

SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY IN A DIGITAL WORLD

As technology continues to evolve and grow, so does our access to social media platforms. Social media can be a great asset for connecting with friends and family, researching how to create effective PowerPoint presentations for work, or learning how to complete everyday tasks we may not have known how to do before, such as changing a tire or completing do-it-yourself home projects that can help us save money.

However, what we often see is that while the good continues to grow, so can the bad, especially when it comes to the ability to hide behind social media. We hear stories on the news of individuals being exploited or unsafe events occurring due to the power and vastness of social media, particularly when an identity is not always required. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, 75% of harassment typically occurs on social media platforms, which can have a significant effect on mental health, leading to disorders such as major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

The good news is that there are a variety of ways social media can be utilized safely and in the healthy, appropriate way it was intended. When we are able to navigate platforms safely and use them for growth and connection, social media does not have to be scary. Instead, it can become a useful tool in our pocket. By employing the tips below in our next social media search, we can continue to be proactive about the dangers of social media.

1. Privacy is a right. Most users, if not all, can edit their privacy settings on social media platforms to control who can view their profiles and access their information, such as their name, location, and place of employment.



2. Set boundaries. Many of our friends and family, ourselves included, enjoy sharing pictures online, tagging each other, or posting about current activities. If you do not feel comfortable being tagged in photographs or having others share information about you, set clear boundaries with friends and family regarding social media, or untag yourself.

3. Create security and establish trust. Use passwords that are more difficult for others to guess. For parents, ensure you regularly receive updated passwords and access codes from your children so their social media usage can be monitored for safety.

4. Teach messaging and technology safety. According to the Pew Research Center, up to 64% of accounts on social media platforms, specifically X, are created by bots. Bots are computer-generated profiles that are not real. Regularly review your own and your children's social media accounts for suspicious messages and links that could lead to potential harm.

If you or someone in your household feels overwhelmed by social media, your Employee Assistance Program offers free and confidential mental health support. Call us today!



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