

# 6 Ways to Help Your Kid With Their Device and Social Media

**Jo Phillips**

I've spoken with more than 120K kids, and they sure are tired of the stereotypes and assumptions that come with being a kid with a device. Social media, and device use are two different things.

So, here are 6 things you can do to help your kid with their device:

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## **Before you tell them to put their device down, ask what they're doing.**

Kids use their devices for a lot of reasons. They might be talking to a friend. Maybe organizing their day tomorrow. They could be watching a video to learn something cool. Or they might just be bored. But we as parents assume the last and ignore all the other stuff.

Give them a two-minute warning instead. A simple "it's time to wrap it up" will breed far better results than forcing them to ghost a friend in the middle of a convo!

## **Don't ban or forbid if they tell you about a problem they're having online.**

Kids across the province are trying to solve their own problems online because they predict, often correctly, if they tell the adults in their lives, they will either lose phone privileges, or be banned from using the platform.

Parents need to think of social media and devices like a swimming pool for our kids. Lots of fun, new skills to be learned, time to play with their friends, and no deep end until you're ready to swim in it. But at the same time, if your child is being repeatedly splashed and dunked, you don't respond by taking away the swimming pool. "That's it. Someone else is acting inappropriately so you can never swim again."

No. You respond by helping them with the problem, and then encouraging them to go back to having fun and building their skills and relationships with their friends. We need to respond in the same way with social media.

**Don't ground them from their device unless they've done something incredibly serious.**

It's the parenting go-to. "That's it. No more phone!" But what many parents fail to realize is how extreme this punishment is. When we were kids, we had a ghetto blaster, a television, a library, an alarm clock, cash, paper agendas, video game consoles, computers, and telephones. For our kids, these are all the same thing. Their device.

A kid in grade nine once told me, "My mom installed a bunch of tracking stuff in my phone, and she reminds me to take it with me when I leave the house and it makes me feel safe. And then she grounds me from my phone, and I have to leave the house without it and it scares me."

Sit down with your kid and make a list of everything you each do with your phones. First, you'll be astounded at how integral it has become to your life, and theirs. Next, talk together about which aspects of device use could be restricted as a punishment.

Take away their charger, rather than their phone. Require a screenshot on demand of the battery life, to be sure they aren't surreptitiously charging it through a friend or sibling. This way, they'll only use the device for the most important stuff, and you have an effective consequence. Or have a family flip phone for those who are grounded.

**Learn how they're using their device to navigate their world.**

Don't learn from Google, or other parents. Learn from your kid! Many kids will use their device to help manage anxiety, often through simple games. Some kids will use them to manage the stresses of being in school - a classroom environment all day is tough for introverted, anxious, or shy kids! Teens might use their phone to find out who's going to be at a party, so they know if it's a place they want to be.

## **Model good device etiquette yourself.**

We hold our kids to a standard of etiquette and use that we don't seem to hold ourselves to. Of the over 120,000 kids I've spoken with, almost all have told us they have a parent who is always on their device. All of them say that their parent often doesn't hear what they're saying because they're involved with their phone. Their TikTok (which is their television, along with YouTube) screen time is the same as your Greys Anatomy binge or WWII documentary screen time. And please stop texting and driving. It scares your kids.

## **Stand up for them.**

When kids and their use of social media is brought up at the next family gathering, stick up for your kids. Make sure that they, and you, aren't on your device inappropriately. But if your kid needs a brain break, a barrier, a chance to chill, support them! And if the convo turns negative about "kids these days" talk about the cool things they've learned, and maybe taught you. Take pictures with them. Maybe encourage everyone to join in creating a TikTok.

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This is a different world. Our kids DO have devices. They DO have social media. They ARE impacted by technology all around them. You may believe the way you grew up was better, but this is the way they're growing up. Our kids need us to stop listening to other adults about how they're using social media and start listening to them.

Need help starting a social media conversation with your kids? Attend the Parenting and Social Media course when it's offered by your school, or find quick and affordable courses at <http://jooutloud.com> It will change your perspective and give you the tools you need to navigate this part of parenthood.

*Adults and kids are using social media in different ways, and many kids don't feel like they can approach an adult with their problems, or even the things they're excited about. I'm committed to bridging this gap and doing everything I can to start a positive social media conversation in homes*

*Learn more about my programs at [JoOutLoud.com](http://JoOutLoud.com)*

# Jo Phillips

## Public Speaker/Mentor/Coach

- Professional Speaker/Mentor/Coach
- BA Psychology - University of Calgary
- Certified Youth Resilience Coach - Youth Coaching Institute
- Former CEO - Jo(e) Social Media Inc (est. 2012)
- Co-Founder and former Executive Director - Jo(e) Youth Creative (est 2020)
- Founder and Executive Director - Journey Youth Creative (est. 2023)
- Founder - JoOutLoud
- Parent of three

For Jo, it's all about kids. Hanging out with them, learning from them, helping them. From 2015 to 2023 she delivered the program "Starting a Social Media Conversation" with partner Joe Whitbread in schools, listening to kids about how they use social media and the challenges they face. She now delivers the program independently.

Jo is co-founder and Executive Director of Journey Youth Creative - an innovative space in Lacombe where kids come to play video games, make TikToks and learn YouTube. She is also founder of JoOutLoud Youth Resilience Coaching, a professional speaker, and an advocate for kids and coach to parents who want collaborative solutions to their family challenges.

Jo loves to listen to the stories of kids and work with them to find solutions to their ideas, and their challenges. With a degree in Psychology focused on motivation and personality, and a minor in Sociology from the University of Calgary, she's able to connect the dots for parents and kids in a healthy, fun, way.

