

BY JANELL BURLEY HOFMANN

TOP 10 PARENT TECH TIPS

A resource for parents

JANELL BURLEY HOFMANN.

TECH TIP 1

DID YOU SAY YES TO THE TECH? HAVE YOU ALLOWED NEW TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA, GAMES, CHANNELS OR SETTINGS IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS? CHECK IN:

- WHICH YOUTUBERS ARE THEY WATCHING?
- WHO ARE THEY GAMING WITH?
- WHICH PAGES ARE THEY FOLLOWING
- WHO ARE THEY SNAPPING WITH?
- WHAT KIND OF GROUP TEXTS ARE THEY IN AND WHO'S IN THERE?

This isn't about trust! It's about building a healthy relationship to technology and it's about parenting. We ask questions like this all the time away from the screens: Who's on your team? Who is your lab partner? Where are you going for pizza? Who's going to be there? Our kids need guidance and boundaries - yes - but they also need someone checking in on them. They need an adult to care about their digital lives in the same way adults care about their lives away from the screens. Sometimes the time slips by and we don't check in after a yes to new tech. Don't worry, just follow up! It's not just about what tech is being used - but *how* is it being used.

Get to know the way it's working for your kids!

TECH TIP 2

IN MY WORK, I OFTEN TELL KIDS & TEENS TO ASK THEMSELVES - "DOES THIS TECHNOLOGY (SOCIAL NETWORK, GAME, FRIEND, FOLLOW, SUBSCRIPTION) MAKE MY LIFE BETTER? IS IT "TECH POSITIVE"? HOW DOES IT MAKE ME FEEL?"

The teaching point is: we always have a choice. As parents it's important to ask ourselves these questions too. If some aspect of technology isn't serving you, you are not required to continue its use.

Often stepping away and not participating is the best choice. The coolest feature of technology is that you can curate your experience so that it works for you as an individual with changing needs, perspectives, time and concerns.

Digital health is often overlooked as an aspect of self care, but it is critical.

TECH TIP 3

ONE OF THE BIGGEST QUESTIONS I GET IS "WHEN (HOW) DO I TELL ANOTHER PARENT ABOUT WHAT I SAW THEIR KID DOING/POSTING/SHARING ONLINE?"

As part of your community building, develop a plan with your parent peers.

How are you going to talk about tech with each other?

How will you report to each other?

How will you make hard conversations safe & open?

How will you approach community parenting in the digital world with care and not with judgement?

TAKE THE TIME TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THAT SUPPORT YOUR PARENTING. WE ALL NEED EACH OTHER.

TECH TIP 4

WHEN SETTING RULES AND THINKING ABOUT TECH IN YOUR HOME, CONSIDER ALL OF THE PLACES YOUR KIDS MAY INTERACT ONLINE BEYOND JUST THE BIG SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, TEXTING AND CHATTING APPS YOU'VE APPROVED (OR NOT). *INSTEAD THINK OF ALL TECH AS SOCIAL.*

- MAYBE THE CHAT FEATURE IS ENABLED ON MINECRAFT AND ROBLOX?
- DO YOU KNOW IF THEY'RE INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE (KNOWN OR UNKNOWN) ON XBOX OR MUSICALLY?
- DO THEY WEAR SMART FITNESS WATCHES/BANDS THAT ALLOW THEM TO CONNECT, POST AND SHARE ON THE APP?
- ARE THEY IN COMMENT CONVOS ON YOUTUBE?
- ARE THEY USING CONNECTED TOYS?

Companies and products want and encourage users to be interacting online and creating "communities" for higher engagement.

If it's digital, assume it's got a social component and get to know it.

Parenting tech is much easier when we know what it is, how it's being used specifically by our child and the future and potential uses.

Keep going!

TECH TIP 5

WHAT KIND OF DIGITAL SUPPORT MIGHT YOUR TEENS NEED TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL?

I recently worked with an awesome group of teens & a few of them told me they put their own parental controls on their devices to help manage their time. Some of the other teens in the group didn't even know that was possible, but had other strategies (turning off notifications, hiding their phones/putting in an inconvenient place while writing/working on laptops, no social media or YouTube app on school devices). It was an awesome convo about digital health & well-being, self-knowledge and time management.

REMEMBER THE KEY LEAD INS ARE "HOW CAN I HELP YOU" AND "I CARE ENOUGH ABOUT YOU TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION." WHEN IT COMES FROM LOVE, IT'S HARD TO BE DEFENSIVE.



Tech Tip from the crowd

A few elementary school parents in the same neighborhood got together & made an agreement to have the same screen free hours after school. This helped their children make their way to each other for some free play without feeling like they were missing out online. A great example of community!

TECH TIP 6

[ACTUALLY A STUDENT TECH TIP]

Applying to college? For a job? Just want to make sure that the great person you are is reflected online? Google yourself! What shows up? Which social media pics show up? We can control our digital footprint and our digital reputation. The healthier we are with our online interactions and behaviors, the better our digital profile.

**Ask yourself, are you proud of what comes up
or do you want to hide it?**

**IF HIDE IS THE ANSWER, MAKE SOME POSITIVE
CHANGES ONLINE TO SUPPORT YOUR PERSONAL
GROWTH AND SHOWCASE YOUR STRENGTHS.**

TECH TIP 7

RECENTLY I HAD A CONVERSATION WITH A FATHER ABOUT TECH USE. HE SAID THAT DURING ONE WINTER STORM HIS HOME LOST POWER FOR A DAY OR TWO. HE PAUSED AND FOLLOWED UP WITH: "JANELL, DURING THAT TIME, I GOT MY FAMILY BACK. WE WEREN'T BUSY OR DISTRACTED OR PLUGGED IN. WE WERE JUST US. I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH IT HAD CHANGED."

THIS STORY IS TEACHABLE FOR ALL OF US.

LET'S HEIGHTEN OUR AWARENESS.
LET'S ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPACT.
LET'S CREATE BOUNDARIES THAT PRESERVE FAMILY CONNECTION, NOT JUST DURING STORMS, BUT AS PART OF OUR FAMILY CULTURE.

TECH TIP 8

NOW IS A PERFECT TIME TO TAKE A "TECH INVENTORY" AT HOME.

Sit down with your kids, ask about the sites, apps, social networking accounts they have, ask for user names and passwords to keep in a log book. Knowing where they are online helps us understand how they use the technology, allowing us to parent it with better understanding.

*** GO AHEAD, MAKE A LIST HERE:**

TECH TIP 9

ONE OF THE BIGGEST QUESTIONS I GET FROM PARENTS IS HOW WE CAN MAINTAIN OUR TECH PRACTICES WHEN OTHER KIDS ARE IN OUR HOMES. HERE'S A GREAT EXAMPLE OF GROWNUPS BEING GROWNUPS FROM MY OWN LIFE WITH OTHER PARENTS I'M JUST GETTING TO KNOW.

1

hold the judgement and keep it light

2

allow space for other parental needs on your tech rules. (they may know something about their kid we don't, so keep the dialogue open).

3

keep your framework - if devices don't go in the bedrooms or you don't allow certain YouTube Channels/Video Games - keep it consistent when friends are over.

4

what is acceptable? Tell them what they can do & then let them enjoy it.

5

be upfront about it. enjoy being the adult & allowing kids to be kids.

TECH TIP 10

ESTABLISH A BEDTIME FOR YOUR KIDS - ALL AGES!

IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT FOR KIDS & TEENS TO HAVE A CONSISTENT "END" TO THEIR DAY THAT INCLUDES TURNING OFF DEVICES, DISCONNECTING FROM PEERS, THE WEB, NETFLIX AND GAMES.

THIS IS A HEALTHY (AND NECESSARY) ROUTINE FOR THEM, FOR YOU AND FOR THE FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD SYSTEMS.

VISIT
JBHWITES.COM
FOR MORE PARENT RESOURCES, ONLINE
CLASSES, AND MORE.

*"Digital parenting is not technical, it's
relational."*

JANELL BURLEY HOFMANN.