

PARENT WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Equipping parents with knowledge and resources to intentionally parent in an increasingly complicated and dangerous digital world.



CHAPTER 1: A WHOLE NEW WORLD

This chapter will be a window into the role technology plays in the lives of teenagers. We'll gain perspective on how very different this world is from the one in which parents grew up. We'll begin conversations about technology use, with an aim to grow empathy toward the challenges and pressures teenagers face. A basic understanding of current apps and social media will be explored in an attempt to address potential knowledge gaps that can make parenting in this new landscape difficult to navigate.

- As digital natives, technology is teenagers' first language, whereas Gen X and Millennial parents speak "technology" less fluently.
- Teenagers self-report being on their phones "almost constantly" for school, entertainment, and social pursuits.
- Teens' developmental needs for "connection and belonging" match with what social media offers.
- While the internet can open doors to vast amounts of information, significant time spent online has been shown to compound teenagers' feelings of loneliness and depression.



CHAPTER 2: DANGERS IN THEIR DIGITAL WORLD

Seeking to promote understanding and greater compassion around teenagers' desire to spend so much time online, this chapter builds parental awareness around the intersection of adolescent brain development and technology. By examining dangers present in their teens' digital world, parents will be better equipped to keep their children safe from potential harms resulting from pornography, cyberbullying, sextortion, and online predation.

- Teens seek affirmation, asking the question: "Am I known, and am I loved?"
- The need to answer this question drives them to spend copious amounts of time online.
- The teenage brain is wired for high stimulation pursuits, leading to large amounts of screen time and other addictive behaviors.
- Teens are naturally curious about sexuality, often seeking information online which can lead to both helpful and harmful content.
- Most parents believe their children have not been exposed to pornography, however research shows the majority have, beginning at an early age.
- The deluge of explicit content teens are bombarded with normalizes a culture in which sexting is commonplace.
- Sexting does not always result in disastrous consequences; however, there are times in which it leads to bullying, shaming, and sextortion.
- Online predators intentionally target teens that are more vulnerable due to low self-esteem, difficult home life, or mental health challenges.
- Certain apps, gaming platforms, and chat rooms enable predators to meet and groom potential victims for exploitation.
- There can be severe consequences for both teens and adults if they choose to engage in making, sending, or requesting explicit content from minors.



CHAPTER 3 : THE HEART OF THE MATTER

In this chapter, we will examine the emotional impact teens experience as a result of their exposure to a torrent of explicit content. This will help us better understand their lived realities, equipping them to lead lives of integrity both online and offline. This chapter assists in recognizing and responding to signs of potential exploitation, acknowledging the accompanied lower sense of well-being expressed by victims of harmful activities online.

- Engaging in sextortion or cyberbullying as either victim or participant can have deeply harmful emotional consequences.
- Negative online experiences can seem to “live on,” compound, or even become permanent, leaving teens feeling trapped and unsure how to course correct.
- Due to shame or a fear of punishment, most teens will not report sextortion or cyberbullying.
- It is therefore important for parents and caregivers to recognize sudden behavior and personality changes that may point to potential exploitation.
- When bullying or exploitation is suspected, learn to respond appropriately to the situation by seeking to understand, forming a plan, courageously parenting, and engaging in constant conversation.
- Equip teenagers to not merely avoid internet pitfalls, but actively engage in building digital character.
- Challenge teens to say NO to participating in that which commodifies another, choosing instead to build a better, kinder digital world.



CHAPTER 4 : PRACTICAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

This chapter will offer information and practical tools to assist families in developing healthy relationships with technology while maintaining good boundaries and open lines of communication. It will enable parents to assess their teenagers’ level of vulnerability to internet dangers and will engage them in adopting appropriate safeguards to help keep their family safe.

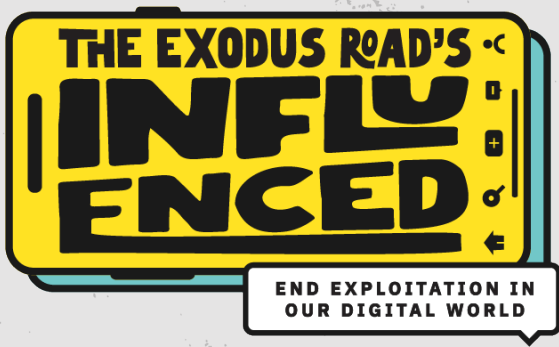
- A “vulnerability rating card” helps parents assess potential risks their teens may experience while using technology and spending time online.
- Various safeguarding levels are then recommended based upon high or low levels of determined risk.
- A Family Technology Agreement is offered as a resource to help parents and teens establish good boundaries and clear expectations for technology use.
- Parents are instructed to respond quickly and appropriately to suspected predation or exploitation by gathering detailed information and reporting to local authorities.
- Parents are encouraged to identify and commit to making at least two practical changes in the way they engage in conversations based on what they learned during the Influenced training.
- An invitation is made to participate in creating a world free from exploitation for all children by partnering in The Exodus Road’s anti-trafficking work.

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TEEN WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Equipping teens to understand the dangers of their digital world, while empowering them to keep themselves and others safe, engage with the adults in their lives, and create healthy boundaries with technology.



CHAPTER 1 : YOUR DIGITAL WORLD

This chapter will offer a look at the realities teenagers face growing up in a digital world that is very different from the one in which their parents were raised. We will identify some of what sets Gen Z apart, including their status as “digital natives” — acknowledging generational gaps that may exist between teens and parents related to understanding and using technology.

- Technology has evolved dramatically over the past few decades, and culture has shifted with it.
- Parents have a lot to learn with these changes, and it makes sense there may be gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- As “digital natives,” teens speak “technology” as a first language and are able to navigate the technical world much more easily than their Gen X and Millennial parents.
- In addition to being digital natives, Gen Z is known for diversity, political progressiveness, and having a greater awareness and experience of mental health challenges.
- Along with these changes comes high levels of online access, with most teens logging hours per day streaming and using social media on their smartphones



CHAPTER 2 : RISKS AND REALITIES

Acknowledging technology as a major component of our lives, this chapter takes a look at some of the potential impacts it can have, including teens’ capacity to experience happiness and to develop meaningful relationships. The teenage brain naturally prioritizes high-stimulation activities — explaining their draw to technology. When used less carefully, technology can lead to risks of bullying, sextortion, pornography addiction, and online predation.

- Teens have an innate desire to feel connected to others.
- Meaningful relationships are more fulfilling when experienced in-person vs. online.
- The larger someone’s virtual network, the less time available to invest in developing offline relationships and pursuits.
- Endless scrolling leads to comparison and feelings of being left out or not good enough.
- For this reason, Gen Z is often referred to as the loneliest generation.
- Teenage brains innately prioritize the pleasure center, seeking out highly stimulating activities that lead to dopamine production.
- This can lead to both healthy and less-healthy pursuits, from sports to music, gaming to partying, scrolling social media, and even pornography.
- Teens who intentionally engage porn do so most often out of curiosity.
- While sexual curiosity is a normal part of development, pornography is not a reliable source of information.
- Porn is highly addictive and can lead to a number of harms, including perpetuating a culture of violence toward women and fostering human trafficking.
- The sheer availability of explicit content has normalized a teen culture of sexting.
- Sexting can lead to a number of negative consequences, including content being shared without the creator’s permission, bullying, and sextortion.
- Most teens will not report sextortion due to fear of punishment or shame.
- Online predators are aware of this and intentionally target teens, grooming them with the intent of gaining explicit content which can be used to exploit.
- There are legal consequences teens need to be aware of regarding sending or receiving sexually explicit material.



CHAPTER 3 : THE HEART OF THE MATTER

This chapter helps teenagers understand the adverse mental and emotional impacts affecting both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying and sextortion.

Teens learn to recognize signs a peer could be experiencing online exploitation and are equipped to take appropriate action with the help of a trusted adult. In addition to advocating for those who may be in trouble, teens are empowered to participate in creating a better digital world for themselves and for others.

- Being a victim of sextortion or cyberbullying can lead someone to withdraw, isolate, and experience poor mental health.
- Being a participant in cyberbullying or propagating harmful or explicit content also has negative emotional and mental effects.
- If a friend is a victim of cyberbullying or sextortion, there are several signs to be aware of.
- If one suspects predation or exploitation, it is important to take action, involving a trustworthy adult.
- In addition to advocating for others who are in trouble, teens have the power to shift culture and help create a better world, refusing to perpetuate undignified content and being thoughtful in how they interact both online and offline.
- A quick self-evaluation tool enables teens to determine if they are currently engaging as someone who is influenced vs. someone who is an influencer.



CHAPTER 4 : CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

In an attempt to normalise having tough conversations with trusted adults, this chapter aims to help teens understand their parents' primary role of keeping them safe, both online and offline. Participants are invited to share about current tactics they and their families use to establish healthy online boundaries and practices, and introduces

additional tools that can aid in creating a safer digital experience. Teens will conduct a vulnerability self-assessment and begin conversations around Family Technology Agreements.

- Discuss different tactics families currently engage to stay safe.
- Recognize the importance of maintaining privacy around personal information when deciding what to share online.
- Understand that parents need to be knowledgeable about their teens' online activities in order to keep them safe – their primary responsibility.
- Consider Family Tech Agreements as a tool families use to keep conversations open and expectations clear around technology use.
- Explore additional practical steps teens can take to keep themselves and their friends safe, becoming empowered to create a better digital world.

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