

INTRODUCTION

He walks into my office with a tortured look on his face.

This is a father who has clearly reached his wit's end. He doesn't want to be here in my office. He's here because he doesn't know what else to do.

Slumping into the chair in my office, he seems on the verge of tears.

"My son won't cooperate," he says. "Won't listen to anything I say. I think he actually hates me. I don't know how to make things better."

I nod. It's heartbreaking, but this father's pain is a particular kind of pain that I've seen hundreds of times before.

"So, what are you hoping to achieve in working with me?" I ask.

A pause.

"I just want my kid to be happy. To grow up and be a good person. Have a good life. I want our home to feel peaceful again, not like a war zone. I just want all of us — me, my wife, my son — I want all of us to be happy."

I nod again.

"So let's talk about you," I begin.

"I thought we were going to talk about my son." he counters.

"We are," I confirm. "But we need to start by talking about you."

That's the reality about being a parent.

Raising a happy, healthy, successful child starts with you.

It always starts with you.

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[From Chapter 10]

Self-reflection.

Got a tech-addicted kid who is superglued to his or her iPad, phone, computer or tablet?

Here are a few questions to help you see how your upbringing, your past, and your personal choices might have contributed to creating this situation...

- What's my relationship with technology?
- Am I constantly glued to a device, thereby showing my kid — through my example — that this kind of behavior is OK?
- Do I feel intimidated by technology? And if so, do I take a hands-off approach with my kids? (Like: "I don't know anything about social media, so I can't intervene. I guess I'll just let my kid be.")
- Do I rely on technology to make me feel "valuable" or "lovable"? Is my mood dependent on how many re-tweets or Facebook likes I've received that day?
- Do I expose myself inappropriately online? (Oversharing details from my own life or posting revealing, sexual photos, for example, even though I don't want my child to do the same?)
- Where does my relationship with technology come from? (Am I following my parents' example? Do I emulate my partner? My friends?)

Finding solutions.

There are lots of things you can do to help your child develop a healthier, more balanced relationship with technology.

Here are a few basic guidelines...

- *Monitor online activity.*

If you read the previous chapter on dating and sex, you'll probably remember these 4 words:

Supervise. Review. Educate. Block.

Here's a quick review:

Supervise your child's online activity (and phone activity) with a tracking app. Situate the computer that your child uses at home in a visible area, like the living room.

Review your child's social media profiles (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest). Be aware of what your teen is posting and how often.

Educate your child about the dangers of posting sensitive information online — like your address, telephone number or last name. Emphasize that information that's posted online is trackable, forever — even if you delete it. (Tools like the Wayback Machine reveal that even deleted info can be recovered by people who really want to find it.)

Block inappropriate and potentially dangerous sites (like porn sites, adult chat rooms and online dating sites) so that your child cannot access them, period. If you're unclear about how to block sites, find a friendly computer pro who can help.

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