Let's Talk About
Generative AI

A companion resource to FOSI's 2025 report, "Generative AI in Uncertain Times."

Generative AI is changing how we learn, communicate, and create. For today's teens, these technologies are a normal part of daily life, offering instant answers, new creative outlets, and even emotional connection. For parents, this change can be exciting, and a little overwhelming. Many want to understand how their teens are using generative AI and how to guide them safely and responsibly.

This resource helps families do just that. It combines insights from FOSI's latest research with practical tools for use at home. The first section, Understand, offers a snapshot of how teens use generative AI and what it means for families. The second, Practice, provides prompts, discussion questions, and a shared checklist to help you and your teen explore together.

Use this resource to learn, talk, and build trust as you navigate this new digital landscape as a family.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS:

Teens are using generative AI frequently and for a wide range of purposes.

➡️ 45% of teens use generative AI more than once a week.

➡️ 46% use it for schoolwork—brainstorming, proofreading, or researching.

➡️ 42% say they've talked about their feelings with a generative AI chatbot.

➡️ 60% report feeling safe while using generative AI, even though 57%say their parents don't have household rules about it.

For many teens, generative AI is more than a tool, it's part of how they think, learn, and connect.

WHY TEENS USE GENERATIVE AI:

Learning and Academic Support - Generative AI can make schoolwork feel more approachable and less stressful. Teens say they value the extra help, especially when they're short on time or stuck on an assignment.

Creativity and Curiosity - Teens use generative AI to write stories, make music, generate art, and explore new ideas. They enjoy experimenting and seeing what's possible.

Connection and Expression - Some teens use generative AI chatbots to talk through their thoughts or emotions, especially when they don't feel comfortable talking to others, or they aren't able to reach anyone.

Independence and Exploration - For many teens, generative AI offers a sense of independence. They often use it like a search engine to explore questions, test ideas, and learn by doing.

THE CHALLENGES:

While most teens see generative AI as helpful, they also notice its downsides—and parents may share many of the same concerns.

Critical thinking - When answers come quickly, it can be tempting to skip the deeper thinking. Generative AI can be a great helper, but it's still important for teens to practice problem-solving on their own.

Academic honesty - Teens say it can be hard to know what counts as "help" and what crosses into "cheating," especially when school rules aren't clear. Families can talk together about what responsible use looks like.

Privacy and safety - Generative AI tools can feel private, but many teens share personal information like details or photos without realizing how that information might be kept or used by the platform.

Emotional reliance - Some teens turn to chatbots to talk about their feelings. That can feel comforting, but it's important to balance those interactions with real connections and trusted people.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

Generative AI presents both opportunities and challenges for families. Parents can play an important role by fostering curiosity, modeling integrity, and encouraging thoughtful use rather than restriction. Creating space for open dialogue helps teens develop the judgment and confidence they need to navigate new technologies responsibly while setting clear expectations.

PRACTICE:

This section turns insight into action. It's designed to help parents and teens put what they've learned into practice through: reflection, discussion, and shared agreements that build understanding and trust.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH GENERATIVE AI:

Start by thinking about how generative AI fits into your daily life. This is a chance for parents and teens to see how each of you experiences technology differently.

For Teens:

I use generative AI most often for:

The generative AI tools or apps I use most are:

One thing I like about using generative AI is:

One thing I don't like or that makes me nervous about using generative AI is:

I think generative AI is best used when:

For Parents:

I've noticed my teen using generative AI for:

Something new I've learned from my teen about generative AI is:

Family Online Safety Institute

For Parents cont.:

One thing I'm curious or unsure about when it comes to generative AI is:

One value that's important to me in how our family uses technology is:

Talk about it: What did you learn about each other's perspectives? Were there any answers that surprised you?

LET'S TALK ABOUT GENERATIVE AI:

Now that you've reflected, use these prompts to spark open conversation about generative AI. Choose a few questions that feel most meaningful to your family.

➡️ What rules or guidelines does your school have about using generative AI for assignments? How can you check with a teacher if you're unsure what's okay?

➡️ How do you feel when you talk to generative A!?

➡️ How would you describe generative AI? As a tool, a helper, a person? Something else?

➡️ Has generative AI ever shown you something that felt off, confusing, or unsettling? What should we do if that happens?

➡️ What's one way our family could explore or learn about generative AI together?

➡️ If we made one family "rule" for generative AI, what should it be and why?

Quick tip: Teens can ask parents questions too, curiosity goes both ways!

OUR FAMILY'S GENERATIVE AI CHECKLIST:

By now, you've learned, reflected, and talked together about generative AI. This final checklist helps your family turn those conversations into clear, shared guidelines for using it thoughtfully.

☐ Talk openly about how we're using generative AI and what we're learning from it.

☐ Follow school rules and teacher guidance about generative AI use.

☐ Use generative AI as a tool for learning and creativity, not as a shortcut or replacement for our own work.

☐ Double-check information from generative AI before believing or sharing it.

☐ Protect our privacy by keeping personal details (like names, photos, or addresses) out of generative AI chats.

☐ Speak up if something feels confusing, uncomfortable, or unsafe when using generative AI.

☐ Keep checking in and talking together about how we use generative AI as it becomes a bigger part of daily life.

☐ Our family rule about generative AI:

Sign below to show that we agree to use generative AI responsibly and keep learning together.

Teen's Signature   Date:

Parent / Caregiver Signature   Date:

We'll check back in _____ **months to see what's changed.**

For more information: fosi.org/parenting