

Teaching youth about choosing healthy content online is a vital part of helping them succeed in our digital world. Whether exposure was accidental or intentional, exposure to pornography and violent media is a normative experience for young people, and is an aspect of technology that needs to be addressed with teens. This guide addresses technology challenges and solutions to help families and communities work towards digital health.



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iKeepSafe

iKeepsafe Mission + Vision

The iKeepSafe mission is to provide a safe digital landscape for children, schools, and families by supporting the protection of student privacy, while advancing learning in a digital culture. To support this mission, we provide data privacy certifications to technology companies, educational resources to schools, and information to the community.

About iKeepSafe

iKeepSafe

The Internet Keep Safe Coalition[©] (iKeepSafe) certifies digital products as compliant with state and federal requirements for handling protected personal information. We help organizations achieve and maintain compliance through product assessments, monthly monitoring, annual training, and assistance with remediation.

Governors, First Spouses, and State Attorneys General from throughout the United States joined with law enforcement agencies, and child safety advocates in the formation of the Internet Keep Safe Coalition© (iKeepSafe) a national effort promoting the safe and healthy use of technology. iKeepSafe was founded by Jacalyn S. Leavitt, former First Lady of Utah, in 2005. Over the past decade, iKeepSafe has evolved into a leading organization trusted internationally by families, educators, and industry. Visit our resources page for parent and educator content.

This publication was sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Foundation

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Introduction and Instructions for Youth Leaders

Teaching youth about choosing healthy content online--and avoiding unhealthy content--is a vital part of helping them succeed in our digital world. We want parents and leaders to have the resources they need to effectively guide youth to use technology in a way that enhances their relationships, improves their health and wellbeing, and makes them more productive.

Teaching Healthy Content to 6-12th Grade Youth is designed to address the technology challenges identified in iKeepSafe's research, and the research conducted by our partner experts, to help families and communities work towards digital health.

The materials in this Course are designed to be presented in two youth meetings. The first meeting will introduce and discuss healthy content choices, and the second meeting will provide supporting youth activities. Leaders should plan to distribute information to parents in advance and give them the option to attend the meetings with their youth.

Meeting Preparation for Youth Leaders:

- Watch the *Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content Leader Videos 1-4* available at iKeepSafe's Youtube channel "*Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content*"
- Review all content in this packet that includes information, step-by-step instructions, and activity plans to incorporate healthy content choices into your group meeting.
- Link to video *Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content*, plan to show to youth on digital device or screen.
- Link to video <u>The Science of Pornography Addiction</u>, plan to show to youth on digital device or screen.
- Share with and instruct parents:
 - Share *Healthy Content Choices Parent Tips, 6th-12th Grades* handout (via email or handout) for background information and practical tips on modeling cyberbalance in their household.
 - Share *Public Health: Why Encourage Healthy Content Choices?* handout (via email or handout) for background information on the development of this course.
 - Invite parents to optionally attend meetings as observers.
- Print copies of:
 - This packet- *Teaching Healthy Content Choices to 6-12th Grades Youth Leader Guide* (one per leader)
 - Healthy Content Choices Parent Tips, 6-12 Grades (one per parent)
 - Public Health: Why Encourage Healthy Content Choices? (one per parent)
 - Internet Safety Pledge 6th-12th Grade (one per youth)



- Story Board Sheet Handout (one per youth)
- Upstander Intervention Strategies Handout (one per youth)

In group meetings, help youth complete the following:

1. Read, commit to, and sign the *Internet Safety Pledge 6th-12th Grades*.

Watch the video *Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content*, found at iKeepSafe's Youtube channel "Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content"

- 2. Participate in the Guided Discussion (Guided Discussion Outline for Youth Leaders).
- 3. Participate in the Learning Activities to demonstrate what they have learned about making healthy content choices.
- 4. Discuss with their family and friends what they have learned.





Healthy Content Choices Information for Youth Leaders

Background on Healthy Content

In the digital culture, we are constantly faced with choices over what content to consume, share, and create. Youth in particular need the background information and support system to develop skills for choosing healthy content. As a leader, you can prepare youth for life by informing them about their media sources and help them understand how their content choices affect their bodies, brains, and relationships. You can also make yourself available as a source of support and information should they need it.

Youth have constant access to hyper-stimulating sexual and violent material online. Internet porn affects development in two major ways:

- 1. Psychologically: social norms unhealthy relationships. For example, promotes violence against women.
- 2. Physiological development: creates neural pathways that train consumers' brain to only be aroused by something specific to porn.

6-12th Graders

Children under 12 should continue to have a mediated online experience, through monitoring and filtering. Filtering software is useful in blocking porn and violent content, but it is even more helpful for parents to manually monitor internet and media use. Manual monitoring (e.g. checking Facebook pages, Instagram profiles, etc) allows you to provide direct advice and guidance, and to model the self monitoring skills youth will need to manage their own consumption and sharing. For tips on intervening in case of problematic media use, watch the Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content Leader Videos 1-4 found at iKeepSafe's Youtube channel "*Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content*"

In middle school and high school youth will likely show increased interest in autonomy, privacy, and romantic relationships. It is important when filtering out unhealthy content to provide access to educational resources about bodies, development, and romantic relationships. This can include information directly from parents as well as digital resources.



Group Discussion & Learning Activities Leader Guide

Meeting 1

- Introduce the Healthy Content Choices topic, based on content for youth leaders in this packet.
- Have youth watch video: Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content found at iKeepSafe's Youtube channel "Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content"
- Ask for any questions about the content of the video.

Media & Brain Chemistry Video & Discussion

You will need:

- An internet connected device
- The Science of Pornography Addiction- <u>youtube.com/watch?v=1Ya67aLaaCc</u>

Objective: Youth will watch and discuss a video to learn how brains learn behaviors through chemical rewards.

Gather around to watch "The Science of Pornography Addiction" on a laptop, phone, or tablet.

Ask:

- What are some examples of prefrontal cortex activities? (judgement, planning, moral reasoning)
- What are some examples of limbic system activities? (body reaction, sensation, drive)
- What are some ways that your brain learns behavior through rewards?

"White Towel" Media Production Activity

You will need: 1 white towel (or washcloth) per group 1 Storyboard Sheet Handout per group Pens or pencils

Objective: Help youth learn how media messages are crafted for a specific target audience through visuals, language, and sound. Reinforce the concept that specific marketing engages target audiences and has little to do with the product itself.

Divide youth into groups of 3-4 and distribute the white towels and storyboard sheets.

Say: Today we will all be designing a TV commercial to sell our white towels. After you take some time to brainstorm in your groups, fill out your storyboard sheets with a visual sketch for each scene in your commercial. Remember to decide:

What is the name of your product?

What characters will be in the commercial?



What is the setting? What is the plot or story? What does the voiceover say? Is there music playing?

Say: Before you get started I am going to assign each of your groups a different target audience. I will write your target audience on your storyboard sheet – don't tell the other groups your audience!

Write a target audience on each group's sheet, and give them 10-15 minutes to design their commercials. Easy audiences to assign include: Adult women Adult men College students Teens

Children, ages 3-9

Have the groups announce their product name before presenting their commercial with their white towel prop, and remind them not to share their target audience. After each group presents, have the other groups guess who the commercial's target audience may be.

Discussion questions:

How effective was the group's commercial in 'hooking' the target audience? What was effective? Did any stereotypes come up in their commercial (gender, age, etc)? Why might commercials rely on stereotypes to relay messages in a short amount of time?

Say: Just like we targeted our own commercials, content creators sell products by framing them in a way that will be attractive to specific audiences. It's important to consume media with a grain of salt; be a critical consumer and remain in control of your content consumption choices.

Internet Safety Pledge 6-12th Grades Activity

Pass out the *Internet Safety Pledge 6-12th Grades*. Discuss the content of the pledge. Have students sign and commit to healthy content choices.

Meeting 2

Review all topics from Meeting 1, ask for questions and comments about what youth thought about throughout the week.

Creating Neural Pathways Activity

You will need: A ball to toss (soccer ball, football, dodgeball, etc) Candy



Objective: Demonstrate how neural pathways are created and reinforced through practice and rewards.

Have everyone stand up and form a circle. Start with the ball and pass to a youth across the circle. Instruct them to keep passing the ball, but tell them to **remember who they passed to.**

Say: We have formed a "neural pathway" once we pass the ball 20 times. Every time we finish the neural pathway, we all get a piece of candy.

Complete a few neural pathways, and give out candy.

Say: Did you notice how fast we learned our pathway and got better and faster at remembering how to pass the ball to next?

Start a new "neural pathway" by passing in a different direction 20 times to demonstrate how we can always create new patterns in ourselves.

Say: Just like the "neural pathway" we just made, our brains learn behavior and get more efficient at processing information when we practice that behavior and experience rewards. This can help us develop our skills, like in our game. Focusing on healthy skills and pattern development keeps us positive in the long run.

Being an Upstander & ACT Group Discussion

You will need: 1 copy of *Upstander Intervention Strategies* per youth

Objective: Learn what an upstander is, and what that means when making healthy content choices in the digital culture.

Say: Having a personal ACT plan in place before hand prepares us to react to unexpected and uncomfortable experiences with confidence. A "bystander" is a person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part. An "upstander" is someone who recognizes when something is wrong and acts to make it right.

Say: In the offline world, an upstander might physically intervene. In the online world, an upstander has the power to report and stop the behavior, or extend the abuse through inaction or forwarding the content (or retweeting, liking, posting, etc).

Divide youth into groups of 2-3, and instruct them to review the intervention strategies on their sheets.



Ask:

- In what situations might these intervention strategies come in handy?
- Can you imagine yourself using these? If not, how would you edit them to be most useful?
- Which of these strategies might work best when communicating online? When communicating offline?

In their small groups, ask youth to practice using the intervention strategies on the sheet or that they came up with. Explain that they should use the guides in the intervention strategies to form their own reactions to the following scenarios:

• Your friend texts you that he has a nude photo of a girl you to go school with on his phone. He is about to send it to you.

- What would you do if he sent it to you with no introduction?

• You're hanging out at a friend's house. You're on the internet and he wants to pull up some porn.



Upstander Intervention Strategies Handout

Humor

- Diffuses tension in an intervention.
- Displays confidence and comfort.

"I" Statements

- Three parts: 1) state your feelings, 2) name the behavior, 3) state how you want the person to respond.
- Example: I don't like that sort of thing. Please don't do that anymore.
- Focuses on your feelings rather than criticizing the other person's actions.

Silence/non-response

- You don't have to speak to communicate, sometimes body language is more powerful than words.

"Bring it Home"

- Prevents someone from either distancing themselves from the impact of their actions or depersonalizing a victim or situation.
- Example: "I hope no one is sharing pictures of you without your knowledge or permission," or "How do you know if this porn actress is a victim of human trafficking or sexual abuse?"

"We're friends, right ... "

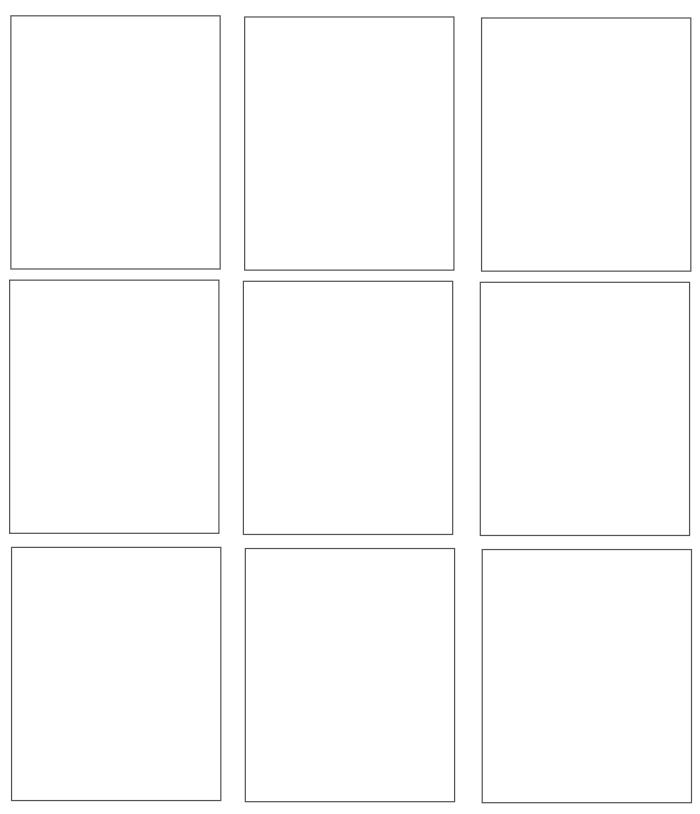
- Reframe the situation in a caring, non-critical way.
- Example: "Hey, as your friend I gotta tell you that watching this doesn't set you up for healthy and successful romantic relationships. How about let's focus on offline relationships?"

Distraction

- Snaps someone out of a problematic situation by changing the subject or activity.



Storyboard Handout







Internet Safety Pledge for 6-12th Grade Youth

I pledge to be an ethical, respectful, responsible, and resilient digital citizen.



- I spend time with my friends and family without technology, media, or screens.
- I keep a list of my favorite things to do without technology.
- I take regular breaks from screens.
- I maintain good posture when using digital devices.



- I respect the creative property of others by using legal websites to watch TV and movies or listen to music.
- I cite my sources when using others' content or information in a school project.
- I consume content that supports my body and brain's healthy development.



- I protect my privacy. I share my personal information (like my age, full name, address, phone number, name of school, passwords, or images) online only with my parents permission.
- I protect my privacy by customizing privacy settings in my online profiles and services.



- I post things that create a positive reputation.
- I know that nothing online is private.
- I only post images of or text about my friends online that creates positive reputation.



- I am kind online, and offline.
- I take 10 deep breaths before posting something when I feel angry or upset.
- I only share images of others with their consent.



- I keep passwords to myself.
- I only open links that I recognize.
- I create strong, difficult to guess passwords and change them regularly.



Part of being an ethical, respectful, responsible, and resilient digital citizen is making healthy content choices.

This is what I do if I see porn or unhealthy content:

ALERT myself: This is porn. I know unhealthy content when I see it. **CLOSE** the lid / turn off my device.

TELL a parent or trusted adult. They can help me.

- I ACT when I see something that makes me uncomfortable, embarrassed, or troubled.
- I ACT when I see unhealthy content.
- I ACT if a friend or adult shows me unhealthy content.

Here are some things that I know:

- Telling my parents or trusted adults will never get me in trouble.
- Feeling curious about porn is normal.
- True friends and trustworthy adults will never ask me to look at porn or violence.
- Devices that connect to the internet are used in family spaces like the living room.

Certain parts of my body are private, and private parts have special rules. My body safe boundaries mean that there are only a few people, like parents and doctors, who should see or touch private areas of my body.

I ACT if:

- Someone offers me a reward like money, toys, or treats for something that violates my body safe boundaries.
- Someone threatens to take something good away or do something bad if I won't keep a secret.
- Someone tries to tell me that my body safe boundaries are not important or not normal.

MY NAME:	<u>\</u>
MY SIGNATURE:	



Healthy Content Choices Tips for 6-12th Grade Parents

Written in collaboration with Dr. Megan Maas.

Create a healthy content environment in your home.

The most important tip for fostering healthy relationships with technology in the household is to **establish yourself as a trusted and supportive listener.** We are all able to help youth develop the resilience and skills to navigate the digital environment successfully, despite the social, psychological, and physiological challenges brought up by the violent and sexualized content freely accessible and highly visible to youth online.

Top 10 tips for encouraging healthy content choices

- 1. Be a trusted and supportive listener.
- 2. Implement and continuously reinforce the ACT acronym (Alert, Close, Tell) as a family rule.
- 3. When you learn a child is interacting with harmful content, take time to collect yourself and avoid reacting negatively or with heightened emotion.
- 4. Reaffirm your child's decision to tell you when they see unhealthy content: "Good job telling me. I know this takes courage and you have made a wise choice. Please tell me if something like this happens again."
- 5. Avoid punitive punishments that may discourage youth from coming to you for help or to report a traumatic experience.
- 6. Monitor young children's digital activity and slowly increase online autonomy with age.
- 7. Start early with education about the sexualized and violent digital content they will stumble upon.
- 8. Prepare youth for seeing sexualized content online by educating them about sexual health from an early age.
- 9. Teach youth that nothing online is private. Allow use of digital devices only in public, family spaces not private bedrooms.
- 10. Ask your child about their friends' exposure to sexualized and violent content. Doing so will demonstrate that you can talk about these topics calmly, and will open the door for future discussions.

Discuss openly with your children that others may encourage secrecy or say not to tell a parent or adult about sharing or using unhealthy content. Talk to your child about how pornography can cause them to feel curious. They might also feel confused, embarrassed, or troubled. Here are some ways to start a conversation with your child:

- Porn can make you have many different feelings, good and bad, and you may want to keep looking for more. That is called attraction. People are meant to feel attraction to others— especially as they get older. But with porn, you feel attracted to pictures without any relationship or person. That makes you not pay attention to the people around you or not enjoy them as much.
- There is a better choice. When you see porn and if you feel like hiding it, remember: TELL. That will help protect you.





Please watch the *Healthy Content Choices Leader Video*, found at iKeepSafe's Youtube channel "<u>Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content</u>", for detailed background and tips.

Why should parents encourage healthy content choices?

The media environment today is significantly different than it was 30, and even 10, years ago. At some point, anyone who uses technology will come across unhealthy content. A great deal of online content is violent and sexualized – and it is important to know that the pornography freely available today is not like what used to be in magazines. Internet users do not have to search long to find what can be shocking sexual violence.

The Three A's of Internet Porn:

Available Affordable Anonymous

Preparing youth for healthy social and sexual relationships, regardless of when or with whom those relationships begin for them, means developing the skills and habits with technology that will support their healthy development. It is important to note that these skills are important for boys and girls alike; girls are almost as likely to be using porn as boys.

Solidifying your child's healthy content lessons

Parents can help reinforce the lessons their children learned about making healthy content choices by discussing, creating, and keeping household expectations regarding healthy content choices. Reviewing the *Healthy Content Leader Videos* and *Public Health Research Summary* prepares you to enter conversations about violent and sexualized digital content with helpful background information and strategies. This is key in order to overcome any discomfort yourself, and to minimize the embarrassment and shame felt by your children.

Work together to come up with a list of rules for internet and media use. Where possible use your child's own words to frame the rules in positive and proactive ways. This list may provide a guide to support this activity.

- I know that I will never be punished for talking to my parents about uncomfortable experiences with unhealthy content or sexual situations.
- I use devices and go online only in family areas not in bathrooms or bedrooms.
- I ACT when I see pornographic and violent content online.
- I never post nude photos of myself online or send them to friends, and I tell a parent if anyone asks for nude photos of me.

Becoming comfortable educating youth about the content they will see online and encouraging healthy content choices in them is a vital responsibility for parents in the digital culture. Emphasize the importance of this skill as it relates to the success of their current and future relationships, including romantic relationships.





Why encourage Healthy Content Choices? Public Health Research Summary

Kids' bodies, minds, and relationships are influenced by their digital content consumption. Exposure to pornography and violent media is an aspect of technology that needs to be addressed for teens and kids. Whether exposure was accidental or intentional, it is a normative experience for young people; 93% of boys and 62% of girls see online pornography during adolescence.¹ Though individual reactions vary, most youth report feeling both discomfort (embarrassment, shame, surprise, disgust) and sexual excitement.² Overall, the available research on pornography consumption shows negative outcomes and correlates for young people across key social andphysiological developmental indicators.

Bodies

Viewing sexualized content conditions future sexual behavior; the body and brain learn patterns by responding cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally to sexual stimuli.³ Porn users may need to engage in certain sex acts that are popular in porn in order to maintain arousal.⁴

Brain Development

Adolescents have heightened responses to incentives (i.e. chemical rewards for behavior), occurring in the limbic system or "feeling brain," while impulse control and frontal lobes are relatively immature.⁵ Their brains are are also hungry for stimulation.⁶ For kids and teens, repeated viewing of pornographic and violent content during this time of intense brain development can write (or rewrite) the pleasure and reward neural pathways in the brain to react to and desire this content.⁷ This rewiring happens through neuroplasticity – the brain's ability to reorganize itself and form new neural connections in response to new situations and changes in the environment. There is overlap between brain regions involved in processing natural rewards and drugs of abuse, which may shed light on why behavioral and drug-related compulsions manifest in similar symptoms.^{8,9}

Relationships

The depictions of sex, sexuality, and gender in popular media and pornography is a source of concern for many. Content analyses of popular pornography reveal close to universal verbal and physical violence against women, and common portrayals of women as objects whose purpose is to sexually gratify men.^{10,11} Extreme and violent sex acts are the norm in the pornography industry, and even in "alternative" pornography that aims to challenge elements of popular pornography,² this norm persists.¹² This unmediated sexual information presents a risk to young people, who are very attracted to sexual media and whose sexual schemas are consciously and unconsciously formed by the content they consume.¹³ This means sexualized content eventually shapes young people's judgments, attitudes, and behaviors.¹⁴ Once sexual attitudes are accustomed to what is represented in porn, users can develop greater sexual arousal and craving for this type of experience – regardless of whether or not the user is experiencing a sexual relationship in reallife as well.¹⁵



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Recommendations for Intervention

Many young people seek pornography intentionally, for sexual stimulation or simply for information.¹⁶ In order for media literacy programs to mediate the social and physiological developmental risks that come from young people processing and mimicking the cues in pornographic and violent media, they must identify and address factors that reduce likelihood of youth adopting behavioral scripts from such content.^{17,18}

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Healthy Content Choices & Cyberbalance Links Guide

Download all Leader Guides at <u>https://ikeepsafe.org/scouting/</u>

Teaching Healthy Content Choices to K-5th Grade Youth

• *iKeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content* (Find leader and youth videos here) -

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCl70ryDObauySEf2PrmaJx9CwMm3zFk

• Faux Paw and a Time to Act PDF https://ikeepsafe.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Faux-Paw-and-a-Time-to-ACT.pdf

Teaching Healthy Content Choices to 6-12th Grade Youth

• *iKeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content* (Find leader and youth videos here) -

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCl70ryDObauySEf2PrmaJx9CwMm3zFk

• The Science of Pornography Addiction video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ya67aLaaCc&feature=youtu.be

Teaching Cyberbalance to K-5th Grade Youth

• *iKeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Teaching Cyberbalance to Youth* (Find leader and youth videos here) -

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCl70ryDObbUS12WQGishnLW8iiVLs53

• Faux Paw Goes to the Games PDF http://ikeepsafe.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Faux-Paw-Goes-to-the-Games-FP3.pdf

Teaching Cyberbalance to 6-12th Grade Youth

• *KeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Teaching Cyberbalance to Youth* (Find leader and youth videos here) -

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCI70ryDObbUS12WQGishnLW8iiVLs53

