Cell Phone Safety

Most children, even at the age of 10 or younger, have cell phones today. While beneficial to keep track of our children or for our children to communicate with us as parents, there are many risks associated with today’s cell phone. Gone are the days of the giant Motorola cell phone or even flip phones. Today’s cell phones are so sophisticated that they can often replace a home computer or laptop. Apps are being created every minute or every day, and social media is one of the hottest trends globally.

It’s extremely important that anyone who owns a cell phone understands how the cell phone works and uses it responsibly in order to prevent not only personal misuse, but we need to be aware that there are people out there that prey on the unsuspecting and vulnerable victim. ID Theft, computer viruses, cyberbullying, and more...the list of risks we are faced with today can result in many challenging and frustrating incidents in our lives that may be preventable.

I encourage all parents and students to have a serious discussion about cell phone and other media device usage before permitting our students access to these essential yet privileged pieces of technology. Collectively agree upon amount of time used, what apps are permitted (most social media apps require the user to be a minimum of 13 years of age or older WITH parent permission), understanding of what the apps are used for and how they are used, settings that are consistent with your family’s moral compass and that can prevent our children from being exposed to images or content that most adults would feel uncomfortable viewing, and ultimately making good decisions while using the device.

Many colleges and businesses in modern society are rejecting admission or hiring due to irresponsibility of a person related to their social media activity. Some activity can even be considered criminal, i.e. Telephonic Harassment, Harassment, Disorderly Conduct, various sex offenses, and others. The point is, as the School Resource Officer I have investigated and had serious discussions with students, parents, and school staff regarding these issues. In most cases, parents were unaware of what their child(ren) was actually doing on their cell phone or other devices and had no idea of the apps they were using until the poor decision making already occurred.

My advice is to establish and maintain good communication and guidelines for appropriate and responsible technological device usage as a family. If you need additional resources, including a student version and parent version of a Digital Safety course and/or a Family Media Agreement, please don’t hesitate to contact me. Stay safe and thanks for reading!

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