

// Youth Ministry
Tech Savvy Parenting
Navigating Your Child's Digital Life

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Parenting leader, author and blogger, Brian Houseman has turned his parenting blog "Tech Savvy Parenting" into a book. He has taken his years of experience and wisdom both in youth ministry and in parent ministry to share practical insights to help parents be wiser when it comes to the issues of the tech saturated world kids live in.

Each chapter addresses head on one of the current hot button issues of technology that children, parents and families are facing. This book is not just a quick read and forget book. It is a common sense tool with real life applications for parents to work through these sometimes complicated issues. The book includes a wealth of easy-to-understand colorful graphs, charts, statistics, and more to make every topic simple and clear.

Being a tech savvy parent means being willing to taking on some of these tough topics...

1. The Cell Phone Monster

We live in a constantly connected world through our cellphones, that is why it is so important to lay down some rules and controls when it comes to your child's phone. Simple rules that are spelled out as well as modeled like communicating face to face when possible and not allowing cellphones around at bedtimes, meal times, or drive times help keep the cellphones from becoming an addiction. The other key to keeping the "cellphone monster" from taking over your family is setting parental controls. I-Phones and I-Pods offer simple ways to set up your child's phone to keep everyone on the same page virtually and literally.

2. Video Game Play

Video games are not just a guy-thing anymore, whether they are played on a console or on a device, video



games are still played by 97% of children 12-17. They are not just a distraction they also can become an influencer of moral behavior through the exposure of violent and mature content. It is important for parents understand what each rating stands for and why games are rated they way they are.

Once parents understand the rating system and content of games they need to be willing to come up with guidelines to help guide their child's game play. Simple things like creating a "no go" list of rules, offering alternatives to releasing tension/aggression, monitoring time, and encouraging games that are played as a group vs. simple player games, all help make video game play a less tense topic in your home.

3. Social Media World

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the list goes on of popular social media apps are as popular with parents as they with your kids, that is why there needs to be some etiquette as much as for parents, as there is for children. Here are couple helpful suggestions-Don't post embarrassing photos of your child or yourself. Keep your comments to a minimum and your lectures offline. Not everyone needs to be your friend, so just follow people you actually know in real life.

The other hot question is always "how young is too young?" The easy answer is most sites like Facebook make registration age to be 13 or older, and once your child turns 13 it is still good to set the privacy settings and make yourself a quick checklist of things to remember as children begin their social media journey. 1. Set profile to private. 2. Prudence in posting. 3. Posts are permanent 4. Pictures speak louder than words. 5. Bullying is never cool. 6. Moderation.

4. Internet Safety

A person's online reputation is becoming as important as their offline one in our world. Colleges and employers are now looking at online activities as much as they are looking at resumes. Easy ways to protect a child's digital resume is through a few simple things like: restricting password, setting up notifications, monitoring posts, and occasionally doing a Google name search. Beyond just reputation there is always a need for good online security. Parents need to find the right software for their family's devices and computers.

Places like: *Safety Eyes*, *McAfee*, *Net Nany*, *K9 Web*, *Internet Security Barrier* are all great programs to keep your family safe online in general. Places like *Net Nanny Social*, *Avira*, and *Uknowkids* allow parents to monitor child's social media as well.

The final 3 security areas that parents need to aware of when in comes to the online world are: video chatting, cyber-bullying and pornography. While there are continually great services that work hard to monitor and block unwanted and dangerous content these three areas continue to be dangers socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Limiting and making all video chatting public, monitored, and used with clear expectations help minimize unwanted contact and content. Cyber-bullying continues to grow, even with so much public attention being given to it. Parents need to be aware of some of the signs of cyber-bullying: reluctance to attend school, talk of suicide, suddenly stopping use of computer/devices, and change in sleep, grades, and friends. The first 2 are troubling; pornography however has grown to epidemic proportions. It is important for parents to understand the allure of pornography, talk about it openly in age appropriate ways, set clearly boundaries and offer honest accountability.

Tech Savvy Parenting is so jam-packed with so much information, that this quick snapshot could never come close to covering all of it, so I hope you will pick up a copy of this great book sometime soon.

