



solutions



SAFEGUARDED

Keeping a Curious Child Safe in the Digital Age

All search engines have built-in software that allows parents and guardians to control access. This software can be valuable for protecting younger ones. While technology can provide some safety, providing guidance, keeping the lines of communication open, and being there to help your child make appropriate responses are powerful ways to keep him or her safer.

Age-appropriate message

It is important to tailor your message about safety to the age and maturity level of your child. Your child may not be able to completely understand the full details of a safety message. If that's the case, provide the information you know that he or she will fully comprehend. As your child gets older, keep the conversation going and provide the other necessary details.

Guarding personal—and family—information

Another protective tactic is to teach your child to be discreet about letting people have personal information about him or herself or loved ones—including comings and goings, who is related to whom, etc. Teach your child that just because someone seems to know a lot about him or her, they did not necessarily get this information from another family member or friend. He or she may have just picked up the information from the Internet. The best policy is to be guarded with personal information, whether online or in person.

Open communication

Having an open dialogue with your child can help him or her make good decisions to avoid risk. Give your child real-life examples of what might put him or her at risk. Provide sample responses that can help keep your children safe. Reiterate that they should come to you or a trusted adult whenever they need help making a decision about online behavior.



The quickest and best way to contact the EAP is by calling **1-800-222-0364**

No secrets

As part of the open communication, explain to your child that though secrets may seem fun and exhilarating, they should not exist between him or her and you. In fact, explain that if someone asks him or her to keep a secret from family and friends, this is likely a warning sign that the person may be up to something that could be harmful. Explain that there are some exceptions to this like surprises regarding birthdays and presents.

Come to me first

Setting a policy where a child must go to his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) before posting information or replying to anyone's request—for information or a meeting, for example—can make all the difference for their well-being. In addition, giving a child solid guidance about what is wholesome and appropriate goes a long way toward helping him or her stay safe. The child also needs to know that it is okay to say no to a stranger or disengage from anyone or anything that makes him or her feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Strong self-esteem provides safety

Sometimes it is the basics of a strong sense of self and high self-esteem that can protect a child both online and off. Many of the things that put your child at risk, like being easy to manipulate or belittle, can be avoided by routinely reminding the child of his or her intrinsic worth. Providing a loving environment can help a child feel safe and valued, which can help him or her excel in other areas of life, too.

Watch out for bullying

Be aware that bullying can chip away at a person's self-esteem and sense of worth. If you know or suspect that your child is being bullied, in addition to contacting school personnel, you may want to seek professional help from your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Recovery from this type of peer treatment can be difficult, because of the devastating impact on a child's self-esteem. Bullying may also lead to the recipient causing harm to him or herself. Seek professional help—like from your EAP—immediately if you suspect your child is experiencing this.

Checking in

Periodically checking in with your child to learn if he or she is feeling stressed, anxious, or down is important for his or her continued safety. Children can be more vulnerable when they are feeling out of sorts. You may consider a session with an EAP counselor to find resources that can help with giving your child some relief.

If your child is doing well, this is a good time to reiterate some of the guidelines for safe online behavior and inquire about current online activity, including what is being posted, what is being watched online, and who his or her online friends are. This is a great way to keep the dialogue open and may lead to talking about other topics and issues with which you can help your child.

Employee Assistance Program

24
HOURS A DAY

1-800-222-0364

TTY: 1-888-262-7848

FOH4You.com