Starting a Conversation about Your Teen's Online Protection

One of the most effective ways to protect your kids from online dangers is to have ongoing conversations about those dangers and how following basic Internet safety rules can help prevent problems from happening. It also helps to understand what is going on in their world so you are there to help them solve problems they might not know how to handle. TrueCare's goal is to make this easier by providing you with tools and resources you need.

- *Talk about potential dangers of the Internet.* Communicate with your children about the consequences of inappropriate behavior and "friending" strangers on the Internet. Help them identify suspicious behavior, and encourage them to tell you if something is wrong. Some of the reasons that kids don't tell their parents about issues that occur online include:
- *Embarrassment.* Let your children know that just because they witness something inappropriate online that it's not their fault and that they shouldn't be embarrassed or afraid to talk to you about it. Remind them that you're on their side and want to help keep them safe while online.
- *Afraid of Discipline from Parents or Schools.* It's important to establish rules for online behavior and consequences for breaking those rules early on so that your child understands exactly what you consider inappropriate or dangerous. But it is also important that your child knows that you recognize that just because they are involved in a situation online does not automatically make it their fault and that you're always willing to have an open conversation about the issue.
- *Afraid of Losing Technology.* One of the most common reasons that kids do not tell their parents about issues involving the Internet, social networks or texting, is that they're afraid of losing access to their computers or smartphones. Parents need to recognize the importance of these devices to their kids (especially their teens) and that the fear of losing access to them could be motivation for not telling parents about problems that they are experiencing. Again, it's important to establish rules and consequences for breaking the rules early on.

Overall the best way to keep your child safe online and to avoid these issues is to have ongoing, frequent conversations about what your child is doing and what they are seeing online.

Talk about ground rules and limitations. Using the Internet and social networking sites should be viewed as a privilege that comes with responsibility. Set rules for your kids regarding when, where and for how long they can access their accounts.

Talk about privacy settings and how to use them. User controls on social networking sites can be confusing. Work together with your kids to learn how to make their profile private, block or report certain users, and share content safely.

Talk about what they did on Facebook today. Sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter can be fun ways for your kids to connect with friends and family members. Stay updated on what your kids are doing online on a daily basis, so you can quickly identify unusual behavior or activity.

Talking to your kids about Internet safety is one of the first steps to protecting them from cyber bullying, sexual predators and other online risks.

http://www.truecare.com/for-parents/starting-conversation