Technology and social media have taken over our world. While social media makes it fun and easy to keep up with friends and family, it also poses many dangers. Several kids have begun suffering from a new phenomenon that the American Academy of Pediatrics has called "Facebook depression." Our students spend a lot of time on social media and sometimes validate themselves by how many "likes" or "friends" they have on their social media accounts. When they are "unfriended" or receive critical comments about their "selfie", they start to feel negatively about themselves which can lead to "Facebook depression." While social media can be enjoyable, it is important that parents are involved in their child's online social activities. Here are some things you can do to keep your child physically and emotionally safe:

- Check privacy settings- Make sure the privacy settings are set to the strictest levels!

- Create ground rules- Have a discussion with your child about media usage. It is very important for your child to abide by your rules to keep him/her safe!

- Be aware- It is important for you to know about your child's media habits. You need to know what forms of social media your child is using and the people your child associates with on their social media accounts.

- Urge your child to avoid questionnaires, giveaways, and contests- Many of these sites are just attempts to gain personal information.

- Monitor your child's posts- Be sure you know what your child is posting on social media. It can be dangerous to post information about his/her current location. Also, make sure your child is not participating in or becoming a victim of cyberbullying.

- Be a good example of how to use social media- Your child is learning from you! Model good habits.

- Limit cell phone use- Just as you limit other forms of media (TV, computer, video games, etc.) you can do the same with a cell phone. Set specific times that your child can use a cell phone. Remember that it is important to have cell phone-free family time!

- Teach your child about an online reputation- Ensure your child knows what a digital footprint is. Emphasize that future employers, college recruiters, coaches, and many others can stumble upon their posts even if they have deleted them.

- Talk to your child about online dangers- Make sure your child is aware of potential predators. While this topic is very scary, it is better for your child to be aware of this danger than to be unaware and unknowingly put themselves in harm's way.

- **<u>Know about technology-</u>** This one can be challenging, but it is very important! It is vital that you know about the key features on each of the social media websites as well as your child's device. Knowing this information can help with conversations about safety!

If you would like more information on this topic, please visit www.parenting.com/article.kids-social-networking or feel free to contact me.

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"To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift." –Steve Prefontaine