DIGITAL PARENTING GUIDE TO ESPORTS

ESPORTS, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

If your child is a gamer, then he/she may imagine monetizing their gaming like their favorite players with channel donations, personal endorsement and branding deals. Gaming enthusiasts also have a host of other well-paid career options in the gaming world to consider, from programmer to artist and live production roles. Your video gaming child can go from an everyday gamer to a lucrative career! Esports is coming to a high school near you, either as a club or as a Varsity lettered sport! Pretty soon, your kid may ask to play video games in school leagues. Here's what you should know as you consider this new after school activity:

ESPORTS ARE LIKE TRADITIONAL SPORTS

Esports games are similar to playing on a team sport with multiple players. You would not expect your child to leave in the middle of a competitive sports game, letting teammates down, but would make sure that there is enough time to finish. Likewise, there is no pause button in live online gaming! So, asking your child to end an online game before a new level is reached is akin to walking off the field in the middle of a team game.

THE BENEFITS OF MULTIPLAYER GAMES

Time spent with friends immersed in creative and strategic game-playing worlds can sustain and grow the friendships and relationships in your child's life. More than that, in video games, your child is also learning how to compromise, follow rules, take turns, resolve conflicts, and solve problems. Gaming worlds are a social event amongst friends, as well as a challenge of skill and a competition within a larger community.

SOCIAL INTERACTION & ONLINE GAMING

Your child may be playing with friends or family, but may also be playing with other gamers from anywhere in the world. Many of the online games are designed with built-in voice/video/chat functions. As a parent, have conversations with your child about what he or she may hear, see or experience in the gaming world and let them know when they need to alert you for help.

PLAY GAMES & YOU WILL UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD'S LOVE OF GAMING

Play with your kids and show them that their gaming worlds are not an alternative to real life, just one fun aspect of it! By letting yourself get immersed into this world, you can better explain your concerns to your gamer and he/she may very well understand and respect the limits that you establish. And, hopefully, you can end the power struggles with your child, leaving the battles for the game itself.

KEEP CALM & GAME ON

Today's kids are future game enthusiasts and game developers, not to mention the tech leaders of tomorrow. What they learn now about the good and the bad about gaming will shape the games that come for the next generation. More importantly, the ways our future virtual—and IRL—personas interact with each other is being shaped right now on video consoles throughout the world.

As a parent of a young person in the digital age, you are a Digital Parent and you have to teach your child how to live with technology responsibly. As a Digital Parent, you should be watching what your child is doing online and regularly initiating 'The Tech Talk' to teach personal cyber safety and cyber ethics. Savvy Cyber Kids' free ongoing series, *The Digital Parenting Guide to Technology*, helps you get the talk started. It's up to you to teach your child how to engage with the digital world. When it comes to keeping your child safe while gaming, every family can and should make their own judgements, even from child to child, about what constitutes cyber safety and cyber ethics in the family home.

TIPS FOR MANAGING ONLINE GAMING IN YOUR HOME

TELL YOUR CHILD

- Their gamer tag should not reveal their name, age or gender. They should never reveal where they live or what school they go to. Email addresses, phone numbers, photos of their face and gaming account passwords are also off-limits.
- Your child should also implicitly understand that they should never accept an invitation to communicate with another gamer they do not know on a non-gaming platform or app.
- Remind your child that a stranger is ALWAYS a stranger, even when online interactions may make them seem familiar. In the online world, you never truly know who is behind the screen.
- Encourage your child to use respectful and appropriate behavior when gaming. Be sure that your child understands that you are available to them if someone makes them feel uncomfortable when playing a game.
- Most importantly, your child should never, EVER agree to meet up with a stranger offline.

AS A PARENT, BE SURE TO

- Set and share family time limits for gaming. Letting your child know when dinner time is or when you need to leave for an appointment—and offering a reminder prior to the end time—will help your child proactively plan how they game.
- Be concerned by your child's gaming habits not from the number of hours played but by behavioral characteristics like withdrawal, compulsion, lying and a shift of values.
- Do due diligence and read game reviews that will alert you to potential risks of each game or gaming platform used by your child. For each game that your child plays, be sure that you understand all the ways that strangers could interact with your child. Make sure that you know who your child is playing with and regularly review the nature of the communications.
- Understand the content of each game, before your child starts playing, and decide if it is appropriate for your child.
- Review what parental controls, especially the ones that further your child's privacy while playing, are available to you for each game and gaming console that your child uses. Exercise the controls that make sense depending on your child's age and for your family. For each game, review how to report inappropriate behavior.