



# The Digital Dos and Don'ts

## WHY ARE THESE IMPORTANT?

When it comes to mental health, our digital world can be a mixed bag. There are quite a few ways online life can enhance our mental wellbeing. There are also many ways online life can diminish our wellbeing. This list of “dos” and “don’ts” will help you & your family accentuate the positives of mental health in our digital era while mitigating the negatives:



It's no secret that there is a lot of bad news out there. It can be easy to spiral into a panic by reading one scary post after another. Tell your teen to try to avoid this experience by staying in tune with their emotions while they're consuming news online. If they are getting very upset, it may be time to put their screen down and walk away. This can be temporary, they can always return to the news later once you've had time to regulate their feelings.



Being constantly connected makes us very accessible. This can make teens and kids feel pressured to constantly support and respond to their friends, especially if their friends are going through a tough time. This can become draining and anxiety-inducing. Remind your teen to set boundaries and make sure they are focusing on their self-care as well.



Teens say feeling the need to check notifications is the most common negative situation they experience as digital citizens. Notifications are often designed to get people to come back to a certain platform. This constant need to open notifications can make your child distracted and overwhelmed. Let your kid know it's okay to turn off their notifications, whether for a particular app or platform, or via the Do Not Disturb feature. Either way, this can help minimize the sheer number of notifications your child views each day.



Teens told FOSI that the best part of being online was the opportunity to connect with their peers. Connecting with friends, family, and loved ones online, whether it be via messages, video chats, gaming, or something else, can help teens alleviate feelings of loneliness or isolation. It's still important that teens stay connected to their friends IRL, too. Face-to-face interaction and time off screens is invaluable for bonding and to increase social skills and confidence.



The online world can help kids connect with people of similar interests and identities. Many young people from underrepresented groups find community on the Internet that they are unable to find in person. These types of connections can change lives for those who are looking for people with similar interests, perspectives, orientations, and more. While these communities can be an amazing place to converse, learn, and grow, it's important to make sure your child doesn't get so engrossed in their new online community that they miss out on things like sleep, exercise, or in-person socialization. A great way to get offline might be to plan an IRL meetup with members of their online community!



# Additional Resources

## NEED MORE GUIDANCE?

While these digital dos and don'ts can help create healthier online habits, it's important to recognize when additional support is needed. No one should have to navigate mental health challenges alone. Whether you or someone you care about is feeling overwhelmed, struggling, or just needs someone to talk to, there are trusted resources available to help.

- **Crisis TextLine**: If your teen is struggling in any way, or they just want to chat, text Crisis TextLine at 741741 to talk to someone 24/7.
- **The Jed Foundation**: For emotional health resources and suicide prevention support specifically for teens and young adults.
- **Mental Health America**: To check out more mental health resources and guidance.
- **The Trevor Project**: For mental health support specifically for young people belonging the LGBTQ+ community.
- **988**: If you, your teen, or anyone in your life is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988. This number is for U.S. residents only.