

### 3rd - 4th Counseling Corner

#### **Screen time, social media, and digital safety, how is your family dealing with these issues?**

Hoping to better prepare us to navigate this important topic, social media expert Darren Laur “The White Hatter”, came and spoke to our middle school students and separately to parents.

Here are a few takeaways that might help those of us with younger kids.

- Take a holistic approach where we communicate with our kids and participate with what they are doing with technology and online.
- In addition to our supervision, filtering and monitoring software can be of greater benefit, but not alone or as a replacement to our parenting.
- Technology and the internet are great inventions, but we need to help our kids use them with caution and responsibility.
- Monitoring the time spent and supervising what type of use is crucial; no monitoring software or app can replace that.
- There is a big difference between just consuming versus spending time becoming a producer/creator/ social change maker, etc.
- Our kids are “digital natives”. They are growing up with technology and do not know life without it. Most of us adults are “digital immigrants”. How can parents stay informed?
- What our kids do online (and may think is private), can hurt them later as adults, in ways they have no idea. Many kids share way too much personal information.
  - Protect your digital reputation, not just for now, but for future opportunities. Colleges and employers regularly check digital footprints now.
  - “There is no such thing as privacy online: everything is public, permanent, searchable, copiable, exploitable, and for sale.”
- Have computers and cell phones in a neutral area of the home and out of bedrooms.
- Internet challenges are becoming more prevalent. Use filters such as “Google Safe Search” to help reduce the likelihood of encountering inappropriate content. Other browsers also have filter tools as well. You Tube has “Safety Mode” which can help filter out inappropriate video content.

His webpage has helpful resources, including more info on internet use in his article, “10 Things to Make Surfing Safer for Your Kids” <https://www.thewhitehatter.ca/single-post/10-Things-to-Make-Surfing-Safer-for-Your-Kids>.

This is a great opportunity to continue this important discussion with other parents and help determine exactly what steps to take to avoid pitfalls and prepare our kids to navigate technology in a God honoring way.

Additionally, just this week on the evening news, I heard the concern about “screen time and possible risk for our kids”. They discussed how looking at the “blue light” on screens for long periods can both change our eyes and impact our sleep. They suggested the 20-20-20 rule for screens- every 20 minutes, look at something at least 20 ft. away for at least 20 seconds, to avoid the damage of changing the shape of our eyes.

Please contact that me if you have any questions or concerns about your student. I am here to help!

Praying for God’s wisdom and leading, as you navigate along your parenting journey.

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