The internet and social media have become a huge part our dating relationships, friendships, and daily lives. Teenagers stay connected with their friends and family, find validating communities of peers, and access useful information online. Adults can help teenagers navigate the online world by having conversations and brainstorming strategies for supporting young people in developing skills for safe and healthy technology use.

There are communities online. The internet can be a place where young people find community and support that they may not be able to access in person. When our physical communities are not set up to offer the support necessary for healthy and fulfilling relationships, young people will turn to the internet to access resources. LGBTQIA youth often use the internet to explore their identity, find information, and connect to on- and offline communities and services. If your teen is interested in engaging online in this way, you can help them identify safe and trustworthy websites.

Technology plays a huge role in teen relationships. It is common for teens to be in near constant communication with each other online, which means they are likely having important and challenging conversations online as well. There are both benefits and disadvantages to this, and the teens in your life can probably name them. You can be curious with your teen about their experiences communicating online.

Some things we all can do:

- Talk to your teen about what is a reasonable expectation for communicating via text. Many of us check in with friends and families throughout the day. It is an easy way to update schedule changes, or to let someone know you are thinking of them. There is a difference between a healthy amount of communication, and an extreme expectation to be constantly available and responsive. Technology should enhance our lives, not complicate them. When we feel overwhelmed by the number of texts we need to respond to, or anxious about watching every snapchat story, it may be time to reevaluate our technology and social media use.

- Model healthy relationships with technology. Talk about conversations you choose to have in person versus over text or email. How does texting change the conversation? Are there times you try to turn off your phone? Share your own struggles with technology and social media. Perhaps you feel pressure to live up to expectations set by social media, or maybe you posted something or sent a text that you regretted.

- Encourage your kids to not use technology as an "easy out" for hard or challenging conversations (note: technology may be the safest option when trying to end an abusive relationship). Encourage them to talk to a teacher after class about their grade, instead of sending an email. Recommend that they confront a friend about their hurt feelings the next time they are together, rather than over text. Suggest they ask the person they like out on a date at the end of the school day. As adults, they will need to have many of these conversations in person, practicing while they are young will make it easier.