



skills our daughter managed to film her breasts only cutting off the top half of her face whilst she animatedly discussed how to apply makeup. This is where being a Facebook "friend" comes in handy as I saw her post arrive on my account and immediately asked her to take it down. We both had a giggle but it did highlight that users need to check their work before they upload and "go live".

Finally, the third incident which was the straw that broke the camel's back was our daughter viewing a post uploaded from a friend's account (who happened to be a teenage boy). Now, I have nothing against teenage boys (I was one once remember) but quite often I cringe at their overzealous approach to impressing the girls (yes been there done that too). Unfortunately, this boy's judgement went out the window when he uploaded a pornographic photo that he had obtained somehow (probably from the internet) for all and sundry to view. He obviously thought that it would gain him some kudos amongst his male peers but for my daughter it just upset her. It was at this point that we deleted her account.

Inappropriate content is all over the internet and even being a member myself of a Local Community group on Facebook I have been exposed to explicit content that is someone's idea of a joke. This highlights the fact that anything can be posted online in any forum despite putting in privacy settings. By allowing your children to access Social Media before they have the maturity or understanding to deal with what they see, you are taking a risk of exposing them to content and/or people who can influence or manipulate them. This can have catastrophic affects from alienation at school, feeling unsafe at home (this should always be a place of safety for children) which can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem and a lack of confidence.

As I see it, we cannot stop our children from entering into the world of Social Media but we can educate ourselves and them about how to use it responsibly.

So here are my top ten tips for keeping your children safe online.

1. Keep the home computer in a communal area of the house
2. Ensure filters are in place with your broadband provider, if you do not know how to do this, call your provider and they will talk you through it. Not knowing is NOT an excuse.
3. Before your child has access to Social Media have a discussion about the dangers of using it as well as the good reasons to use it because at some point they WILL be using it, whether it's Moshi Monsters, You Tube, Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn
4. If you do not know what these Social Media apps are, find out. There are plenty of explanations available online.
5. Monitor the history on a regular basis, this works until your children work out how to clear it so at that point you need to stipulate that their use of the home computer is permitted as long as history is left intact.
6. Keep the lines of communication open with your children about online activity from the start. Let them know it is important to share with you any activity that has upset them.
7. If peer groups have been involved, DO NOT approach them or their parents. Discuss with and educate your child how best they can deal with them. Empower your child to deal with the situation but ensure they know you are there to support them.
8. Have a set amount of time allocated for your child to access Social Media each day (suitable age permitting). This way they can let their friends know when they will be online and it does not have to be all the time.
9. If your child/teenager has a Smart phone be aware that this device will allow them access to the internet and Social Media anywhere, not just at home.
10. If your child is using Social Media ensure they switch off two hours before bedtime, this will allow them time to relax fully before going to sleep.

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