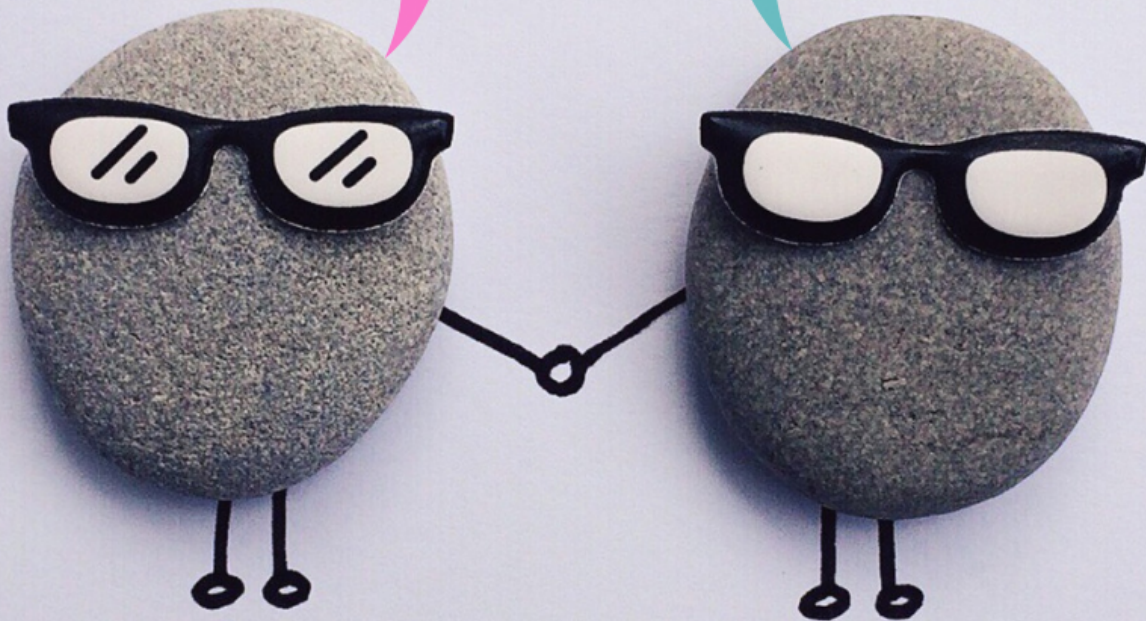


Why did you post that? 😡

Why didn't you text me back? 🙋



Friends with Everyone ...

Tween Small Group

Week 11: "Friending"

Friendship Filters: Social Media/Texting

ACTIVITY: Hashtag Buttons

Supplies: Customizable Buttons, markers

Follow Directions Below:

Today, we're having a funny hashtag context. Whoever can think of the most creative or funniest hashtag wins. Hashtags tell us what's trending. When we post on social media, or text others, we tell other people a lot about who we are. Make sure your digital footprints are spreading kindness.

Digital Drama.

"As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." Colossians 3:12 NIV

It is NOT OK to argue over text messages or on social media. It's not OK to insult people, make fun, or say anything we wouldn't say out loud and face to face to someone in a digital format. If it's not kind, be quiet. We all get angry and lose our patience, but when we treat each other poorly in public, it's a bad reflection of our hearts. Paul tells us in Colossians 3:12 to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. *This is really hard.* No-one is expecting us to be perfect, but we have to try, and we need to apologize when we lose our patience, gentleness, humility, kindness, and compassion with others. Especially over text messages or social media. Everything we do is meant to honor God. Think about that every time you go to post something or text someone.

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN: "Consider the power of your presence in another person's life."

Say What?!

"You are the God who sees me." Genesis 16:13a NIV

God make an incredible promise to Abraham! Everything looked like it was going to turn out ok, right?! Easy peasy, just wait on the Lord! Well, in Genesis 16, Sarah becomes impatient with the Lord. Instead of waiting on God, she takes matters into her own hands, and asks Abraham to have a child with her maidservant! Can you believe it? AND THEN ... Sarah became jealous of her servant Hagar after she became pregnant. Hagar fled, and an angel found her and reassured her God saw her pain and mistreatment. This is what "You are the God who sees me" means. Even when others mistreat us, God sees us. Digital communication is not as easy to understand as face to face or voice to voice communication. It's not good to compare our lives with others, or be jealous of the way we think they are or their lives are based on what they post or text. Get to know people for who they

really are, and choose to value the opinion of those who know who you really are. On the flip side, when we mistreat others ... God sees us!

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN: "Keep the conversation going.

Spark in the Dark.

"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love." John 15:10

Digital communication isn't going away, so we need to make sure we are learning how to be responsible with it. Group texts are a convenient way to communicate, but having good manners is really important.

1. Remember to respect the lives of others. Don't text late at night when people are ...or should be ...sleeping.

2. When you're just talking to one person in a group chat, start a private conversation.

3. When you text someone, give them time to respond. Don't freak out if they don't get back to you right away! Maybe they are away from their phone ...or in the bathroom ...or got it taken away. Be patient, and don't assume the worst.

4. Read your texts out loud before you send them. You might find it doesn't sound the same when you read it as it did when you wrote it. It's important to be careful with our words, especially when they can be screenshot and saved to show others. Don't say anything on social media or in a text that you wouldn't mind your whole class reading. Not unless you *REALLY SUPER DUPER TOTALLY AND ABSOLUTELY* trust the person you are talking to.

5. Don't befriend people on social media that are not your friends in real life.

6. Don't post pictures you wouldn't want your mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, pastor, priest, or principal to see. If it's online ... anyone can access it. There are many ways to hack into private accounts.

7. Be positive! Use your online presence to encourage others! Post motivational quotes and things to make others smile. Compliment people ...go out of your way to be kind. It makes a big difference.

See social media for what it is ... a fun way to keep in touch and communicate. It's not a complete representation of who you are, or anyone else. It's not the place to argue or criticize. But it can be used for good by spreading a little kindness and cheer to those who need it. When you see someone post something mean or obnoxious, choose to forgive, and remember ...you are always forgiven and never loved less. If someone posts something

mean or untrue about you, talk to someone you trust about it, and consider unfollowing or unfriending that person ... maybe leaving that group text. It's OK to have boundaries. It's not mean ... it's wise.

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN: "You are always forgiven, and never loved less."

Parents:

We are all in this together. Each kid, each family, is different, but we are all facing the same challenges as we raise our tweens in the digital age. Stay engaged in your child's life. If they have a phone and are on social media, diligently patrol it (have all logins and passwords.) It's better to catch and learn from mistakes right now while they are figuring out how to navigate the digital world. Don't be afraid to take it away, or wipe apps off of their phones. This is not the time to be their friend. They need us to set boundaries to protect them from things they don't understand or know about.

Trust your instincts as a parent, and try not to compare your decisions to that of others. Kids mature at all different rates during the tween years. There's no one way that works for everyone. Statistics show it's unhealthy for kids to have their phones in their rooms at night. Even if they are not scrolling through them, the light given off by text alerts disrupts their sleep cycle. Set a limit to the amount of time they are allowed to be on their devices, and have a family charging station in a neutral location where everyone plugs them in at the end of the day.

Can I be honest with you? It's a lot of work. It's one more thing I don't have time for. It's inconvenient. But I see the good results from parents that have gone before me, and I know the work is worth it. More powerful than our words is the example we set. Personally, having to instill rules with my children holds me accountable to apply the same habits in my own life. We can all use a little more accountability, digitally. Above all, prayer is powerful. Here is a prayer to pray over our children in this digital age:

Father,

You go before us, behind us, and ahead of us. What lies unknown to us, You have the ability to reveal. Show us how to be the parents our children need in this digital age of information overload. Protect them from predators and hackers, cyber bullies and meanness. Guard their hearts and minds from images, videos, posts and games that can harm their psyche and attack their self-worth. When they are tempted to crack under peer pressure, uphold them. Be their strength when they face adversity, and surround them with good friends that build them up and inspire them to be all they can be. Father, we pray our kids know You see them, hear them, and are always with them. Help them to be honest when they are pressed to bend the truth, and kind when they feel the pressure to be cruel. In this digital age, we are attempting to guide our children through something we're going through alongside of them. Help us to handle it in all in a way that honors You, God. Be our strength. Give us wisdom.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Resources for Parents:

Common Sense Media <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/social-media/age/tweens>

Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/artificial-maturity/201803/parents-guide-social-media-use-kids>

parenting.com: <https://www.parenting.com/gallery/social-media-monitoring-kids>

Safe Search Kids: <https://www.safesearchkids.com/parents-guide-to-protecting-teens-on-social-media/#.XNtW1C-ZP64>