

It is important to keep open and honest conversations with your child. We often talk about the potential harms of smoking, drinking etc but we do not always cover gaming and gambling.

Here we have identified some useful tips and reminders to help you have these conversations.

Chatting to your child

Listen to your child's opinions without judging

Understanding what gaming means to your child can help you to view it in a different perspective. In our research young people felt their parents didn't understand gaming and what it means to them so ask them to tell you to help you understand. They may want to show you to help them explain. Show an interest.

Come to a joint agreement over gaming

– Share your opinions and listen to their opinions. Young people want to feel heard and feel they have some control but also still want those boundaries so look to come to an agreement everybody is happy with.

Keep chats regular and short.

Young people do not have long attention spans so try and keep conversations to 20 minutes. If you need to have another chat on another aspect of the topic choose another time. This will also help keep emotions in check too.

Remember young people aren't prepared to balance emotion and logic to make healthy choices – they won't be considering the

consequences of their actions. The rational side of their brain is not fully developed they are leading with their emotions and how activities make them feel.

Establish general safety measures

and set general ground rules for ALL the family to keep to.

Speak openly about the dangers and talk about the topics just as you would with sex, alcohol and online safety issues. Ask them what they feel the dangers are so they can self identify.

Set boundaries – children like having them (even if they may at times try and break or move these boundaries)

Teach awareness for themselves and their friends – Sometimes using a third party and having a child look at others' behaviours rather than their own can help them identify behaviours/situations easily then if they look at their behaviour.



Topics

Joint agreements over gaming. To create a happy harmonious household. How long, what needs to be done before gaming, how much to spend on in-app purchases are some topics to agree on.

Look into their interests – what do they like doing? Why have they chosen that game, how does it make them feel. Look at other interests they have outside of online activity as this can help for when they finish playing or to provide them with alternatives.

Use news stories or local community stories to generate conversations with your children and get their opinions to help them to feel heard. As they grow up it is good to get them thinking about the world and their local community.

Teach them about the odds of gambling – Young people can be dazzled by the prospect of winning, with adverts for gambling showing better lifestyles, however the odds for this are slim. Have discussions and look at the odds of winning a game or to get what they want from a loot box. Look into the odds of winning the lottery vs being struck by lightning etc to help them to put odds into perspective.

Look at what else they could spend their money on – Rather than spending money on cosmetic purchases, look at what alternatives they could get which are useful such as clothing, a day out, an activity etc. To help them think about the value of money compare it to what they money could be better spent on such as charity items, a meal for the homeless etc. Sometimes looking at the value can help them view gaming purchases in a different light.

Virtual currency vs real money – does your child realise when they click a button on their game to purchase an item they are spending actual money? More importantly do they realise they may be spending YOUR money?? If they want to purchase using your money have them work for that money so they can learn its value.

Talk to your kids about their digital footprint – how everything is permanent, what they say, what they post etc Don't use it as a scare tactic but helping them to understand that future employers may look at their social sites before interviewing them can educate them with lecturing them.

Helpful hints

- Make time to have fun with your children – this can be online or offline
- Find time for family time
- Work with your child to help them to understand online activities without going too far
- Understand their technology, the apps and websites they visit. It's ok to ask them to tell you but it helps if you know what you are talking about.
- Use settings to turn off the Wi-Fi at certain times so your children can't play/go online
- Set rules with consequences
- Punish the behaviour you don't like seeing but remember to reward the behaviour you do like to see.

