Parent Ministry
Right Click
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REVIEW:

The researchers and minds behind *Sticky Faith* are adding to their collection of great family resources with *Right Click*, a handbook for parents in a digital media world. More than just another book to scare parents about the digital age that children are growing up in, this book is a realistic, common sense guide to facing down the digital challenges. Each chapter ends with helpful discussion questions for parents to have a balanced discussion about their family's approach to technology. This book can easily be used in a parenting class, small group, or any setting where parents want to have a discussion about these topics.

SNAPSHOT
Why Right Click?

It is not about "the" right click but "your" right click. It is important to not look for a universal answer but the right answer for each family.

Understand three things about this book and the recommendations in it: 1.) Digital media is still relatively new. 2.) A lot of existing research treats minors, college students or parents and adults as separate categories. 3.) This is especially true when it comes to research on sex, social media, and young people.

The goal should always be relationship, not rules. If a parent's goal is to have great relationship with their kid, media will be in the middle of that somehow. Parents need to seek a way to not make media a divider but rather a common ground. An easy way to do this is by creating a written covenant that is a "consistent consensus about a family's expectations" when it comes to all technology and media.

Why do my kids constantly check their phones?

Research identifies parents as "digital immigrants" and their kids as "digital natives". Adults have transitioned into an age of social media and social technology. Children are born into a world where it has always existed.

In the past, media and technology was passive and engagement was a choice. Parents grew up with time restrictions put on their television watching or time on the phone, but today technology is a multisensory interactive engagement. Parents need to understand what technology has become and it's connection to almost all areas of their child's life.

The question of "why" is answered in an understanding of use and gratification. While parents are concerned about the usage, they are unsure of the underlying gratifications. Children seek various gratifications through their technology usage; parents can find other non-tech ways to meet those felt needs.

A helpful tool in determining usage guidelines is once again through a family covenant. A family covenant will allow parents and children to come to an agreement on how and when technology will be used.

How can I help my family actually be together when we're in the same room?

Parents as "media immigrants" understand what researchers are calling "media rituals"; remember a time when media was designated to a time and place. The TV was in the family room, radio listening happened in the car or bedroom and movies were at a theatre. The uniqueness of this new era of technology is everything is mobile. It is important to create healthy media rituals and routines for a family, which also includes parent's usage as well.

The place to begin is by carving out specific times and places, which are screen-free for the whole family. Screen-free zones teach children about healthy boundaries and relationships.

How can I supervise what my kids are saying and sharing without making them feel like they're under surveillance?

Responsible parents want to know what their children are seeing and who they are interacting with, keeping their children safe. The difference is supervision, not surveillance. Parents want to pay attention to their children's media time, without watching over it.

It comes down to a matter of earning and maintaining trust with their children. Parent's first reaction is restriction, but that can be a double-edge sword. Children living in a digital and technology-saturated world will tend to hide negative experiences or issues, if they know their parent will overreact.
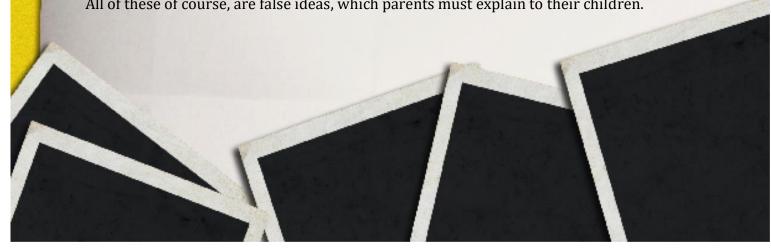
Children should be treated innocent until proven guilty and no matter how often the children fail, parent's reactions are teaching moments. Through the good and bad of technology usage parents have the opportunity to build integrity and trust, online and off.

How can I help my kids become good digital citizens?

When kids see adults using media to feel better about themselves, they likely will follow that example. "Disinhibition effect" is how researchers explain the way people act and interact online that they normally would not act in person.

Parents need to address four misunderstanding in children's minds about social media and the digital world in order to become good digital citizens: 1.) Digital content feels non-permanent. 2.) Digital users can appear anonymous. 3.) Digital interactions seem to lack consequence. 4.) Bad behavior is the status quo.
All of these of course, are false ideas, which parents must explain to their children.

How (and when) can I gracefully take off the media training wheels?

There are three modes parents move through in teaching their children about media and technology.

1. Architect. This is the mode of parents upholding the structure of rules and boundaries of protection while children learn. Architects still have the right to take away a device, turn them off, or stop paying for them.

2. *Mentor.* This mode is of thoughtful engagement allow parents to teach lessons and skills for life through the ups and downs of digital engagement. Parents share wisdom while allowing their children freedom.

3. *Companion.* The final parenting mode is when children mature and grow up. The mode shifts from protector or teacher to interaction.

Each mode and age-range is supported by a healthy, realistic partnership with children, empowering him or her to speak into creating their own boundaries. Some of the keys to this are to continue to talk, invest time in social interaction, and not being afraid about the confusing ever-changing digital world.