Recommendations for parents to discuss online behaviour with their children

Children spend a lot of their free time online. It is not uncommon for children to use different social norms online than in real life. This can lead to inconvenient experiences. It is therefore important for parents to integrate online behaviour and experiences of their child into their parental care. With this flyer we would like to provide you with a few supportive recommendations to help you out.

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1. Open communication

Discuss with your child about its online experiences. Which are fun experiences and which are not? Try not to be controlling, but show interest. **Ask questions.** Make clear that you will be there to help if problems arise.

2. Get involved in social media

Joining social media will teach you more about the digital world. Ask your child to help you to learn more about social media. What safety tips does your child have for you? Where did he/she learn about it? **Ask your child where to go for help** when things go wrong on the internet.

3. Talk about consciously building an online image

Discuss with your child how to establish an online image in such a way that he/she will not regret it. Ask questions like: **"How can you make a good impression of yourself?** To what should you pay attention? What does your online behaviours say about you? What kind of information should you put online or better not put online?"

4. Talk about online bullying

Talk with your children about bullying, for instance in WhatsApp groups. Ask questions like: **"If you see someone being treated unkindly or wrongly online, what can you do?** Suppose you were a victim of bullying, how would you want your friends to respond?"

5. Go through the settings of the social profiles of your child together

Formulate together a nickname that your child can use on chat sites. The nickname should not include information on the age of your child. Advise to save the history of chat conversations. This will provide evidence in case something should go wrong. Explain that you, as a parent, will not read the conversations without the permission of your child. Make sure that the **settings are set to 'Private'** so that the profile is not visible to everyone else.

6. Make agreements about online friends

Let your child think about online friends. Ask if it is safe to accept a stranger as a friend on social media. **Explain that people might be someone different from what they say online.** Also explain what you perceive as a 'stranger'. Children often do not see people they have met online as strangers. Let your child think of the dangers of meeting an online friend in real life. How could this be done safely? For example: bring a friend, make sure your phone is charged and turned on, tell others where you are and meet in a public place.

7. Talk about webcam and photo use

Discuss with your child if creating and sending sexy pictures of him/herself (erotic selfies) to others can be done safely. Sending erotic selfies is called 'sexting'. Explain that it is wise to exchange only photographs of yourself that you feel comfortable in showing to everybody. This also counts for using the webcam. Inform your child that distributing a picture of a minor with pornographic nature is a criminal offense because it is seen as child pornography. Your child needs to understand that **after sending an erotic selfie he/she loses control** over what happens with this image, especially after a love relationship ends.