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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming more and more integrated into our lives — and the lives of our children. At its core, AI refers to technology that can mimic human thinking and communication. The most popular AI tools, like ChatGPT, are trained on vast amounts of internet data and can hold intelligent, human-like conversations.

Many adults now use tools like ChatGPT in their daily workflow. Interacting with these platforms can feel like chatting with an endlessly knowledgeable friend. While that might sound helpful, it raises serious concerns — especially for children. Conversations can easily veer into mature or inappropriate topics, and even more alarming is the emotional connection and growing dependency users can develop with these systems.

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DISCONNECT & RECONNECT

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ARE YOUR KIDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA — LIKE GOOGLE PHOTOS?

When reviewing the apps and websites we allow our children to use, we often assume that photo storage and file-sharing platforms like Google Photos, Apple/iCloud Photos, or Google Drive are safe and harmless. After all, what could be wrong with a daughter sharing an online album of pictures, or song-and-dance videos from school or camp, with her friends?

But it's important to consider the features these platforms offer. Friends can comment on pictures, add their own videos, copy and re-share content, and more. This can quickly evolve into something much bigger: albums with long lists of followers, sometimes including people they barely know, who check in daily, leave comments, and even contribute their own content. These albums may contain not just personal photos but also viral memes, funny video clips, and even full-length movies. In essence, the uploading, commenting, and constant interaction starts to mirror social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok.

Fortunately, filters can offer some protection. A filter can block just Google Photos, for example, or even allow Google Photos while blocking the ability to play videos and movies.

Although filters can help limit access and reduce exposure, parents should still monitor usage and set additional boundaries, such as time limits. Periodically review the content your child is viewing or sharing, and don't assume these spaces are always innocent. Shared albums and drive folders may seem harmless, but they can become hubs for socializing and media consumption—sometimes in ways you wouldn't expect.



Who says I have to be available every moment of my day? Response time has shortened into almost no time at all.

When I was contemplating switching from a smartphone to a flip phone, I was worried about response time—what if I needed to Zelle someone right away or check my email with no computer nearby? These concerns were on my mind.

When I made the switch, I decided it was okay to have a delayed response. I could Zelle someone when I got to a computer later that evening, and checking email twice a day was just fine.

What I didn't expect was the smug satisfaction of being my own boss—fully in control of my time and when I took care of things.

Looking around at smartphone users, I see a frenzied need to check for messages constantly and be beholden to everyone but themselves. The freedom I feel is wonderful and liberating.



Okay, I admit it—I'm a news addict. I love to check the news multiple times a day and keep updated on local and Israeli news. I bounce from site to site and check for any updates several times a day.

Recently, I went to an inspiring speech about the power of making small commitments in technology control and how a little change goes a long way. Feeling inspired to put my inspiration into action, I thought honestly about what I was willing to commit to and stick to. The big stuff ran through my mind, and I immediately felt overwhelmed by those options.

I decided that when I would search the Jewish sites for news, I would stop there. Usually, I would end up checking foxnews.com, and I would try to avoid doing that. Immediately, I felt a little silly. My kabbalah was so small that it almost felt embarrassing after an inspired high. Then I decided to stick to it.

I was shocked. This tiny commitment made me feel more in control of where I looked and what I clicked on. Because I made this small choice, my ability to choose—and not just be sucked into whatever I was looking at—grew stronger. I never expected that a little change would be so big.



Have you heard about the toll-free numbers to call AI? Your kids probably have. These are free services that let users speak with AI by phone — the responses sound just like a real human, with voice, tone, and emotion. Some of these services are almost entirely unfiltered. It's very possible your child already has a digital “phone friend” — one who's ready to talk about anything and shares the full range of ideas and values found online, including those that may conflict with what we teach at home.

Another popular service is **AI Chat Companions**. These are apps and websites filled with AI personalities, each designed to act like a specific character. One of the more popular ones reports

that many users are under 24, and a significant number are minors. While this app and website is technically for ages 13 and up, many children simply lie about their age. Kids are having deep, personal, and even intimate conversations with characters like “the most popular kid in class,” “the girl next door,” and others that are far more inappropriate. Tragically, some children have formed intense emotional bonds with these bots, leading to devastating, real-life harm. Lawsuits are already underway related to the app's content and lack of protections, but as of now the app remains the same.

Of course, not all AI use is dangerous. A child may say they're using AI to help with math homework — and they may be. But what starts as tutoring can quickly evolve into a personal conversation neither the child nor the parent ever intended.

AI is incredibly powerful and evolving quickly. It's exciting — but deeply concerning. As always, we urge you to stay informed and monitor the apps and services your children are using. And if you need help or guidance, don't hesitate to reach out to TAG. We're here to help you navigate the digital world safely.



With the recent rise in podcast popularity has come the surge of Jewish podcasts—audio and video productions from within our community covering everything from daily Torah learning to casual schmoozing. Whether this reflects our communal growth or decline is debatable, but one thing is certain: it raises serious digital safety concerns.

A primary issue is how people access these podcasts. Many listen through major platforms like YouTube and Spotify. In exchange for hearing a shiur or an interesting discussion, these platforms expose listeners—or their children—to a vast amount of inappropriate content, appearing through auto-play, related links, or easily searchable material alongside the podcast itself. Thankfully, several podcast and audio apps now offer only Jewish content, creating a much safer experience.

Still, even within Jewish podcasting, not all content is created equal. Some shows offer inspiration or helpful information, while others delve into sensitive or mature topics that are not suitable for children, or even inappropriate speech and gossip. Since most content online isn't moderated, even platforms limited to Jewish material require discretion. Ultimately, we must be our own advocates—for our children's safety and our own—approaching podcasts thoughtfully to ensure a safe and meaningful listening experience.

DISCONNECT & RECONNECT

אני לדודי ודודי לי

Enhance your connection with Haghem

COMMIT TO ONE OR MORE OF THESE SUGGESTED TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES

DELETE an app you use often

STRENGTHEN your filter settings

TURN OFF your phone during dinner

IGNORE your phone during in-person interactions

DESIGNATE one room in your home for going online

LEAVE your phone out of the room or Shul when Davening

Or choose a challenge of your own!

SIGNING UP ENTITLES YOU TO AN ENTRY IN A WEEKLY RAFFLE

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PLATINUM EVENTS

