READY to LAUNCH
Empowering Young People to Thrive Online

Think about how young people learn to drive:
Understand the rules of the road. Get your permit. Drive with an adult. Keep practicing with an adult until you pass a road test. Then, hit the road.

As parents, we try to establish a solid foundation that keeps our kids safe when starting to drive. We are confident in their abilities because we have prepared them.

Like learning to drive, there are milestones for kids and teens as they begin to experience life online. When a kid moves from tween to teen, they have access to many more platforms because they are no longer covered by a law called COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act), which was adopted in 1998 to regulate the online collection and use of personal information from children under the age of 13.

This "aging up" is significant in the online world and represents a distinct shift for young people, but there is no manual, permit, or driving test.

This is their time to take the wheel. You may have already started these conversations, teaching them about privacy, safety, digital citizenship and media literacy during their childhood. And, remember, it's never too late to have these conversations! You are their guide to help them navigate the online world safely and explore the ways in which online life can be empowering.

Here are three ways you can support them during this transition.
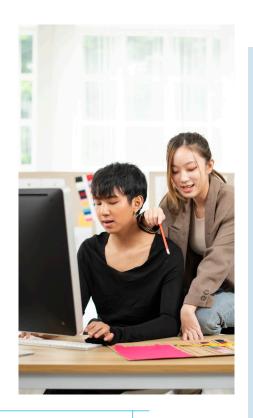
1. CREATE CONNECTION
In The Digital Wellness Lab's 2022 Pulse Survey Adolescent Media Use: Attitudes, Effects, and Online Experiences, almost 50% of young people surveyed reported that social media improved their friendships, and almost 80% said social media made them feel connected. The online world, especially social media, is a wonderful way to stay connected with friends and family. It can be an incredibly effective and welcoming place to build community with others that share interests and hobbies. Teens can learn a lot about building relationships, communication, and connection interacting with people online. **Encouraging your teen to reach out to friends and family is a great way to guide them toward the social aspects of the online world that can be really beneficial.**

NAMLE — National Association for Media Literacy Education

ROBLOX

2. EXPLORE CREATIVITY

In the 2022 report Demystifying Teens Online Interactions, published by Internet Matters in partnership with Roblox, teens were open about how they spent their time online, and how important creativity and learning new things was to them. User-generated content (UGC) platforms such as Roblox provide a range of positive activities available to do online. Some examples include the Alo Sanctuary, where visitors can join free yoga lessons, guided meditation and mindfulness, or the Digital Fashion design course (in partnership with Parson's School of Design) where creators learn how to build the latest looks. In fact, the essence of UGC platforms **is creativity**.

The internet can be a glorious place for imagination and innovation. There is so much to explore and learn. Support your teen by sharing with them websites, videos, apps and games that align with their interests. Is your teenager interested in photography? Share some suggestions about interesting photo accounts to follow. Does your kid love to bake? Forward some baking videos to them. **Guide them to explore creativity online.**

3. BUILD IDENTITY

Pew Research Center published the report Connection, Creativity, and Drama: Teen Life on Social Media in 2022 in which they explored teens' nuanced thoughts and experiences with social media. One teen participant shared that social media "connects me with the world, provides an outlet to learn things I otherwise wouldn't have access to, and allows me to discover and explore interests." This sentiment was shared by others and shows the important role online experiences can play in teens' development. The teen years are key years to develop one's identity. Discovering what your interests are is part of adolescence.

Immersive online worlds, like Roblox, afford your teen access to so much amazing content to discover. They can also provide a space to feel welcomed and accepted. Teens are inclined to explore who they are and who they want to be. **Accepting that this discovery happens partially online for teens today is necessary, and it's a great way to be supportive during these years of discovery.**

A lot of changes happen for young people once they turn 13, and their online life is a significant one of those changes. Parents can support their children by guiding them towards the positive elements of the digital world so they can build upon the foundation of skills they already have. Remember, as a parent, you'll be there to remind them to be safe and keep their eyes on the road.