

Note to Parents & Educators

Teaching children the social impact and safety of technology is an extremely important responsibility parents and educators share. It is important to help bring balance to our children's fast-paced lives, how to determine healthy amounts of time to spend on technology and management of a balance between technology use and social interaction. We think that making children aware of the large impact technology and social media can have in their lives and mental health is a decision that must be made well before any device is set before a child of any age, in a classroom or at home.

Offering tools to help navigate the information, pace and impact on oneself & others, that technology brings into our lives, will help guide children to make better, kinder choices. Having safety conversations and for educators, creating lessons and programs that inform children of safe technology use from a perspective that technology & media are **tools NOT toys** will take time to communicate to a generation of children who have "played" with technology since toddlerhood and even before, but is well worth the challenge.

Pediatricians, psychologists and neuroscientists warn of both the stimulus concerns to the brain and it's functioning and the mental health concerns for which we are seeing staggering statistical shifts in today's youth. Mobile devices, computers, technology and social media have the potential to provide great learning opportunities for our children but, also have the same power to negatively impact their social and mental health, if not properly managed and balanced, especially to young, developing brains.

To have success in supporting balance, a unity between parents and educators should be forged to support these valid concerns. Shifts in social interaction between children and their peers, rates of unhappiness and depression and increasing rates of suicide in children age 10-24 are all concerns that require parents and educators to be effective in the support and planning they offer to children's media and technology use.

Ultimately, students must learn the balance of how to tune in to others in both the physical world and the virtual and digital world, balance the use of technology and media as a tool and create healthy guidelines they can learn to follow as responsible caretakers of themselves. Education and support is a means to wellness in this regard.

Because the use of technology and media is in constant research and debate, we urge you, as parents and educators to put value in finding balance, *together*. Technology and media can be useful tools and are a part of our lives in the 21st century, but should not replace social interaction, interrupt life or physical activity and shouldn't be viewed as social status for a child or a school campus. We suggest that clear, concise guidelines for children be laid and well thought out educational programs must be in place *before* technology is put into any child's hands at home or in the classroom. More technology use & safety directives can be found at www.common sense media.org.

As a starter tool, we offer our AddyPresLifeSTYLE Technology Agreement. We welcome you to prompt a conversation with your child/student(s) using the tool. Be sure to convey the message that **technology is a TOOL not a toy**. We thank & commend you, as an informed parent/educator, for your dedication to support your children/students to thrive in life and learning! If you are a parent, please feel free to share this agreement with your educators.

Dear _____,

Congratulations! You've proven yourself mature and responsible enough for

We trust that you have heard our guidance and that you will make good choices, but we still need to have you sign a contract. Here's why:

A _____ is more than a piece of technology or a sign of social status. If incorrectly used, it can be a machine that puts your safety at risk. The goal of this contract is to ensure that you are INFORMED, SAFE & HAPPY. It is important that we maintain an open line of communication that can help you navigate anything that feels unsafe, inappropriate, scary, unsure or unhealthy. Your responsibility is to use this new technology as a tool, not a toy. Its use will have guidelines written out on the following pages, and you will forego its use if any of the guidelines are not carried out. Remember that I care deeply about your safety, happiness and well-being, which is why this contract is necessary. Please ask questions if you are curious.

Technology Agreement

_____ I understand that I am a child and not yet ready to take on the full responsibilities that technology and social media will bring into my life, so I promise to accept the guidance and support from my parents and educators and abide by the rules they set to keep me safe and happy.

_____ I understand that the rules below are for my safety because my parents and educators care about me. I understand that my parents want to support my freedom with enough support and security for me to make smart choices for myself and my future.

_____ I promise that my parents will always know my passwords. I understand that my parents have the right to look at my technology and social media accounts whenever they want, even without my permission.

_____ When at school, I understand that I will not have use of any technology, except what is guided by my educators. I understand that I can check my phone before school, once and after school, twice, because it is a tool, not a toy.

_____ I understand that technology can be addicting, and I will work hard to understand that the limits my parents and educators set are for my safety and well-being, respecting their guidelines for time of use and content.

_____ I will not send or receive inappropriate photos or texts of myself or my friends because I understand that there could be serious legal and social consequences that could put mine and my parents' future at risk.

_____ I understand that my behavior with technology could impact my future, even in ways I might not understand yet, so I will always use it as a tool not a toy in kindness and respect of myself and others.

_____ I promise I will tell my parents immediately if I receive suspicious or alarming phone calls, texts or images from anyone.

_____ I promise I will not share any of my personal information anywhere online, because this is dangerous.

_____ I promise to talk to my parent about any unkindness I experience through the use of technology.

_____ I promise I will not interrupt real life conversations, opportunities for activities or exercise or learning because of technology use.

_____ I promise I will not replace real time spent with my friends or engaging in conversations--- not texts, tweets, or chats--- for technology use.

_____ I will NEVER use my technology or social media to be unkind, bully or tease anyone, even if my friends think it's funny. I will always use my technology as a tool to help not hurt. I will THINK before I post anything: T: is it TRUE, H: is it HELPFUL, I: is it INSPIRING, N: is it NECESSARY, K: is it KIND

Child/Student

Parent(s)

Educator(s)