

MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ANXIETY

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
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Social media is a huge part of our lives now, but it can have a negative effect on self-esteem and mood. For teens with anxiety or depression, social media likes, comments and views can be very important to them. Research shows that having a higher emotional investment in social media is strongly linked with higher levels of anxiety. When in-person contact is limited, it is likely that your child/teen will spend even more time on social media. If you have concerns about the effect social media is having on your child, you can talk with them. Teens are not usually enthusiastic about talking to their parents – especially about uncomfortable topics. It can be hard for them to admit they are having difficulty with their feelings. There are some general tips for talking with your teen about tough subjects and increasing your bond with them. There are also some specific questions you can ask your teen about social media that can lead to a discussion on that topic.

Tips for starting a Conversation and Increasing the Bond with Your Teen

1. **Start by being curious.** Ask your teen how they are doing and be interested in the response– without judging them.
2. **Show trust.** Teens want to be taken seriously. Look for ways to show you trust them.
3. **Do not be a dictator.** Offer ideas but don't try to solve all your child's problems. This is about teamwork.
4. **Give praise.** Parents frequently praise younger children, but teens need the self-esteem boost, too.
5. **Control your emotions.** Teens are not able to think as clearly when they're emotional. If you stay calm, they are more likely to follow your lead.

Questions for Your Teen about Social Media

- Do you think when your friends post on social media, they are posting about how their lives really are or how they want them to appear?
- Do you feel pressure to look or act a certain way because of other people's profiles?
- How do you balance your online life with face-to-face interactions? How has the Coronavirus affected this balance?
- How can we set healthy limits on the amount of time you spend on social media?
- What would you do if you or a friend is the victim of cyber-bullying?

Excerpted from: <https://childmind.org/2018report/>