Let's Talk:

Social media – Think before you post

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Hi, my name is Erica, and let's talk about social media and how to think before you post. I think we've all heard those horror stories about people who posted something online and then it cost them a job or a relationship or it turned into a big online fight and just spiraled out of control. And the truth is social media and just being online is a reality of modern day living. So if you choose to engage in online social networking sites like Twitter or Facebook or Instagram, it's important to understand how you can make healthy decisions when you use those sites.

Positive posts can spread happiness

Social media is actually good for our health when we use it correctly. In fact, there's evidence to show that when you use social media and engage in positive conversations with people online, it actually can reduce your heart rate and can reduce your stress. And there's other evidence that suggest that positive posts online can actually spread happiness and positivity to others.

Stop and think before you post

The first rule of social media use is to think before you post. And why should you do that? Well, more and more employers are looking at employees or potential employees' social media accounts to get an idea of who they are and what kind of things that they like and what kind of things they're really saying when they're not in an interview room, for example. It can also cost you a relationship if you're posting inappropriate content or you're posting content that hurt somebody else's feelings. And another reason you want to think before you post is that while you may just be interacting with somebody's Twitter handle and it's an unknown, anonymous person, there's still a human being on the other side of that computer and that person has feelings and thoughts and you don't know what kind of impact you're having on them.

Be aware of online safety issues

Another consideration before you post something online is safety because the reality is that there are people out there who might take advantage of the content that you post online. So when it comes to children, for example, don't post any pictures of children at any kind of state of undress.

You probably don't want to post pictures of them in the bathtub, for example, or potty training, and you may even want to question whether or not you want to post pictures of them in their swimming suits because you don't necessarily know who is looking at those pictures. You also want to avoid posting pictures of other people's children or of other people without first asking their permission, because they may have a different sense of privacy than you do.

Avoid posting your personal contact info

You also want to think about, if you're posting identifying information. So things like your address or where your kids go to school or maybe even where you work and whether or not that's appropriate to post and could cause some safety concerns for you and your family. And if you have children, you definitely want to talk to them about the rules of using the internet and who they interact with and how it's really important that they don't share that information with strangers online.

No un-do option

One of the most important reasons you need to think before you post is that once you put something online, it's out there. Even if you delete it, it's still out there. Somebody could have grabbed it and saved it and they could share it with others even after you've deleted it. So you want to ask yourself some important questions before you post online. Ask yourself, "Would I want my grandmother to see this? "Would I want my employer to see this? "Would I want a photo of me posted like this?" or, "Is this my work to publish?" And finally, "Do I want this information "following me around, possibly for the rest of my life?"

Additional resources

Stopthinkconnect.org

Netsmartz.org

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