their information ending up in the wrong hands. Often predators online will insert themselves into friend circles to gain trust so it's important to stress that even what appears "safe" still needs to have boundaries about what is being shared.

THINGS TO CONSIDER OR ASK IN THIS CONVERSATION:

- What are your online friends sharing with you about themselves?

- What kinds of information are they sharing? Locations, photos, or details about their own life? May I see what they shared with you?

- Do they push for more thorough answers? How do they respond if you don't provide them with the responses they are seeking?

- Has anyone asked you to prove what you're saying is true? How did they ask for proof?

> Remind yourself that to many kids nowadays, online friends are just as real to them as our real life ones. This is why we need open dialogue about them.

CLOSING THE CONVERSATION:

3. Keeping an open dialogue is the first step towards strengthening the child's situational awareness and transparency about their internet activity. Thanking them for participating, giving praise and noting their efforts to speak helps them feel safe to share. Allowing them to help set safety rules also helps them feel a sense of responsibility to follow and keep them!

THINGS TO CONSIDER OR ASK IN THIS CONVERSATION:

- What can we all agree on as a safety plan? Where can we post it to make sure we all see it? How often should we update that plan?

- What questions do you have for us/me about what to share or not to share?

- Thank you for talking to me, when would you like to do this again? Do you have any suggestions for me?

> Applauding kids participation and efforts is key to building their self confidence and sense of security. They seek validation for their efforts!