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| Something to be mindful of during the summer school holidays....  Parenting can be hard when children often seem to know more about the world of social media than we do ourselves. But while they may seem completely at home on their phones, tablets, PCs and consoles - they still need our help and guidance to stay safe.  Children value their parents’ good opinion, advice and support. By sharing and talking together about your online lives, you can model safe behaviours, agree boundaries, support your child's mental health through positive online experiences, and know how to help should something ever go wrong.  Top 10 tips:-  1) The earlier you start talking, the better - according to Ofcom, almost a quarter of 3-4 year old have their own tablet. It's never too early to start establishing positive and safe practices together so that these quickly become the norm for your child. NetAware have a video of four simple steps you can follow to male talking online safety a part of your family conversation.  2) Keep talking! - you want your online lives to be something you enjoy talking about and sharing together, not something you just end up having arguments about. Talk about your own experiences, things you've enjoyed and encourage your child to tell you more about what they enjoy. These conversations can also provide natural opportunities for your child to share something that might have worried them or to ask you something they are unsure about.  3) Practise online safety - children will learn a lot about online safety at school. By showing an interest and going online together, you can put their learning into practice at home. ThinkUKnow have a range of activities you can do with your family to support their online safety at home.  4) Set a good example - think about how you use social media, how often, how you behave towards other people online and so on. The main thing to think about is would you be happy if your child behaved the same? If not, are there some adjustments you can make?  5) Agree your family rules - many parents hear from their children that "all my friends are allowed to..." but does that work for your family? Work together to set realistic boundaries that your child sees the rationale for and can respect. ChildNet has a really helpful family agreement which can help start positive conversations a out safe and responsible internet use.  6) Be aware of what your children are accessing - it can be hard to stay up to date with the latest apps, games and online trends. Talking with your child about what they're enjoying will be a great source of information. NetAware regularly review the most popular apps, games and social media sites that young people are using.  7) Understand the risks - social networking can be a hugely positive part of a child's life but there are some risks. By helping your child understand these risks, you can prevent them becoming problems. Internet Matters has a helpful guide that suggests thinking about what children might see and do online, who they might meet, and how these experiences might affect them.  8) Let your child know you're there for them - you want your child to know they can come to you if they are worried or if something has gone wrong. Listen, stay calm and try not to get stressed yourself. Help them say what they need to by asking open questions and together you can work through whatever the problem might be.  9) Keep an online/offline life balance - it's ok not to be available all the time on social media. Gaming in particular can be hard to stop and it's understandable that children feel frustrated at being asked to cut off in the middle of a level or if they are in a team with friends. ThinkUKnow have a useful parent guide on gaming and managing these emotions.  10) Dont be afraid to ask for help yourself - the social media landscape changes all the time and we all need help to keep on top of it. There is a list of websites and resources below that you may find helpful.  www.childnet.com www.internetmatters.org www.thinkuknow.co.uk |