



THE 6E'S

OF PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

- EXEMPLIFY
- EXPLAIN
- ENGAGE
- EDUCATE
- EMPOWER
- EMPATHIZE

Today's youth are growing up surrounded by technology and media. The world is at their fingertips and that comes with incredible opportunities but also difficult challenges. Many parents are overwhelmed by the ins and outs of parenting in the digital age. They are worried for their children's safety, well-being, and health. They are also worried about their ability to help their kids' navigate the complicated digital landscape when it's all new to them, too. Don't fret! Creating a healthy relationship with media and technology in your home is not only possible but can also bring you and your child closer. Explore these 6 E's of parenting in the digital age to empower you and give you the skills you need to level up your parenting skills for today's world.

For
Parents
of Young
Children

Exemplify

Well, parents, it's on you. Whether you have a two year old or a twelve year old, your child is watching you probably more than they are listening to you. If you want your kids to have a healthy relationship with media and technology, then you need to show them how to do it! Be a role model. Reflect on your media use. What is your relationship with media and technology? If there are things you are seeing that concern you about your child and their media use, reflect on how your behaviors might be impacting them.

FOR EXAMPLE

You may not want your child to use technology before school because it keeps them from getting ready for the day. They may see you on your device distracted from the pancakes on the stove and the permission slip that needs to be signed for a school field trip. Pay attention to ways you can show them how you are being thoughtful about your technology use.

Explain

It's really important that your family is clear about the rules and expectations around media and technology use. Conflict can arise when there is lack of clarity around the guidelines. Some basic ones might be "technology free dinners" or "homework before Roblox". There may be more significant ones, too, like "you need to wait for social media until high school." Consider writing a family contract that outlines basic rules for everyone. The important thing is that everyone knows what the rules are and what happens if they are broken.

FOR EXAMPLE

Talking while you are using technology is a great way to explain uses of technology. Rather than simply saying "give me a second". Give details like "I have to reply to a work email from my boss on a project due tomorrow, and then we can go to the park."

Engage

We spend a lot of time talking to our kids about what *not* to do when it comes to media and technology. It's important to find moments where you can engage with them around their interests and likes. Just like you head outside to kick the ball around with a child that likes soccer, you need to be willing to engage in their online interests, too. Ask them questions about why they like the apps, games, and platforms they use. Ask them to teach you how to play a Roblox game they love and play with them. Share funny videos you see online with them. Watch some together! Find moments when you can enjoy the positive aspects of technology.

FOR EXAMPLE

Young children are figuring out what they enjoy. They are exploring the world and discovering the activities that engage them. When your child shows interest in a show, a website, a film, or a song, sit down, watch and listen with them. Ask them what they find entertaining and why they prefer a certain type of media more than others. Show them you are interested in their likes and dislikes.

Educate

You may feel like your child is growing up in a world you don't understand. Technology changes quickly, and for some, that change can be overwhelming. It's important that parents learn about the digital world but also remember that many of the experiences that children have today are grounded in social issues. You have life experience to navigate social situations, awkward interactions, tough personalities, disappointments, and challenges. You have a lot to teach your child even if you might not know all the technology. Use your life skills to educate your child and prepare them for the road ahead.

FOR EXAMPLE

How many times has your child come home from school asking for the newest toy, game, or tech gadget declaring "everyone has it!"? Parents know this statement is an exaggeration, but it's also a great opportunity for teaching. Educating our kids to not compare themselves to others and about patience are important lessons in a consumer culture that moves quickly.

Empower

If your child loves to sing and dance, you might find yourself looking for voice lessons or dance classes to nurture those interests. What if they love video games? Or taking pictures on their phone? Or Roblox? Embrace your child's interests and passion when it comes to technology. Encourage their curiosity and skill building. Kids today are growing up in a world where they will need to be adept at technology. Find them opportunities for learning. There are so many new skills young people need to navigate the world. Do your best to ensure they are empowered to learn them.

FOR EXAMPLE

Your child loves art and loves to draw. Just like you might keep art supplies close by, download art related and drawing apps they can use that can enhance their skills and spark their interests. As they get older, find design classes for them.

Empathize

When you were growing up, odds are you had more privacy than youth do today. It's important that we empathize with our children about the challenges of growing up in public - where there is not only very little privacy but also an expectation to share about yourself. Your child knows the digital world is complicated and has concerns and worries about navigating it just like you have for them. Listen to them. Be there for them and support them through the ups and downs.

FOR EXAMPLE

As young children start to navigate conversations online via text or games, they notice that sometimes people are rude and say things that they would never say in person. It can be very upsetting to see how some people communicate. This can be tough to manage for a young child. Talk with them about what they are seeing and assure them that you want them to come to you if they see anything that makes them uncomfortable.