

## **Social Media is Here to Stay; How to Help Your Teenage Daughter Navigate It**

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As much as we want to protect our daughters from social media's negativity, we will not succeed. They will be exposed to it. The subtle and not so subtle messages of what society projects on women continues to exist with more avenues of expression. We can delay the age of exposure, but computers in schools and smart electronics for recreation at younger ages makes this increasingly difficult.

Media has a love affair for focusing on women's bodies not their intellect, and social media is no different. To help your daughter have a healthy relationship with social media we must accept the inevitability that they will use it. We will not always know how and teenagers have a better understanding of the technical aspects. Once you accept this, then you can dialogue with your daughter in a more effective way.

When you speak with your daughter about social media, you may be met with defensiveness and refusal. How you approach her is just as important as what you say. Keep a non-authoritative demeanor and be inquisitive not judgmental.

Consider discussing the following with her:

- Exactly how does she want to portray herself to the world? Does she want to be admired for her intellect, attitude, body, accomplishments, goals, and choices? When she answers these questions ask her to show you how she is achieving this through her social media posts.
- Ask her what social media products she prefers and why. Listen closely and allow her to educate you as to why she chooses these platforms.
- Discuss with her what she does and does not like about social media. How has it benefited her? How has it harmed her?

During your conversation, the opportunity may arise to discuss how she views her pictures and how society might view them. Although women have become more empowered in society, men and women alike continue to judge a woman's appearance harshly. True, but an unjust issue that exists. Your daughter may not have considered this.

Discuss these topics at a pace that matches your daughter's needs. Once you feel you have met with a better understanding of each other, then

discussions regarding parameters for social media will likely be met with a better reception.