



Youth and Media

10 tips for parents in the digital age



THE MANNERHEIM LEAGUE
FOR CHILD WELFARE



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To parents

Parents and educators may be unsure how to guide an adolescent towards balanced, safe and responsible use of media. It is not necessary for adults to know everything about the internet, games or new apps, but it is important to be present, show an interest in how the child uses media and be willing to understand it.

Adolescents are individuals, and their use of media varies. For some young people the most important motivation for using digital media is the presence of friends there, others are pursuing individual interests online. There are many kinds of users, from those who use digital media irregularly or try to use them less to those who consume great amounts of media content. The digital skills of young people also vary.

When one is, as a parent, aware of the teenager's interests and media habits and willing to discuss them with the teenager, it becomes easier to guide and regulate his or her use of media in a meaningful way. Some young people want support in the form of discussion or reminders, others want action,

concrete measures or tangible adult presence.

Talking regularly with teenagers about media use, agreeing on rules and supporting their digital skills can contribute to increased security and wellbeing online. It is also helpful for adults to gain an understanding of which aspects of media use are important from the adolescent's perspective. It is important to maintain dialogue and to be a trusted adult whom the teenager can turn to with all joys and worries.

This brochure for parents of teenagers in lower secondary school focuses on digital media and technology, such as internet environments, social media, digital games and smart devices. The brochure also contains comments from young people taken from surveys conducted by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare.

Which aspect of media use will you discuss with your teenager today?

1

Support informed choices regarding digital media

The use of digital media often plays an important role in the everyday lives of young people. Adults should actively stay updated regarding what is happening on the platforms and in the games and applications their teenagers are using. Interest builds trust and encourages continuous dialogue on the topic.

It is important that the content, applications and devices are suited to the teenager's age and level of maturity. Age limits of applications and social media should be adhered to. Encourage your teenager to choose platforms that do not rely on powerful algorithms or advertisement.

No platform is completely safe or without problems. Moreover, social media phenomena are evolving quickly. Consequently, it is beneficial to discuss the online experiences of the adolescent regularly.

Joys and sorrows online

Young people use social media to communicate with friends, get to know new people, create content, consume entertainment, learn new things, search for and strengthen their identity, look for information and share their experiences.

Online communities offer many young people a sense of belonging.



For adolescents, the difference between the digital and non-digital world is often unclear. What occurs in face-to-face interaction continues on social media, and vice versa.

"I use the phone to get in touch with my friends, and I can, for example, easily find my training schedule and other everyday information. One can gain inspiration from the internet and use it to follow what is happening in the world. One can feel good and develop one's social skills by playing with friends."

Although there are benefits with digital communication, it is important to be aware of various risks present in the digital world. For example, cyberbullying, harassment and lack of privacy may have adverse effects on the security of young people. Being constantly exposed to harmful lifestyles, unrealistic body images and pressure to look a certain way can distort a young person's concept of human being and lead to increased anxiety.

Young people are often aware of the problems of social media. Although they want to use social media to communicate with friends and follow topics that interest them, they wish that some negative aspects would disappear.

"Some content on social media causes anxiety. It is as if what one should think is decided by social media."

Adult engagement is of key importance when trying to maintain the positive aspects of digital media while at the same time protecting young people from adverse effects. Ask and listen open-mindedly about what your teenager is concerned about in media. Remember that your own attitude determines what your teenager is willing to tell you about his or her experiences.

**Information for adults
about various social
media platforms**
(in Finnish):



Talk about media use

Ask your teenager:

- What is your favourite activity or what do you spend most time on when using the internet or your devices?
- What kind of content have you seen? What kind of games do you play?
- Which apps or groups are important to you? What are they about, and who participates?
- Which influencers, channels or phenomena do you follow? Whom do you admire on the internet or in gaming communities, and why?
- What kind of content do you enjoy or would like to create yourself?
- What kind of things on the internet do you find concerning or questionable? What could be done about them?
- As a parent, what could I do to help or support you?

2

Learn media skills from each other

Using media today requires versatile skills. One must be able to navigate the internet safely, search for information and analyse it critically. In addition, one needs interaction skills and the ability to build safe and positive relationships online.

The importance of critical media literacy has increased in the digital age, in which one needs the ability to recognise and interpret diverse content as well as analyse its purposes and ways of influencing people. It is beneficial to be aware of how influencers on social media

create content for the purpose of influencing the thoughts, attitudes and consumer behaviour of their followers. It is also important to learn how to recognise advertisement and commercial content.

Ensure that your teenager has access to reliable and diverse information about topics that he or she is interested in. Adolescents have the right to access safe and reliable information through media. By discussing and exploring media together you can help your adolescent develop media literacy.



The young person has perhaps already gained some digital skills through education, hobbies or a general interest in media safety. Some young people put considerable effort into ensuring that they use digital media in a safe manner, and they may take pride in being able to face difficult situations online. Give your teenager positive feedback for wise choices. You can also ask your teenager for help with digital matters and let him or her teach you.

Talk about media literacy

Ask your teenager:

- In your opinion, what kind of media skills do you possess?
- In what kind of matters would you like to receive help? And what could I learn from you?
- Where can you find high-quality information about things that interest you?
- Who has produced the media content you follow, and for what purpose? What is their goal? How do they try to influence their followers?
- How does the content catch your attention and maintain your interest?
- Which points of view, opinions or values does the content convey? What is left unmentioned?

Understanding algorithms

Algorithms based on user data easily make applications addictive. For example, platforms with short video clips are meant to catch the attention of viewers and maintain their interest as long as possible by constantly offering new content. A young person who is still in the process of learning how to regulate his or her use of media may find it difficult to close this kind of platforms. Some platforms do, however, offer the option of turning off autoplay.

Platforms that utilise powerful algorithms can distort a young person's worldview by offering only similar content. Without critical

thinking, the adolescent may get false impressions, feel pressure or develop biased views. An adolescent is not necessarily able to evaluate the validity of texts, images, videos or AI-generated content.

Encourage your teenager to be aware of the consequences of algorithms. Discuss the logic behind how these platforms work. Awareness of these matters helps the adolescent gain a clearer understanding, reflect on the effects of social media and make informed decisions.

3

Recognise effects of media use

The effects of using digital media are diverse, vary among individuals and depend on the context. What young people experience online may differ, and what happens to some of them may not happen to everyone.

Not all screen time is of equal value. Some platforms give their users a passive role, letting them, for example, watch short videos that are changing at a quick pace. Others may, however, give users an active role, helping them communicate with friends, explore topics that interest them, learn new things and create something of their own. Encourage the adolescent to have an active role when using media and technology, and take into account his or her skills.

One's state of mind guides media use

Content on social media may be detrimental to a young person's wellbeing and guide him or her towards unhealthy lifestyles, particularly if the young person is inclined to gravitate towards these problems. Mental ill-being may also make the young person spend disproportionate amounts of time on social media, find harmful content or have unsafe encounters with other users.

Earlier experiences, personality traits, skills and one's current state of mind strongly determine what kind of content one spends time on and how it affects one's wellbeing. Individuals also have various skills and resources that protect them from adverse effects of media use.

For a young person struggling with mental ill-being, social media may offer information and peer support in difficult situations. This can be particularly important for adolescents who do not receive information or support elsewhere.

If you notice that your teenager tries to escape from something that feels uncomfortable or burdensome by using the phone, playing games or surfing the internet, be available and offer your help to solve the problem.

"One can use the phone to escape and, so to say, rest from real life. However, often when you return to your real life afterwards, things are more annoying and everything feels more difficult."

Always available?

Modern technology may make users feel obliged to be constantly available online. Although keeping in touch with friends is important, having to

be alert at all times can make one feel burdened, tired and anxious. Some adolescents have a strong fear of missing out, making them check digital media frequently.

The adolescent's ability to regulate the stress associated with technology is not yet fully developed. Consequently, it is important to help the young person become aware of these emotions and situations and encourage him or her to find balance.

Smartphones are often used during face-to-face interaction, and this can affect the social skills of adolescents. Constantly checking the phone makes it more difficult to be present and stay focused. Adults should try to be role models with regard to what kind of situations it is appropriate to use the phone in.

If a young person has got used to having the phone within reach at all times, putting it away may feel uncomfortable. While the adolescent politely abstains from using the phone during face-to-face interaction, friends who are online may be offended by his or her failure to react to their messages immediately.

An adult can help the young person navigate this kind of situations. One can, for example, let one's friends know that one will not be available online at a certain time.

Discuss how to deal with technostress

Ask your teenager:

- How does the pressure to be available online and aware of what is happening on social media affect how you manage your time? How does it affect your wellbeing?
- In your experience, what kind of subtle rules and norms apply to the internet and social media?
- Would it be possible to discuss and modify digital habits together with friends?
- What does it feel like to sometimes be detached from the constant stimuli of digital technology? Does it feel difficult? Or is it good for you?
- What helps you relax and recover? How can you create opportunities in daily life for your brains to take breaks from digital devices?

4

Pursue digital wellbeing together

Digital wellbeing means having a healthy balance regarding the use of the internet and digital devices and how it affects one's health, mental wellbeing and relationships with others. During their lower secondary school years, adolescents still need plenty of help from adults to take care of their wellbeing and use technology in a balanced way in daily life.

In adolescence, one's ability to self-regulate is not yet fully developed. The young person may use media to try new experiences, search for his or her identity, take risks and test boundaries. Moreover, almost all applications, games and social media have been constructed in a way that makes them addictive.

Surveys indicate that young people themselves feel that they need help to regulate their use of technology, but often they do not receive such help. Moreover, they sometimes do not seek help when encountering problems in the digital world, perhaps due to shame, guilt or fear of how adults might react. It is thus important for adults to ask directly about the young person's experiences and create an open climate for dialogue where anything can be brought up.

Balancing screen time

Screen time is the total amount of time spent using digital devices such as smartphones, television, video game consoles, computers or tablets. Being aware of one's screen time and regulating it is important if one is to have time for other things that contribute to general wellbeing in daily life: rest, exercise, hobbies, family and friends.

"Time runs too fast, and things are left undone if you just spend your time on the phone. Time management is difficult even for adults, so how should young people handle this without help?"

The developing brain needs breaks from digital stimuli. Screens also easily divert attention from moments that would be important for the development of the adolescent's emotional and interaction skills and his or her ability to concentrate. It is advisable to offer young people other activities that do not involve screen time.

More information on reasonable screen time (in Finnish):
→ mll.fi/ruutuauka

Ensure at least the following in everyday life:

- sufficient sleep, no media directly before bedtime
- time outdoors and exercise (1–1,5 hours per day recommended during puberty)
- breaks from devices, ergonomic posture and changing position regularly
- taking care of schoolwork and housework
- focus on homework without multitasking
- face-to-face encounters

Discuss digital wellbeing

Ask your teenager:

- How does your use of media make you feel? (relaxed, excited, tired, restless...)
- What happens in your body and mind when you play games, read or use the internet? What happens afterwards?
- In what situations do you use media for the purpose of entertainment, hobbies, spending time with friends or relaxation, respectively?
- Do you occasionally feel that time spent on media is "idling" or that you are using the digital world to escape from things that bother you, such as loneliness and boredom?
- If it is difficult for you to reduce screen time, how would you like adults to help?





Safeguard sleep

Sleep is among the most important things for managing daily life, being healthy and feeling well. The use of digital media by young people must be regulated to ensure that it does not prevent them from getting the necessary 8–10 hours of sleep each night (Source: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare).

Puberty inevitably brings about biological changes that affect the sleep cycle. It is common for a young person not to feel sleepy when one should normally go to sleep. The difficulty of falling asleep must not be exacerbated further by digital technology.

If used correctly, however, technology can facilitate sleep. For example, listening to audiobooks or music can help one unwind. Since

the devices also have features that interrupt the peace, one should optimise the settings for relaxation. Messages and notifications can be disabled by turning on the "do not disturb" mode or by turning off the network connection. The display can be dimmed or switched to black-and-white mode.

Screen time applications can be used to turn off the teenager's phone or limit the use of certain applications during the night. Sometimes the best solution may be not having the device in the bedroom.

**Advice for
improving
an adolescent's
sleep (in Finnish):**



5

Agree on family rules for using media

The family needs shared rules for media use, smart devices and gaming so as to facilitate everyday life and ensure that there is space in it for a variety of activities that strengthen the wellbeing of the adolescent. Rules are often easier to follow if you have formulated them together. Adults must also adhere to the rules that have been agreed upon.

If discussing the rules turns into an argument, it is better to agree to discuss the matter further in a little while when the situation is calmer. Regulating the use of digital media as a form of punishment may exacerbate the argument. One should be prepared that introducing new rules and creating routines requires time and patience. The rules can be discussed regularly and updated, for example, every six months.

If necessary, media use can be regulated through device settings, screen time tools and application blockers. Such measures are not, however, a substitute for dialogue and rules based on reasoning.

Discuss rules for using digital media

Ask your teenager:

- In your opinion, for what purposes and in what kind of situations in our daily lives is it appropriate to use digital devices?
- When should the phone be put away? (bedtime, meals, at the request of a teacher or other adult etc.)
- What kind of common rules do we have in our family? Who are bound by the rules? Do you know what the purpose of having these rules is?
- What policies does your school have regarding the use of digital devices?
- What agreements should we make regarding the use of media or digital devices during free time or at home?
- Which matters should you definitely take care of (sleeping, schoolwork etc.)? What can you decide by yourself, and what should be discussed together?
- How can we resolve or anticipate quarrels concerning the use of media?



Recognise excessive use

If you notice any of the following warning signs, your teenager's use of media may require intervention:

- The teenager is unable to take breaks from digital media, and he or she is constantly preoccupied with gaming and the internet.
- Having to put away the game or phone causes disproportionate quarrelling or negative feelings.
- Using devices or playing games reduces commitment to schoolwork, family life or face-to-face interaction with friends.
- The teenager gets insufficient sleep and neglects his or her wellbeing.
- The teenager is irritable or tired, cannot focus, has difficulties sleeping well, or suffers from pain in the neck and shoulders.

If the teenager's use of media is clearly harmful, creates burdens or affects his or her wellbeing and safety, it is the duty of a parent to intervene. Harmful use of media should not be disregarded based on mere hopes that the problem might disappear by itself over time.

Bring up the issue with your teenager under calm circumstances and let him or her know that you will help to find a solution. If the conversation does not progress immediately, bring up the topic again later – consistently and firmly.

A responsible adult who cares about the teenager should set boundaries and limits. These are not a form of punishment, but are meant to protect the adolescent. It is important to help the teenager learn how to use media in a balanced and controlled way.

It is important to offer meaningful activities, face-to-face interaction and time together to replace excessive use of digital devices. Adults must create circumstances at home that allow adolescents to focus on other things and relax without the stress of having to be constantly available online.

Support in these matters is available on the Vanhempainpuhelin hotline and chat hosted by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. Contact information can be found at the end of this brochure.

6

Ensure online safety skills and privacy

As adolescents get older, they use digital devices more independently than earlier. Although they learn about the internet and how to stay safe online in school, from their friends and independently, it is also important for parents to ensure that adolescents know how to use their devices in a safe way and handle challenging situations that might arise.

Safety on the internet and digital devices means that the privacy of oneself and those in one's vicinity is maintained and that location data and personal information is not disseminated. Encourage the adolescent to get familiar with

the safety and privacy settings of applications and find out what kind of personal information is made publicly available to others.

Reflect on whom the adolescent's online profile might be visible to and how others might interpret his or her messages and posts now or in the future. When something is posted online it can no longer be controlled by its creator. It can be removed from its original context and be used for harmful purposes.

Online safety also includes protecting oneself from internet users with bad intentions and from dangerous content. Most importantly, one should be able to recognise what



content is dangerous or not suitable to oneself, predict dangerous situations beforehand, realise when an attempt to establish contact is suspicious, and know when to turn to a trusted adult. Being aware of and respecting one's own boundaries and those of others also contributes to increased security.

Challenging situations include:

- attempts by strangers to establish contact
- sexual approaches and grooming
- cyberbullying on devices and the internet
- attempted fraud and phishing
- content and situations involving drugs
- AI-generated content that is difficult to recognise as such
- discerning between fact, fiction and opinion
- dissemination of false or biased information
- harmful or dangerous phenomena or trends in social media
- communities and content that encourage self-harm and eating disorders
- publications and groups inciting and celebrating violence

- groups and influencers spreading extreme views and hate speech
- adverse effects of gaming, problematic gaming and social media use

If something about your teenager's use of media concerns you, talk about it. Ask him or her to show you what is happening on the phone and on the platforms. Since maintaining trust is important, it is not advisable to read the teenager's messages without permission unless there is reason to believe that his or her health and wellbeing are in serious jeopardy.

A teenager may hesitate to ask for help due to shame or fear of how the adult might react. However, the teenager is not always the one who has caused the negative experiences to occur. The most important thing is that the adolescent is not left alone with these challenges.

The Lethal Trends website and its parental alert service by MLL provide parents with information about dangerous trends that are spreading on social media.

Read more: → lethaltrends.fi

Age limits for audiovisual programmes

The purpose of age ratings for films, television programmes and digital games is to increase safe use of media among minors. Age limits are based on the Act on Audiovisual Programmes. Age limits are binding and must be adhered to. Moreover, an age rating should not be understood as a recommended age for viewing the programme, but as a warning that it may contain material that is detrimental to the child's development.

More information:

→ kavi.fi/en/agelimits

Television programmes and films



Digital games



Talk about online privacy

Ask your teenager:

- What kind of information should you keep private on the internet? How much and what kind of data about yourself are you willing to hand over to the companies behind social media?
- What kind of content about yourself and other people can you share on the internet?
- Why is it important to ask others for permission before publishing something about them?
- Do you know what kind of information about yourself or those around you should not be shared with others? (e.g. personal and contact information, medical records)
- Which phone and app settings can be used to improve your online safety?
- Do you know how to create a strong password?
- How do you handle your passwords and device PIN codes? (Do not share them with others.)

7

Talk about cyberbullying

Almost all young people encounter or witness cyberbullying. Examples of cyberbullying include offensive, threatening or humiliating messages, manipulated images or deepfakes, spreading of rumours or personal information, and posting of unauthorised content or photographs and videos taken in secret.

Cyberbullying can also involve indirect meanness, insinuation, not replying to messages or excluding someone from a group. Cyberbullies can be either familiar young people or strangers. Anonymity encourages strong language online and may create an atmosphere of fear.

“Everyone has probably been bullied on social media at some point. I wish adults could see cyberbullying in the same way as other bullying.”

According to a survey conducted by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, some young people have difficulties knowing what constitutes cyberbullying and recognising online behaviour as such. In an environment where attitudes are getting more extreme, bullying may become increasingly prevalent and brutal in character, and in the worst case young people become cynical with regard to it.

In social media and games it is often difficult to discern a clear boundary for what constitutes bullying. It is therefore advisable to talk with the teenager about what kind of discussion is appropriate, what kind of jokes are okay and what kind of comments can actually hurt someone's feelings.

Cyberbullying is often not followed up, and young people seldom talk with adults about it. It is therefore important to actively ask whether your teenager or a friend has been subjected to bullying or other bad treatment over the phone, in games or on the internet.





Remind your teenager that you are always available for talking about these matters.

Take action when bullying occurs

If your teenager tells you that he or she has been bullied online, take it seriously and thank him or her for letting you know. Be supportive and prepared to find out what has happened, where it has happened and who has been involved. Store the offensive content and messages as evidence and report them to the administrator. Those who bully or harass the teenager should be blocked or removed from the list of contacts.

Ask your teenager what would help in this situation. Generally, adolescents wish that their parents care, are present, have the ability to sort out bullying situations, express non-judgmental understanding, and react in a swift and sensitive manner.

Situations with bullying should be resolved jointly with all involved parties, such as the school, hobby group, other adolescents and their guardians. In particularly serious cases the police should be informed.

Encourage your teenager to take others into consideration

Your teenager may also have been the perpetrator in cyberbullying, either purposely or inadvertently. If this has happened, encourage him or her to act differently and to think about how sending offensive messages or distributing embarrassing photos can affect the teenager and other people.

Encourage your teenager to see things from the perspective of other people, respect his or her own boundaries and those of others, and take others into consideration in everyday life and during free time. This can strengthen the teenager's relationships with peers and prevent loneliness and bullying. The example you set as a parent also matters. Support friendship and offer opportunities for your teenager to spend time with peers face-to-face, for example in your home.

Information for parents (in Finnish): → mll.fi/nettikiusaaminen

Talk about friendship skills on the internet

Ask your teenager:

- Whom do you like to spend time with online?
- In your experience, how are your relationships with friends and your encounters with them affected by the internet, messaging apps and gaming environments? What is a good friend like on the internet?
- What is the discussion or messaging like on various channels, in games and other groups? How does it make participants feel? What kind of humour is appropriate?
- In what sort of tone are group members and those outside of the group talked about?
- Is someone not allowed to participate?
- What kind of bullying have you seen or been subjected to on the internet?
- Have you ever bullied anyone or participated in a bullying situation?
- Do you know what to do if you or a friend is bullied on the internet?
- In your opinion, what would be the best way to prevent cyberbullying?
- Remember that a person's value should not be measured by the number of likes or followers on the internet.

Take violent content seriously

As teenagers grow older, they are increasingly exposed to online content featuring brutal violence and physical bullying. Shocking depictions of violence are likely to arouse anxiety, fear and general ill-being, especially if the adolescent has nobody to talk with about the matter.

Tell your teenager that violence is never right. Give advice on what to do on social media when encountering a violent video featuring a young person:

- The video is not to be shared or distributed forward.
- Such content is to be reported to the administrator for removal.
- The matter must be discussed with a trusted adult, such as a parent or a teacher.
- Violent videos should also be reported to the police. It is helpful to save a screenshot or link as evidence.
- If the video stays in your mind and evokes feelings that are difficult to handle, it is important to talk about it with an adult.
- If violent or otherwise harmful content occurs on certain platforms, one should limit one's use of them or stop using them altogether.

Getting acquainted with sexuality is a natural part of adolescence, and many teenagers search for information about it online. Make sure that your teenager has access to high-quality information on the topic. For example, you can recommend Nuortennetti, the Mannerheims League for Child Welfare's website for young people, which includes information on matters relating to sexuality.

→ nuortennetti.fi

Ask your teenager whether sexual content appears on the channels he or she uses. If so, how do users react to it? If it feels uncomfortable to talk about this with a parent, think about which trusted adult or organisation your teenager could turn to.

Things to consider before sending messages with sexual content

Some adolescents engage in online sexting, that is, sending messages or pictures with sexual content to another person. This way of experimenting with sexual intimacy with others may feel exciting, but it is important to consider carefully what kind of messages or pictures one should send. There is always a risk that, for example, nude pictures are distributed forward.

Sexuality is a private and sensitive matter. Consent is of utmost

importance, and messages with sexual content are not to be sent before making sure that the recipient approves of them. Remind your teenager that he or she has the right to be treated with respect and in a safe manner also on the internet.

**Information for young people regarding s
exuality in digital
environments can be
found on Nuortennetti
(in Finnish):**



Encourage your teenager to be critical of stereotypes and beauty standards prevalent on social media and in media in general. Pornography rarely offers a realistic view of what sex or intimacy is or what people generally enjoy in real life. When beginning to explore one's own sexuality, it is important to feel secure and advance at one's own pace.

How to talk about pornography with children and adolescents (information for parents on MLL's website in Finnish):

→ mll.fi/lapsetjaporno

Help your teenager recognise dangerous attempts to establish contact

It is important for young people to know how to act if someone approaches them

with the intention to subject them to danger or crimes. Encourage your teenager to talk to you if anything on the internet makes him or her feel anxious or if messaging has felt uncomfortable.

Remind your teenager that no one should be persuaded to do something that he or she does not want to do. Strengthen the teenager's self-confidence and ability to say no and end the conversation if the attempts to establish contact or the content shared feel bad, weird or unsafe.

Harassment, suspicious suggestions and messages about topics such as drugs must be reported to a parent. The best way is not to reply at all. One should never share personal information, contact information or one's location with strangers, and neither should one share such information about others.

In grooming, the adult's goal is to lure the child into a situation where they can be subjected to child sexual abuse. This is a serious crime, also online.

Untrustworthy individuals may ask an adolescent for nude pictures or other intimate material. They may threaten the adolescent or try to gain his or her trust e.g. through flattery. These situations can develop quickly or over a longer period of time.

Encourage your child to be cautious and never share nude pictures or videos if someone asks for such material. A child should become suspicious if someone asks him or her to keep the messaging a secret. Such situations should be reported to a trusted adult.

If the adolescent encounters grooming or harassment, it is important to contact a professional or the authorities and inform the police or the Nettivihje hotline. An adult who has approached the adolescent in this way may well have approached others as well.

More information about sexual abuse against children:

→ [Nettivihje.fi](https://nettivihje.fi)

Talk about strangers on the internet

Ask your teenager:

- How do you know whom you can trust online?
- What kinds of messages or conversations make you suspicious?
- In your opinion, what is the best way to handle strangers?
- Has a stranger ever contacted you? What happened?
- How can you get out of an uncomfortable discussion? To whom would you report what has happened?
- Have you been harassed or seen harassment on the internet, in games or somewhere else? In your opinion, what should be done in this kind of situations?

Read more (in Finnish) about online sexual harassment:



9

Set an example

Young people and their parents often use technology in different ways and for different purposes. Nevertheless, remember that you set an example with your use of media and your habits regarding digital devices. Be aware of your own habits. How do you take others into consideration online, face-to-face or in various situations where mobile devices are present?

Ask your teenager what impression he or she has of your phone habits. In what situations and to what extent do you spend time on the internet, play games or use digital devices? How does your presence seem when you engage in these activities? How does your use of media affect the everyday life of the family, relationships and interaction?

"It would be nice if parents listened instead of just idling on their phones."

For example, scrolling on the phone in the presence of others can weaken close relationships. If one has an important reason to use the phone, it is good to tell the others what one is doing so that family members do not have to guess what it is that requires immediate attention.

You should also consider what kind of content about your daily life and

your loved ones you publish online. Ask the teenager for permission before publishing a picture or any information concerning him or her on social media. By respecting the teenager's opinion you can teach him or her about the importance of asking for permission and publishing content in a responsible manner.

Talk about parents' use of digital media

Ask your teenager:

- What do you think of my use of media and that of other family members?
- In what kind of situations would you prefer that I did not use devices or media?
- In what ways do we use media similarly or differently?
- What kind information, pictures or videos featuring yourself do you not want to be published?
- Do you have any wishes or advice for me regarding my use of media?



Although the adolescent is taking early steps towards independence, spending time with parents supports the growth of the adolescent and strengthens the bond between parent and child. Good relations with family and friends reduce the risk of a young person going down the wrong path, including in the digital world.

The presence of an adult who is not in a hurry has great meaning for a young person. Shared moments with media deepen the parent's understanding of the teenager's life and use of media. Spending time together like this also facilitates talking about things that the teenager and parent have on their minds.

Discuss what your teenager does, experiences and feels while using devices. Listen to the teenager and try to understand his or her perspective. This helps to guide the teenager towards healthy choices and balanced daily life.

"Parents should regularly ask about, for example, how social media affects the young person. This would become a routine, and the young person would not have to be afraid of talking with parents about what is happening or has happened on social media."

Surveys indicate that spending time together using media and communicating with family and friends with digital devices strengthens digital wellbeing with regard to human relations. A family group chat can be used in daily life to let the teenager know that he or she is important and on the parent's mind.

Offer your time

In your own personal way, be and adult whom your teenager can turn to in any situation without fear of being judged. You can state this, for example, in the following way: "There is nothing that you cannot talk to me about. Whatever it is you see or experience online, you can always let me know. You do not have to face these things alone."

Give your teenager time to talk about these matters at his or her own pace and in his or her own way.



Say that you are available at any time if he or she wants to talk about it again later. If it feels difficult for the adolescent to talk about it face-to-face, you can try having the conversation over the phone or with messages. If the adolescent does not want to talk about it at home, other options include talking about it at school or contacting a support service such as those provided by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare.

It is of utmost importance for the growth and development of a young person to get sufficient attention and presence from a parent or other close adult. Make sure to uphold dialogue, set boundaries that enhance safety, and show an interest in the daily life of your teenager.

Did you know?

The EU Digital Services Act safeguards the privacy and safety of minors in various ways. Click or scan the QR code to learn more.



Talk about your everyday life together Ask your teenager:

- What would you like us to do together?
- What do you enjoy doing or would like to do together with the family using media?
- What would you like to do together that does not involve digital devices?
- What is important to you in your daily life and life in general?
- What are your hopes and dreams?



More information

Advice regarding media education for children of various ages and information about media use can be found on Vanhempainnetti, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare's website for parents and on the Finnish Safer Internet Centre's website.

mll.fi/en/about-mll/media-education

mll.fi/sinisen-valon-sukupolvi
saferinternet.fi

Nuortennetti, a website for young people hosted by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, offers information, support and activities for adolescents.

nuortennetti.fi

Invite a media education trainer from the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare to give a parental evening, workshop or a lesson to a class.

mll.fi/tilaakouluttaja

Subscribe to the Ruutujen lumo media education newsletter (in Finnish):

mll.fi/ruutujenlumo

If you are concerned about your teenager's use of media, you can contact the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare's services for parents. Vanhempainpuhelin is a toll-free hotline for adults, and there is also a chat and online message service. **Vanhempainpuhelin, tel. 0800 922 77**, is available Mon 10–13 and 17–20, Tues 10–13 and 17–20, Wed 10–13, Thurs 14–20 and Fri 10–13. The chat and message service can be found on mll.fi/vanhempainpuhelin

A hotline for children and adolescents, **Lasten ja nuorten puhelin, tel. 116 111**, is available Mon–Fri 14–20 and Sat–Sun 17–20. The chat is open daily 17–20. The message service can be used around the clock.

nuortennetti.fi/lasten-ja-nuorten-puhelin

How can adults help adolescents use digital media in a way that is safe and supports their wellbeing?

Talking about media, agreeing on how to use them and using them together are ways to improve the safety of the adolescent, increase digital wellbeing and create balance in everyday life. The supervision and presence of an adult is needed for the adolescent to learn the skills necessary for utilising the devices, games and internet properly.

This guide for parents and educators of lower secondary school adolescents discusses phenomena present in digital media and provides advice on how to talk about media use in everyday life.

mll.fi/media-education



THE MANNERHEIM LEAGUE
FOR CHILD WELFARE

