Parenting for Digital Wellness: Making Sense of Your Teen's Favorite Apps

Today's teens are constantly connected, with social media playing a central role in their lives. While these platforms foster creativity, connection, and learning, they also pose risks. Parents can guide teens toward responsible digital habits by staying informed about popular apps. While school-issued devices are protected by **GoGuardian,** which ensures a safe, scholarly online environment, most teens access social media on personal phones, where school protections don't apply. Understanding app features and privacy settings is key to keeping them safe. Here's what you need to know about popular social media platforms and how to support your teen in making safe and responsible choices online

1. **TikTok – A short-form video app known for viral trends and creative expression.**
   - Key Concerns: Inappropriate content, data privacy, excessive screen time.
   - Parental Action: Enable Family Pairing Mode to set time limits and filter content.
   - Resource: **TikTok Family Pairing Guide**

2. **Instagram – A photo and video-sharing platform with Stories, Reels, and direct messaging.**
   - Key Concerns: Social comparison, cyberbullying, and exposure to inappropriate content.
   - Parental Action: Use Instagram's Supervision Tools to monitor time spent, followers, and interactions.
   - Resource: **Instagram Family Center**

3. **Snapchat – A messaging app featuring disappearing photos, Stories, and Snap Map.**
   - Key Concerns: Disappearing messages, potential for sexting, and location sharing.
   - Parental Action: Enable Ghost Mode to hide location, and use Family Center to view friend activity.
   - Resource: **Parents Ultimate Guide to Snapchat**

4. **YouTube – A video-sharing platform with endless entertainment and educational content.**
   - Key Concerns: Exposure to inappropriate videos, excessive screen time, and harmful challenges.
   - Parental Action: Turn on Restricted Mode to filter mature content.
   - Resource: **YouTube Parental Controls**

5. **Discord – A group-chat app popular for gaming and community discussions.**
   - Key Concerns: Unmoderated chat rooms, potential exposure to strangers, and inappropriate discussions.
   - Parental Action: Enable Discord's Family Center to monitor server activity and set privacy controls.
   - Resource: **Discord Family Center**

Top 5 Actionable Steps for Parents

1. **Talk Early & Often:** Ask your teen to show you their favorite apps and explain how they use them.
2. **Set Boundaries**: Set limits, no-phone zones (e.g., during meals and bedtime), and encourage digital breaks.
3. **Enable Parental Controls**: Use built-in safety tools to set content restrictions and monitor activity.
4. **Encourage Critical Thinking**: Teach your teen to question what they see online and recognize risky trends.
5. **Model Healthy Tech Habits**: Model balanced screen use to encourage mindful engagement.

By staying informed and involved, you can help your teen navigate social media safely while fostering responsible digital habits. For more resources, visit **Common Sense Media Parent Guides.**

Check out the New ISD 728 **Parenting for Digital Wellness Website**