How Smart Are You Regarding Smart Phones?

Smart phones are everywhere you look. Just stop and take a look around you while in the grocery store and you will see that almost everyone is carrying one or some form of digital device. They are sleek, flashy, as well as fast and very multifunctional. They are designed to make our lives easier and accomplish more throughout the day, but they also distract us from our family and work. There is an “app” for everything…literally. With this knowledge, we must ask are smartphones for everyone? If you are a teenager, I can assure you the popular answer would be an emphatic yes!

Smartphones have their advantages such as: they give parents some peace of mind. Parents can call or text to find out where their child is, and if they do not get an answer, most smartphones contain GPS tracking that can be activated to specify the phone’s exact location. Smartphones also come in handy when needing information for school research topics, and projects.

However, smart phones are being purchased for younger children more often than ever before and they are rapidly providing our children with experiences that they are not prepared to deal with on many developmental levels. One main area of concern is that it can harm their ability to communicate with people face to face, as well as even impact their adeptness to write properly. Children can also become so focused on social networking on digital devices they spend less time on homework and that can lead to bad grades.

According to research by the American Academy of Pediatrics, it is no surprise that electronic mobile communication, such as instant messaging and text messaging, has altered to social environment of today’s youth. A recent survey found that, among 12-to 13-year-olds, 93% of youth had access to the internet, 71% had mobile access to the internet, and 68% owned a cell phone; 23% of those owned smartphones. Texting is the most common form of daily communication used by teenagers (more than phones or face to face).

Cell phones have changed communication because now, instead of friends actually having a face-to-face conversation, they text each other. Intent becomes misinterpreted, which can lead to friendship problems. Good communication is also essential for future jobs. Studies show that it makes it difficult for students who rely so heavily on technology to actually communicate to adults in person because they don’t quite develop all of the necessary skills to hold or even start a face-to-face conversation.
Parents should be aware and involved in their children’s social media lives. In social media interactions, there is more potential for interacting with unknown people. The use of messaging apps such as Kik, Facebook, Snap Chat, or Instagram, parents may not know who their child is interacting with, and the person on the other end may be a predator. There are a number of things parents should do to stave off potential negative consequences of social media.

Parents can:

✓ Learn more about social media on their own.
✓ Join social networks and “friend” or “follow” their children.
✓ Set limits! Lay out boundaries where cell phones are not allowed in your home (such as child’s bedroom/bathroom) and the time of evening they are to be shut off. Also setting limits concerning homework, and chores that must be completed before cell phones/digital devices may be used. Turning off Wi-Fi is also a good idea if your child does not have a cell phone but has access to other multimedia devices.
✓ Check with your cell phone provider to see if there are any extra protection measures you can add to your plan for your children’s phone.
✓ Know the content your child is consuming.
✓ Check your child’s cell phone at random times.

There are also tale-tale signs that your child’s cell phone/digital device usage may be out of the ordinary.

✓ If a child is overly preoccupied with what is being said online, or with getting back online when they are away from internet signal.
✓ If they need to be online for longer and longer periods of time.
✓ If they are unable to cut back on text messaging or online time.
✓ If they become irritable, restless or anxious when they cannot be online.
✓ If other areas in their life are becoming impaired due to cell phone/internet usage.
✓ If they are concealing their computer or phone use.
✓ If they seem to be using their device to escape from real world interactions.

While it is true that technology has made completing everyday tasks more efficient, we also have to realize that it has also introduced a new set of risks that we must be vigilant and “stay in the know” especially where our children are concerned.

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Source: