

Q&A: Mother of Three Shares Internet Safety Protocol She Implements

I met with Monique Olivas, 32, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, to discuss how she applies internet safety to her children's lives. Olivas has three children, ages four, eight and 14. She has prior experience as a dental assistant and is a current student studying early childhood education. For the last 14 years, Olivas has been a military spouse, embracing several moves and inconsistencies in her life. Still, one constant has been her diligence in keeping her children safe online. In our interview, I gained an understanding of the boundaries and practices she implements that add structure and safety to the lives of her children.



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Greenhill: Do any of your three children use the internet or social media?

Olivas: All three use a lot of internet, but they aren't allowed on social media yet.

Greenhill: Wow, all three. That's so interesting. Even the four-year-old?

Olivas: Yes.

Greenhill: What are they using specifically on the internet?

Olivas: My oldest is in middle school and uses the internet for schoolwork. Her school is internet-based, so all her homework and assignments are done on a laptop provided by the school. In her free time, she uses [Pinterest](#) and [YouTube](#) for crocheting. My middle uses [Prodigy](#), [ABCya!](#), [Roblox](#), and YouTube; she draws online on her iPad. And then my 4-year-old used to use YouTube, but not anymore, and she uses [ABCmouse](#).

Greenhill: Why does she not use YouTube anymore?

Olivas: Um, it's toxic. It made her attention span very short, and her attitude changed. I noticed she was very quick to anger after using YouTube and watching videos. All the videos she watched were unrealistic. For example, she would watch videos of other kids going to Disney Land or opening up toys, which isn't a reality for her.

Greenhill: How does your oldest feel about not being on social media? I am sure many of her friends are on social media.

Olivas: I know many of her friends use [Snapchat](#), which I disagree with. It's probably the worst choice because you can't track anything, and their activity disappears. My oldest got a cell phone when she turned 13; however, she hasn't shown an interest in social media. She does like to watch the shorts [reels and TikToks] on recipes, crocheting, and volleyball videos, which she can view

on YouTube, but other than that, she doesn't show interest in social media. She has never asked because she knows the rules. We have told her at 16, we will revisit the idea and possibly adjust.

Greenhill: So she is still pretty new to having a phone.

Olivas: Yeah, exactly.

Greenhill: It sounds like you thought about this topic beforehand and placed firm boundaries so your children know the rules and what to expect.

Olivas: Right.

Greenhill: Do you ever worry about what your children do or see online?

Olivas: Yes, all the time. Especially my middle child, the 8-year-old. She is timid, and I worry that she won't speak up. What concerns me the most is Roblox — specifically, the comments in the chat rooms.

Greenhill: What is Roblox?

Olivas: So Roblox is an app for online games. There are tons to choose from. For example, you could select an obstacle course. Then you go into a waiting room, and everyone around the world on Roblox who chose that game is in this waiting room waiting to play the game together.

Essentially, you talk in chats, add random people, and go up to characters and chit-chat. Some of

the games are not kid-appropriate. Roblox was initially made for adults, but then it got popular with kids. Eventually, they started to gear games towards children. I worry about what she reads in the chats and who she adds. You don't know who these people are.

[*Is Roblox Safe for Kids? Here's What the Experts Have to Say.*](#)

Greenhill: Are there any parental controls available within that app?

Olivas: I can turn her chats off and turn friend requests off. They have a parenting app, but I have found that there are ways around it for the kids.

Greenhill: Do you ever worry about your middle schooler?

Olivas: No, not really. She's a pretty good rule follower. So, in our house, we have a rule: if I say, "OK, give me your technology," they bring me all their devices; I'm allowed to go through it and see what they have been looking at. I make it an open conversation. I would rather have them come to me first to tell me they came across something, so I include them.

Greenhill: Have any of them ever come to you saying they made a mistake on the internet or came across something potentially dangerous?

Olivas: My oldest has, but my middle [8-year-old] has not. I have busted my 8-year-old from adding people on Roblox or having chats open. But my oldest will come to me if she gets weird text messages or spam calls. She hasn't ever done anything to get in trouble.

Greenhill: It sounds like you have a good system of trust and communication with your oldest.

Olivas: Right. It's hard, but It's necessary with technology. You know, there's technology everywhere.

Greenhill: Are you ever concerned about her having access to the internet at school?

Olivas: No, the school has most websites blocked, and they can only access what they need for their assignments. But she does have a phone. When they turn 14, their iPhone turns back into a regular phone. So all the child privacy stuff goes away.

Greenhill: So when you get an iPhone, you can put in the age of the child using it, and it makes adjustments for age?

Olivas: Yeah, so it's called family sharing. You can block certain apps and set ratings and screen times. It even filters their messages. If it projects nudity, it will block it immediately, and they can't open it. There's a lot of safety features with iPhones.

[What Is Apple Family Sharing and How Do You Use It?](#)

Greenhill: Is there anything you will do differently with your 4-year-old compared to how you handled your oldest?

Olivas: Not currently. The rules I have set in place are working. Although, it depends on the child. So our oldest was very mature for her age and very responsible. To say I am going to give my middle a phone at 13, I don't know. She's already showing signs of being careless, so I think it's case by case. We don't just give you a phone because everyone else has a phone.

Greenhill: Do your 8-year-old's friends have cell phones?

Olivas: A lot of them have those smartwatches. To me, that is just a distraction.

Greenhill: Do you think it would be hard to keep your kids away from the internet?

Olivas: Yes, very much so. You could try at home, but once they go to school they have iPads and laptops.

[*How Important is Technology in Education? Benefits, Challenges, and Impact on Students.*](#)

Greenhill: Do you think the internet is a necessity in a child's life?

Olivas: A necessity? No. They're perfectly fine without it. It's a privilege. There are still people in the world that don't have WiFi. You don't need the internet to learn, engage, and have fun. So we actually do 'no technology Sundays,' so they have to figure it out. I like to teach them to disconnect from the internet and be present. Adults have a hard time disconnecting so I want to show them how to do that from a young age.

Greenhill: I love that. Does that add accountability for yourself?

Olivas: Yes, definitely.

Greenhill: Do you find the internet addictive for your children?

Olivas: Yes, addictive and manipulative. It changes their thinking. Since I deleted YouTube and Roblox their attitudes have changed. They aren't so stuck on needing their iPads all the time.

Greenhill: Okay, so last question. What advice do you have for parents who are nervous about giving their kids access to the internet?

Olivas: I would say, trust your gut, and be more involved than you think you need to be. Follow-through and follow-up are important. They're kids; they don't fully understand why the rules and boundaries are there and naturally want to test boundaries. If you're going to give your kids technology, be sure to know how it works. Understand the apps they are using. There are apps that seem to be for kids but contain dangerous content. There is also an app called Incognito that allows you to hide profiles and apps. Immerse yourself in what is out there and be proactive. It's hard, but it's necessary.