



# Parenting in the Digital Age: 6 Lessons from Netflix's *Adolescence*

In early 2025, The hit Netflix show *Adolescence* sparked international conversation about kids' digital lives, and the consequences that can occur if parents aren't paying attention. This resource highlights many of FOSI's top pieces of advice for parents in our online age, and relates this advice back to six pivotal scenes in the show.

## STEP 1: TALK WITH YOUR KIDS

**Talk early and often Be open and direct. Stay calm.**

In this scene, Eddie (Stephen Graham) and Manda (Christine Tremarco) rehash their parenting journey, trying to dissect how their son, Jamie (Owen Cooper) came to commit an act of violence against a girl his age.

They realize when he stopped one of his favorite hobbies, drawing, and began to isolate himself in his room: "He wanted the computer, so we got him the computer. We got him the desk and everything, the keyboard, the headset, and all that stuff." They go on to say, "We thought he was safe."

What Eddie and Manda failed to do was establish an open dialogue with Jamie about what he was doing online, which they should have started before Jamie had the computer, and continued regularly. This scene serves as an extreme example of where parents can find themselves if they don't have regular, open, conversation with their children about their online hobbies and interests.



## STEP 2: EDUCATE YOURSELF

Search online for anything you don't understand

Try out the apps, games, and sites yourself

Explore FOSI's parenting tips and resources

In episode two, Adam (Amari Bacchus) explains to his father, Luke, the Detective Inspector assigned to Jamie's case (Ashley Walters) why Luke is having trouble understanding the case. Adam explains the emojis that were sent back and forth between Jamie and Katie (Emilia Holliday) before Jamie harms Katie.

"It all has a meaning, Dad. Everything has a meaning," Adam says, as he explains incels, the manosphere, and how emojis can be used to cyberbully in a way adults don't understand.

Adam goes on to tell his father: "It was just embarrassing watching you blunder about." Here, we see parents, even parents who work in law enforcement, demonstrating a complete lack of knowledge about their kids' online world and culture. As a caregiver, it is so important to stay up-to-date with online trends and vernacular, to better understand and guide your child through this digital world.





## STEP 3: USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

**Set content and time limits on your kids' devices**

**Routinely check privacy settings on social media**

**Monitor your kids' use and their screen time**

During the first episode, as the audience is trying to figure out exactly what Jamie has done, Luke questions Jamie about his digital footprint. He presents Jamie with multiple pictures of women he has liked on Instagram. Luke points to the comments Jamie left under one of these photos and says to Jamie, “you can see that there’s a series of comments and innuendos which seem pretty aggressive.”

This points to a lack of parental oversight when it comes to Jamie’s tech use. If Eddie and Manda had set content limits, checked privacy settings, and monitored Jamie’s screen use, they may have seen these comments. Then, they could have had a conversation with Jamie about why these comments were inappropriate, and how to behave better in the future. At that point they could have also implemented stricter parental controls to reflect Jamie’s lack of maturity when it comes to online behavior.

Ultimately, this could have prevented the incident that cost Katie her life.





## STEP 4: SET GROUND RULES AND ENFORCE CONSEQUENCES

**Discuss and sign a family safety agreement**  
**Restrict where and when devices can be used**  
**Remove tech privileges when rules are broken**

Throughout *Adolescence*, we see kids on their phones in places they aren't supposed to use them. This is most prevalent in episode two, when Luke and his fellow detective Sergeant Misha Frank (Faye Marsay) visit Jamie and Katie's school. Throughout this episode, we see kids on their phones in class, during a fire drill and in the hallways despite teachers constantly yelling at them to get off. In episode four, we witness Manda and Eddie talk about how often Jamie was on his computer, by himself in his room. In both cases, kids are using their devices in places they should not be, whether explicitly told so by adults or not.

The constant phone use by teens throughout the episode shows that the parents and teachers in their lives have not set the boundaries they should around device use, and if they have, they are not effectively communicating these boundaries. Not only do adults need to restrict where and when devices can be used, they also have to enforce consequences that will lead to a change in behavior, like taking the phone away if they don't listen when you tell them to put it down. A family online safety agreement also goes a long way in showing kids what these guidelines are, so they know what rules to follow and where and when device use is appropriate or not.





## STEP 5: EXPLORE, SHARE, AND CELEBRATE—RESPECTFULLY

Follow your kids on social media

Respect their online space and freedom

Don't flood their accounts with comments

Go online with your kids and explore their digital world

Share your own online experiences

Learn from each other and have fun

Towards the end of the series, Manda talks with her daughter/Jamie's sister, Lisa (Amélie Pease) about their family's struggles. During this conversation, Lisa pulls out her phone and sends a text. Manda asks, "Who are you texting?" Lisa answers that she's texting a supposed romantic interest. When Manda prys more, Lisa simply says, "It's none of your business."

This scene shows that Manda isn't really aware of what Lisa is up to online either, and that the two don't often discuss Lisa's online experiences. While it's common for teens to give sassy replies to their parents, Manda could have taken this opportunity to ask other questions about Lisa's digital habits, or suggest that they do something online together in the near future. Instead, she moves on in the conversation and ignores Lisa's deflection, proving that even after Jamie's arrest, Manda still doesn't know how to be a digital parent.





## STEP 6: BE A GOOD DIGITAL ROLE MODEL

**Curb your own bad digital habits**

**Know when and where to unplug**

**Show your kids how to collaborate and be kind online**

While the audience doesn't get a peek into the online lives of Manda and Eddie, it's implied that they don't spend too much time online because they are busy with their business and their two teenage kids. However, in episode 3, Jamie shares a few examples of his dad displaying behaviors that did not set a great example. Jamie talks with his psychologist, Briony (Erin Doherty) about a time his dad ripped down a shed and anger, and about how his dad used to look away from him in shame when he made a mistake while playing a sport. Jamie doesn't mention if his dad takes accountability for either incident.

These instances do not set a good example for Jamie. It shows him that these types of outbursts and behaviors are okay to replicate. Eddie's displays of "toxic masculinity," paired with the misogynistic rhetoric he absorbed online through bad actors, led Jamie to think that taking out his anger on a girl was part of being a "man." Through his multiple outbursts during the course of episode three, as well as the way he addresses his psychologist, it's clear that he thinks both anger and misogyny is the proper way to express his emotions.

