

Technology: Teach Kids Critical Thinking

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Not a day goes by that we don't see a news story about the ills of technology and its negative effects on our youth. As a result many have come to understand the addictive nature of devices. Some of that addiction is driven by developers' use of persuasive technology to keep us coming back, but it is also driven by our increasing reliance on the many useful functions our devices perform. Kids, for example, are now expected to check social media for school announcements and homework updates and are directed to use apps to help them stay organized and on task. In fact, there are a host of apps specifically designed for kids with ADHD to support executive functioning.

Even if your child doesn't already have a smartphone the likelihood is that she will need—yes, need—one soon just to get by.

This means in addition to all the other tasks parents are faced with, teaching healthy tech habits and how to extract the positives and minimize the negatives also needs to be on the list.

Looking Forward

Given that every day holds the opportunity for a new type of social media, game, or device, rather than looking back, I recommend we look forward and learn how to think critically about our use and teach our children to as well.

Not all screen time is equal and not all screen time is bad. This is particularly true for social media, which has been one of the main sources of concern for our children.

Help your children understand the difference and offer praise when they do. Using social media for inspiration or information is different from mindless scrolling. Watching a YouTube video about how to build your own drone or how to bake a cake is different than viewing memes for hours. Following climate change influencers is different than cyber stalking friends or celebrities you think have better or more interesting lives.

If we teach our children to understand these differences, and that it is possible to use devices and social networks in a healthy and intentional way we will prepare them for how to use the next TikTok, SnapChat, Discord, or that which might just drop tomorrow.

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