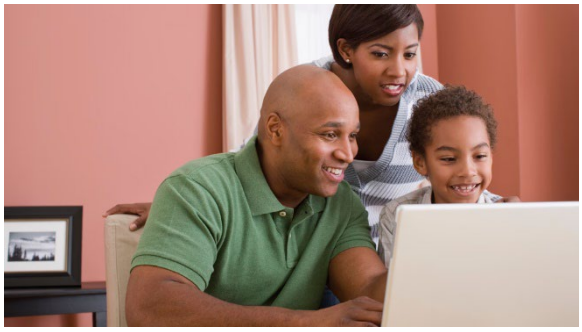
Getting Kids and Teens to Care about Cybersecurity



We all know kids and teens today spend a lot of time online, but that doesn't necessarily mean they know how to stay safe.

Even though they are digital natives, research shows younger generations are at a high risk of falling victim to cybercrimes. How do parents, teachers, and other concerned adults get kids to care about cybersecurity and data privacy? You might say that getting young people to care about anything is pretty hard, but we think a sense of empowerment helps get the message across.

Engage kids with activities

Interactive activities are a great way to introduce cybersecurity concepts to kids and teens. Here are some engaging ideas:

1. Interactive games and simulations: There are online games and simulations designed to teach cybersecurity concepts to children. These interactive tools can make lessons on topics like password security, phishing, handling cyberbullying, and malware detection enjoyable and memorable.
2. Gamify security: Maybe your child will adopt better behaviors if they think of it like living in a spy movie but with more M&Ms and fewer martinis. Who can create the longest, strongest password and store it safely? Use biometrics for next-level, personalized multi-factor authentication like you see on TV. Backup your digital art and stories onto a hard-drive and store it in a safe place in the house. With a little imagination, security can become cinematic.
3. Hands-on projects: Encourage kids to participate in hands-on projects related to cybersecurity. How can they change security settings? What are the signs of a phishing message? What should they do if they find a strange USB drive?

Empower kids to take security into their own hands

Beyond just teaching concepts, you can empower children and teens to actively participate in their online safety. Here are ways to foster empowerment:

1. Be proactive with Core 4: We think our "Core 4" concepts are a great place to start on a cybersecurity journey for people of any age: strong passwords, MFA, keeping software and apps updated, and learning how to identify phishing.
2. Open communication: Create an environment of open communication where children feel comfortable discussing their online experiences and any concerns they may have. You want them to come to you if they encounter troubling content. Encourage them to ask questions about using the web. Provide guidance and support as needed.

3. Responsibility and advocacy: Instill a sense of responsibility regarding cybersecurity. Emphasize that cybersecurity is not just about personal safety but also about being a responsible digital citizen. Encourage kids to advocate for cybersecurity awareness among their peers and within their communities. Maybe they can even start a Cybersecurity Awareness Month campaign with their friends in October!

Kids can stay safe online

We can work together as parents, mentors, guardians and as a society to help kids and teens use the internet securely. We can get them to care about cybersecurity and take an active role. Staying safe online isn't just a computer skill but a life skill. Teaching these skills early enhances online safety and cultivates a mindset of awareness and proactive behavior in the digital world. We can create a more secure online environment for future generations by working together.