

Strategies to Mitigate Social Media Anxiety – Without Overreacting

With so many different stressors, known and unknown, a key piece of advice for parents is to individualize your approach. If your teen seems irritable or overwhelmed by social media, pay attention to what specifically is causing those feelings.

Check in with your teen about what's going on. Parents can and should help support and problem-solve with their teen, but they should also offer validation about how difficult these situations can be. Let them know you understand.

It might not be a good idea to just take your teen's phone away if you suspect drama. Doing so won't get to the heart of the social issue at play— and it could potentially make matters worse. Talk to them about it—without judgment but with clear expectations.

As a family, you can set screen-free times — whether it's at dinner, every night after a certain time, on the car ride to school, an occasional screen-free weekend, or longer stretches over vacations. Many teens say they appreciate these chances. Be good role models in your own use of tech. That means being mindful of your own distracted habit of reaching for your cell phone.

In most situations, it's best to work with your teen to set social media expectations. You want to build consensus and get their buy-in, build trust. Constant surveillance or control won't build trust. Make it an open, mutual discussion. You want to get teens to put their devices down on their own so that you're helping them build their ability to manage their interactions with technology and social media.

