

# ARE YOUR KIDS NAKED ONLINE?

How to protect your tech-savvy  
kids from online self-destruction

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# INTRODUCTION



## The Why Behind The Book

**W**ow, we bet you are wondering why in the world anyone would title a book, *Are Your Kids Naked Online?* Well, it did grab your attention, right? Just the word “naked” invokes a head-turning reaction with pretty much everyone, no matter what your political or religious beliefs. Everyone from all walks of life knows the basic meaning of “naked,” which is unclothed or bare. In addition, in the world we live in today, just about everyone has heard of someone, whether it’s a friend’s child, a family member’s child, a co-worker’s child, or some celebrity, having nude photos show up online, whether intentional or leaked.

However, naked means more than just “unclothed.” Some of the synonyms for naked are: unprotected, uncovered, exposed, unguarded, vulnerable, helpless, weak, powerless, defenseless, and open to attack.<sup>1</sup>

## **ARE YOUR KIDS NAKED ONLINE?**

This book is about much more than naked photos of your children showing up online. When we say “naked online,” we are also referring to the following:

- **Naked—Ignorant:** Not knowledgeable about the real dangers when it comes to social media, chats, the dark web, and online gaming
- **Naked—Defenseless:** No protective mechanisms in place to help prevent or detect problems, both physical (monitoring tools, parental controls) and mental
- **Naked—Unprotected:** Parent or other adults not involved and engaged in teaching, positive communication, ongoing dialogue, and support
- **Naked—Vulnerable:** Sharing private information that can endanger their lives and possibly even expose them to predators
- **Naked—Powerless:** Feeling like there is nowhere to go when something is wrong and that their parents will just yell and scream at them
- **Naked—Helpless:** Feeling like no one would understand them and they would be judged by the adults in their lives for their carelessness
- **Naked—Unguarded:** Not able to see the consequences or think of the long-term consequences of their decisions

- Naked—Bare: Sending inappropriate photos, videos, or text messages that can open them up to criminal charges, predators, and sex trafficking

Most children today know more than their parents when it comes to technology. However, just because they are tech-savvy doesn't mean they are wise. The majority of kids today are young and immature. If we are all honest, we will remember that when we were young, we weren't all that "wise" either. Lisa Good, one of the authors of this book, recently gave a speech at NASDAQ where she talked about drag racing when she was sixteen years old and having her car taken away and sold. That sounds crazy and reckless, right? Yes, it was—especially for someone who was an "A" student, never got in trouble, and didn't "break" the rules. Even the smartest, most "mature" kids make some unwise decisions. It comes with the territory of being a child. Sometimes their emotions get the best of them, like what happened with Lisa, or just the lack of age that brings experience and wisdom gets the best of them. But in the online digital world we live in today, those emotions and mistakes can have life-altering repercussions. The stakes are high.

Why in the world did we write this book? After all, we work with businesses managing their computer networks, security, and technology infrastructure; consulting on new technology projects; providing compliance and security audits; minimizing their technology risk; and protecting their technology assets. We aren't psychologists or school counselors.



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In addition to our technical expertise, we are also parents of four (just four) children, two sons and two daughters, who at the time of this writing are all teenagers.

In our twenty-plus years of business, we have had the privilege of working with entrepreneurs, politicians, celebrities, and business owners in every industry and of every size. The one commonality between them all is we often found ourselves sitting across from them having a very serious conversation—a conversation that had nothing to do with their business technology and everything to do with their children, their nieces, nephews, or grandchildren and technology.

*Some of those conversations were heart-breaking.*

“She sent an inappropriate picture to her boyfriend and he shared it with the entire football team. She tried to commit suicide. Is there any way to get those photos back?”

“He was at a party after the senior prom and some friends talked him into smoking weed. Photos were posted online, and now the college wants to rescind his scholarship. We can’t afford to send him without that scholarship.”

“My daughter and her best friend had a disagreement and they both said some things online while angry. The school suspended my daughter and is considering expelling her. The school said that what she posted was considered bullying, and they have a zero tolerance

policy. They don't care about the context or what her friend wrote. She is only in seventh grade. This could ruin her future."

"My son and his friends were looking at pornography on his school laptop. He's been suspended from school and the police have been called. Apparently, there are pornographic images of children on his laptop."

*Other conversations felt more like covert Q&A sessions.*

"Is there a way to put a tracking device on my daughter's phone without her knowing or finding it? She says she's going to the library, but she never brings home any books."

"Can I have the web camera on my son's computer set up to record when my son's friends come over without the light glowing or them noticing that it's on? I think they may be smoking weed in the house."

"My son posted something incredibly dumb on Instagram, should I call him out publicly and post my response? Or, how do I get him to remove it completely?"

Through every conversation, we applied the same principles we used to tackle their business technology issues on their super-smart, tech-savvy children's technology issues, except for one thing: we were parents, too. While our children hadn't made the mistakes

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some of their children had, we knew they weren't infallible, and we could imagine the heartbreak these parents were going through.

Those conversations and promptings from clients to help other parents they knew are what brought this book to life.

We aren't perfect parents, but we love our children, and we know other parents love their children as well. We do not know of a single parent that would consider sending their child naked to school or to the mall, yet how often are children being sent naked into the online digital world? No parent wants their child to suffer because of a foolish mistake, but yet our children and all the children growing up in this new digital world are held to that standard. We are IT and security experts, who are also parents, who want to help you protect your children from online self-destruction.

This book is designed to provide you with the basic knowledge of today's digital landscape in which children live. It is also designed to provide suggestions, tips, and tools to help you protect your child, or children—if you are like us and have more than one. We know that sometimes things slip out of control. Maybe you never set rules or boundaries, and now you are seeing negative behavior that is concerning. Or perhaps your child may have already made some mistakes with their cell phone. Many chapters in this book have a “What You Can Do” section at the end with tips and suggestions.

While we can't cover every possible situation you may

encounter, we have tried to cover the most common ones.

Remember, you are preparing your children to be independent thinkers and problem solvers. No parent wants their children to be twenty-somethings who need a parent to hold their hand every step of adulthood or are still living at home in the basement on their computer all day playing games in their underwear. The teaching and training you do now will help your child make good decisions on their own when they leave and become responsible, connected citizens of this digital world.

With a little bit of guidance, many conversations, and a lot of prayers, it is our hope that your children can thrive, flourish, and succeed in this digital world in which they live without catastrophic consequences and with their future bright and intact.



# CHAPTER 1



## Times Have Changed

**T**imes certainly have changed since we were kids. Sure, we had computers, but what we had, we had to program. Does anyone remember the first Commodore 64 or Apple computers?

What about the first computer that ran in DOS or Windows 3.1? You certainly weren't taking those computers to your friend's house for the afternoon! The laptops that were out at that time were primarily used by NASA and the military.

None of us knew anything about hacking and the internet as we know it today did not exist. Prior to 1991,<sup>2</sup> the "internet" was only primarily used by those in the education and government sectors, as well as the military.

Cell phones...hmm, when we were younger, the only people who had cell phones were politicians, high-ranking military officials,

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lawyers and celebrities. I'm not sure that even celebrities had cell phones. And when I say "cell phones," I'm talking about those huge things usually shaped like bricks in your car that looked like an extension of your home telephone, curly line and all. You didn't see people walking around the grocery store talking on a phone and you certainly couldn't "text" a message to pick up bread while you were at the store—texting did not exist. In fact, in the late 1980s, cell phones were still an extravagance, and by 1990 only 4 percent of Americans had a cell phone. Smartphones didn't even hit the market until 2005.

If you haven't guessed by now, we were born in the 1970s. (Our kids like to say, "in the Jurassic Era"—I can hear my parents snickering now...)

Our kids look at us shocked and then laugh when we tell them what it was like growing up, way back then.

"You had no cell phone? What did you do when you were at the grocery store and couldn't remember something? What, you had to have a written list? If you forgot something you had to walk back? Seriously?!? How did you tell your friends that you were going to go to the movies? What, you had to preplan everything and stick to the plan? What if you changed your mind? You had to buy cassette tapes or records for music? There was no streaming or iTunes? What *did you do* for fun?"

It's almost like they think we lived in a cave, sat around, and

picked our teeth with dinosaur bones!

The advancement of technology has been great. Seriously, I cannot imagine going to the grocery store without my “smart” phone! All the moms reading this are nodding their heads in agreement. However, that advancement has brought along dangers which we as parents never had to deal with—dangers that did not exist when we were kids, and dangers that can have serious consequences. And I don’t mean the kind where you were at a party on Friday night and drank too much and now everyone at school on Monday is going to laugh at you for vomiting all over the place.

The dangers our kids face today with technology are life-changing and can be life ending. The rate of drug overdose and addiction, thanks in part to kids being able to purchase drugs on the dark web online anonymously, has doubled since 2015,<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, while suicide for kids between the ages of ten and twenty-four has tripled since 2015.<sup>4</sup> It is no surprise that those statistics coincide with the 24/7/365 online life that consumes our kids today.

While every generation has encountered and dealt with peer pressure, bullying, and child predators, the social media world that our children live in today has taken these three matters to an unprecedented level. Prior to social media, when kids had a disagreement or a fight with a friend, they might share it with another close friend and their parents. They would go home, sleep on things,



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have time to let the dust settle, so to speak, and then, most times, they would work things out or come to some type of understanding.

In today's digital world, both parties involved will be posting, tweeting, and sharing their side of the story in the heat of the moment with whatever words they want to type. Every one of their friends, followers, and peers will know what was said between them, whether in person, through text, or on social media. They may even include screenshots of text messages and post audio or video of their disagreement, anything that will help them win the battle on social media in that moment.

Unfortunately, most times what began as a simple misunderstanding, which could have been cleared up if both parties would have had some time to think about what really happened, turns into a friendship-ending event and—even worse—becomes a bitter grudge. Neither child wants to look foolish or be perceived as wrong on social media to their friends or followers. If they share the same group of friends, their friends now feel obligated to pick sides. It is a vicious cycle that can have deadly consequences. Suicides from online shaming, bullying, and fights are on the rise.

Now, we are not going to tell you that you should pull your kids off the internet or take their computers and iPhones away, even though for some parents (and their children), that would be the best course of action. However, for most parents today, that point in time has passed. What we will tell you is that you can protect your kids in

today's digital world, even though your kids are way smarter than you about today's technology and the digital world in which we now live. Some things may not be easy, but our job as parents isn't supposed to be easy.

It starts with open, honest, and frank discussions with your children. You also need to be aware and involved as a parent. You may say, "I have teens" or "It's too late." To that we say, it's never too late! It may be a bit more challenging depending on your relationship with your child, but if they are still alive, it is *not* too late.

The "Just Say No" and D.A.R.E. campaigns against drugs were failures. Even though the intentions were good, there are facts and data<sup>5</sup> to prove that they were not successful. While technology itself is not a drug, studies<sup>6</sup> show that the way a person's brain reacts to the internet, specifically social media, is similar to the way one with a substance use disorder reacts to stimulation from drugs. The same dopamine spike that people with real drug and alcohol addictions experience is happening to our children who are living their lives 24/7/365 on the internet and social media.

Did you know that social media and its addictive behavior doesn't just affect behavior during the day? According to the Trends in Consumer Mobility Report,<sup>7</sup> which studies consumers' behaviors toward gadgets, approximately 71 percent of Americans sleep with or next to their cell phones, with 55 percent of those being teenagers. About 10 percent of teens check their phones more than ten times

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per night for social media updates. Is it any wonder why children today are drinking four and five Monster energy drinks or Starbucks just to make it through their day?

For most parents in today's age, it is not realistic to take a "just say no" approach with their children and technology. Most kids cannot just "say no to technology"; 90 percent<sup>8</sup> of all jobs today require some knowledge of technology. What we can and should be doing as parents is talking about what can happen when we use technology in the wrong ways, the dangers that exist with technology, and how the internet is not all rainbows and unicorns—it's not a 100 percent safe place.

Just like we teach our kids about talking to strangers, being aware of their surroundings, looking both ways before crossing the street, and being careful of the friends with whom they hang out, these same lessons and basic principles need to be applied and taught for technology use. We can limit the age at which they get technology and begin using technology. We can also limit the use of technology in our homes—after all, it's your home, your rules. (Oh, my, I just sounded like my father....)

While schools have incorporated lessons on technology, they can't possibly cover everything, and the reality is, as a parent it is *your responsibility* to teach and protect your child (or children) from the dangers of technology.

**If you still don't think it's important to teach your kids about internet safety, here are a few statistics:**

- One in ten kids under age ten have seen pornography online.<sup>9</sup>
- Pornography searches increase by 4,700 percent when kids are using the internet in the hours after school ends.<sup>9</sup>
- Children under the age of ten account for 22 percent of online porn consumption for the age group of children zero to eighteen years old.<sup>9</sup>
- Forty-four percent of kids ages eight to sixteen years old have hidden their online activity from their parents, and the proportion increases as kids get older.<sup>10</sup>
- Seventy percent of parents whose kids have hidden their online activity are unaware of what their kids are doing on the internet.<sup>10</sup>
- Thirteen percent of kids have accessed inappropriate content when their parents were not at home.<sup>10</sup>
- Twenty-two percent said they have used anonymizers, or anonymous proxy tools, to make their internet activity untraceable.<sup>10</sup>
- Fourteen percent reported that they downloaded applications that hid the apps they open.<sup>10</sup>
- One in seven children between the ages of twelve and seventeen have sent a “sext” (naked photo).<sup>11</sup>

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- One in four children between the ages of twelve and seventeen have received a “sext” (naked photo).<sup>11</sup>

When working with a business, we look at protecting clients like the layers of an onion. Each device or service used to protect the client adds an additional layer of protection to the business, and the more layers you have, the greater the protection. As a parent, you also need to look at protecting your children just like the layers of an onion. The more layers you have, the better your child will be protected. With your children, there are two main types or layers of protection.

The first type of protection is the physical layer. Just like you have locks on the doors, an alarm system, and smoke/fire alarms at your home or business, the equivalent for today’s parent is monitoring software, parental controls, a business-grade firewall that your tech-savvy kids and their friends can’t get past (or would take them a lot of effort to bypass), online reports, etc.

The second type of protection would be the communication and mental layer. This includes ongoing open communication, education of digital dangers, teaching appropriate online use, and the most critical: building a bond of trust so that when something goes wrong, they will come and talk to you or another adult in their life.

Parenting in today’s digital world is a new frontier, similar

to exploring the deep ocean. There is no map, the terrain changes sometimes without notice, and you never know what can be lurking around the corner. It's best to make sure everyone in the submarine (your home) is prepared.