



The LIFE Parent Book Series has begun! We are discussing **Behind Their Screens: What Teens are Facing (And Adults are Missing)**. Harvard researchers draw on a multiyear project that surveyed more than 3500 teens to help grown ups understand the complicated nature of online lives. Parents were asked to think about the pros and cons of screen life and to think about their own technology habits. Here is a summary of October's conversation:

As parents we make assumptions about our child's online life:

- All time is wasted on tech and all tech time is a waste of time
- My child does not have the capability to regulate their time and has no self control
- We assume that kids know how to protect themselves
- Online social connections are superficial
- Our kids can be misled by disinformation
- All kids are affected the same way

As a parent, this is what concerns me the most:

- Hard to stop, its addictive
- Worried about their safety and privacy, unsolicited inappropriate content
- Digital footprint
- Lack of parental control
- Distraction from things like sleep, family time, interpersonal interactions, no balance
- Mental health - loss of interest in other activities
- Online life stifles creativity

As a parent, this is a tech habit "I" need to change

- Mindlessly checking phone
- Nighttime scrolling
- Responding to everything in the moment
- Understand device capabilities
- Prioritize use better
- Figure out how to stop

Positive things parents reported about online life

- Creates independent learners
- Access to great information that inspires curiosity, inspirational
- Opportunities for more social connections, other kinds of connections
- Helps kids help parents
- Increases student voice

Parenting Ideas & Take Aways

- Parents concluded that the concerns they have for their kids are the *SAME concerns they have for themselves* when it comes to screen use and online life, a shared experience! If adults find it hard to manage/balance, then our kids also struggle and/or maybe they are better at it
 - Are the struggles around screen time more about general time management? Academic expectations?
- Listen to your child, learn about their online experiences, check your own assumptions
- Continue to have open conversations and communications. It is ok to set boundaries and have rules and provide your reasons, make it a partnership agreement, get your child's input and suggestions
 - Establish respect and trust, goes both ways, use a team approach
 - Trust instead of shame
- For some families, firm rules and time limits work. For some, these don't work. Try not to force a process that isn't working, be creative and think of different ways to manage. Here are some ideas:
 - No phone use in the car, meal time, etc.
 - Don't assume that all time spent online is negative or a waste of time, talk about the positives
- Younger kids need concrete limits and boundaries. Older kids can be part of the process and the solution. Our kids are smart so talk to them and work on solutions together. Just being the 'parent police' is exhausting.

Our next LIFE Parent Coffee will be a continuation of this rich conversation and we will dive into cyberbullying, managing inappropriate use and content, digital footprints and digital agency. As parents, we all share common experiences and we learn from one another. **We hope to see you at our next LIFE Parent meeting on Thursday, November 16 at 8:45 at the Boynton Campus Cafe.**