

Children as young as 6 holding social media accounts as parents pledge to support the UK's 3rd National Unplugging Day Sunday 25 June 2017

Submitted by: My Family Club

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UK Parents are losing control as their children flock to social media and immerse themselves in digital

This ground-breaking survey reveals children as young as 6 with social media accounts as parents pledge to support the UK's 3rd National Unplugging Day (<http://www.nationalunpluggingday.co.uk/>) on 25 June 2017.

- More than half of children hold one or more social media accounts with some children as young as 6 years old having a presence on-line.
- Nearly Half of Parents surveyed (41%) were unsure of the rules around social media privacy and settings.
- The majority of Parents (85%) having no monitoring software or system on their children's digital devices, apps and social media networks.

Parents across the UK agree tech and social media are taking over their lives and being plugged in constantly is damaging their children as they struggle to set a good example with their own tech usage. Individuals are being urged to unplug on Sunday 25 June 2017 from sun-up to sun-down in celebration of the largest digital detox for families and the UK's one and only National Unplugging Day.

National Unplugging Day is asking individuals and families to ditch their gadgets including smartphones, tablets and computers for a whole day to experience life unplugged and getting back to basics.

Parenting experts are giving a stark warning that overuse of digital devices is harming relationships, stopping the young from developing face to face communication skills and teaching children that disappearing into digital devices for hours is a healthy and perfectly normal activity.

The leading parenting website MyFamilyClub (<http://www.myfamilyclub.co.uk/>) carried out a survey in April with over 1000 parents from across the UK and has resulted in some striking statistics. The survey found that nearly half of parents (41%) are unaware that the age limit for a social media account is 13 years old, and also allowing their child to have a presence on a social media platform.

Over 15% of those surveyed said their children's accounts had open or public settings and shockingly over 85% said they had no monitoring or parental control software on any of the family devices.

In addition to the above: half of parents surveyed (65%) had tried to limit their children's screen time and were aware that they needed to lead by example by managing their own time; with half of parents (51%) admitted not taking control of their children's digital usage and letting them use tech liberally.

Dr Hayley van Zwanenberg, child and adolescent psychiatrist and Priory's Group Associate Medical Director, said; "I urge parents to use National Unplugging Day as an opportunity to discuss the many good reasons for limiting social media use with their children, and to stress the advantages of 'talking not tapping'.

"Important emotional skills are at risk of being lost as children lose the ability to socialise in person and begin to think that they can exercise control at the tap of a key, and receive instant gratification in all things. They lose the ability to read emotions and to empathise. Their attention spans diminish.

She adds; "It is also important to speak with your children about the internet and, although it is a fantastic tool, they need to be aware of the dangers that accompany it; just as they must not talk to strangers in real life, they mustn't speak to them online either. Similarly, they must keep their bodies private online as well as in real life, and not believe everything they read online just as they should not believe everything their friends say.

"If parents follow National Unplugging Day with their children - and parents must switch off their phones and laptops as well - I think many will be surprised at how different a day can be, in a really positive way, without those ubiquitous devices intruding."

With nearly two-thirds (65%) of those surveyed saying they didn't have a 'Tech-free' zone in the house, couple this with a mixture of open privacy settings, no parental controls of monitoring software, this combination can leave a child wide open to a range of worrying issues and at worst, all in the comfort of their own bedroom.

On more of a positive note, nearly all of those surveyed were aware of the dangers of trolling, grooming, sexting, exclusion by friends, on-line bullying and body image issues although many felt that they needed more help and guidance around managing these issues and feeling equipped to open up the conversation with their child on these danger areas.

Hilda Burke, Leading Psychotherapist and Couples Counsellor commented: "Devices aren't the problem it's how they're used. As the Dalai Lama said:

"Whether technology's effect is good or bad depends on the user. It's important that we shouldn't be slaves to technology; it should help us."

It's up to the parents to manage the children's exposure to digital devices.

Two generations ago it was TV, then computer games that elicited doom mongering around how they would be the downfall of kids. The fact is, there'll always be something that 'threatens' children's wellbeing.

It's nothing new. But by setting firm boundaries and modelling a healthy relationship with our digital devices, children are likely to learn how to make technology 'helpful' rather than become enslaved to it"

Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed (60%) of those surveyed called for a 'Toolkit' to help them navigate the dynamic digital space themselves and their child exists within. MyFamilyClub is working with a team of experts to deliver a 'toolkit' that parents can access on a monthly basis to keep them

abreast of social media updates, updates, related news and encourage them to empower themselves and their children to stay in of their digital presence and usage.

Parenting expert Gemma Johnson, Founder of MyFamilyClub.co.uk and National Unplugging Day in the UK says "As a parent of three children, I appreciate how demanding and stressful it can be managing the day-to-day tasks of a busy family life whilst also staying on top a parallel digital world. With technology an inherent part of everyday life, it's easy to feel bogged down and opt to take a back seat at home as the daily demands take over but it's becoming increasingly important to stay vigilant, aware and on top of your families interweaving digital lives and recognise technology for what it really is, a tool where you are the master and it is the slave. With some forward planning, a bit of grit and determination to withstand the tantrums, you can get back into the driving seat and keep your family as safe as possible as you navigate and explore the on-line world.

Johnson adds: We are encouraging families to spend the day together completely unplugged to experience the joys that spending time together brings when there are no distractions. We want to help families kick-start healthier digital habits and we believe National Unplugging Day is the perfect way to start this. Those parents in their 40's and older are the last generations to experience a childhood 'unplugged' and we want to encourage these parents to pass on the baton and positive childhood experiences to their young to teach them about balance and a healthy lifestyle.

The National Day of Unplugging in the UK recognises the value and importance of technology in today's society whilst trying to encourage people, especially families and young children and the connected generations who have grown up with ever-present technology, to be more mindful of their digital usage. This day is not intended to be a one-off, but rather a starting point to encourage people of all ages to embrace a healthy lifestyle by regularly setting aside time away from their digital devices.

To set families up for success during the National Unplugging Day on Sunday 25 June, MyFamilyClub is offering tips and advice to families who want to enjoy technology-free family time.

National Unplugging Day

Facebook: MyFamilyClub (<https://www.facebook.com/myfamilyclub/>)

Twitter: @MyFamilyClub (<https://twitter.com/myfamilyclub>)

-Ends-

NOTES TO EDITOR

1100 parents were surveyed during April and resulted in the statistics above.

Case studies are available to support the stats.

Interviews

Gemma Johnson, mum of three and Creator of National Unplugging Day is available for interview.

Dr Hayley van Zwanenberg is available for interview.

National Unplugging Day

National Unplugging Day happens for the third time in the UK on Sunday 25 June where families will unplug from their devices to spend time with their loved ones without using technology. The National Day of Unplugging recognises the value and importance of technology in today's society whilst trying to encourage people (especially families and young children, the connected generations who have grown up with ever-present technology), to be more mindful of their digital usage. This day is not intended to be a one-off, but rather a starting point to encourage people of all ages to embrace a healthy lifestyle by regularly setting aside time away from their digital devices.

National Unplugging Day are hosting a day of unplugged activities on Sunday 25 June in the luxurious Hampshire Hideaway; Riverside Cottage and Yurt near Winchester.

www.nationalunpluggingday.co.uk
www.riversidelifestyle.co.uk

MyFamilyClub

<http://www.MyFamilyClub.co.uk> helps parents make, save & manage their money.

We're here for parents with children of all ages, from birth until the day they leave home. On the site you'll find tips and guides on money-saving, money making and budgeting, as well as tools to help you manage your family finances. MyFamilyClub also rounds up the best vouchers, offers, deals and discounts, and tells you where to find your household essentials at the best prices every week.

Gemma Johnson

Gemma is the Creator of National Unplugging Day and the go-to media spokesperson regarding families with recent media credits that include ITV Daybreak, BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio Five Live, The Independent, The Observer, Woman's Own, Woman, Prima and many more. Gemma has also been a guest speaker at the Baby Show and Women Outside the Box, the first female festival of entrepreneurship and for the Government's agency Love Food Hate Waste.

Gemma's accolades include winner of the WOW Woman in Finance 2010, and Mum Entrepreneur of the Year 2009.

For further information:

Charlotte Vaughan — 07817 140174
charlotte@myfamilyclub.co.uk