

#Social Media #Modern Parental Problem!

By Jamie Kidds

There is now a new 'F' word in the playground. It's the one that all parents dread hearing coming from the mouths of their children. Facebook. But what do today's parents do when their eleven-year-old begs to be allowed a Facebook account, declaring that absolutely everybody else in their class is not only on Facebook, but also on Twitter as well as other social networks? How should parents in today's social media age deal with the F word question? Is social networking bad for children? Should we allow our kids to freely expose their identities on the Internet?



It's not an easy question but an important one. We love our children and want the best for them. We know that the world is different to when we were young. We know that social media is the future. We know that they need to be technology-savvy, but do we really want our kids exposed to the perils of the Internet? In my daughter's school playground alone there are many different views. In fact, amongst my close circle of friends there are dramatically different views of the impact of social networks on their kids. We are all parents of similar-age children and enjoy spending time together but about the Internet, especially on the F word question, we couldn't disagree more.

However, the biggest contrast is between my husband and I. I believe that the Internet represents the best way for kids to learn about the world. I want my kids to learn about society and the world around them and therefore I have a responsibility to allow them to be on social networks. I see nothing wrong with Facebook and Twitter. If taught Internet safety, and with parental supervision, social media is the best way to be part of the modern world. Social networking is the most popular thing right now and surely banning your children from accessing the sites will leave them isolated and more likely to go on them in secret. Social media is the rock 'n' roll of the early 21st century. Like it or not, our children are now living their lives on the electronic network, posting their photos, revealing their thoughts, making their friends, and defining their identities.

For my husband however, the Internet is killing rather than nurturing intelligence. He argues that social networks fail to educate kids about the real world. They encourage trivial online game playing, which is replacing reading, and promote a mindless consumerism over serious learning. He argues that Facebook causes children to confuse social media with real life. They have no real notion of friendship and community. For them friendship is all about how many 'friends' you have on social media sites. My husband believes that they should be living life for real rather than living it through a computer screen.

Surely the most sensible position for parents is halfway between my husband and myself: social media is neither intrinsically good nor evil. It all depends on how our kids use it.