

# Family Safeguards for Using Technology

The following is a summary of key messages from the Church booklet *Safeguards for Using Technology*, which was published to help missionaries learn how to be safe with technology. This summary shows how these ideas can be applied to help family members learn to use digital tools appropriately.

## Be in Tune with Spiritual Promptings

- Filters can help protect your family from inappropriate content. However, even the strongest filters cannot provide protection 100% of the time. The best filter you have is your own will and desire to make righteous choices. The only really effective filter for lifelong technology use is the individual heart and mind.
- Heavenly Father has given you two very special and powerful gifts that will help you: your moral agency and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

## Be Focused on a Higher Purpose

- Use a computer, mobile device, or phone for specific purposes. Decide beforehand what you intend to do and how much time you will spend. Experience shows that people are more likely to encounter inappropriate content on the Internet when they are casually surfing the web without a specific purpose in mind.
- Limit the use of technology when you are feeling bored, lonely, angry, anxious, stressed, or tired, or when you feel any other emotion that makes you vulnerable or susceptible.
- Select a background screen image that reminds you of your commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

## Be Disciplined

- When you are talking face-to-face with people, don't check messages or answer calls. Take control of how you use these tools. Don't let them control you. Elder M. Russell Ballard taught: "Handheld devices, such as smartphones, are a blessing, but they can also distract us from hearing the 'still, small voice.' They need to be our servants, not our masters" ("Be Still, and Know That I Am God," CES Devotional for Young Adults, May 4, 2014).
- Use settings and features on your device that allow you to minimize interruptions during meetings, appointments, and conversations. For example, when at Church, turn on Airplane Mode.

## **Be One**

- Encourage your whole family to follow these safeguards and to feel comfortable asking for help when needed. Nearly all challenges associated with the Internet or with pornography happen in isolation. Developing a culture of trust will help you avoid isolation, build and strengthen righteous habits, and protect one another from temptation.
- Don't use technology when you are alone. Make sure that someone else can see your screen at all times.
- If it appears that a family member is not following the safeguards, approach him or her in a way that is non-threatening and non-judgmental. In a warm and understanding way, ask questions such as, "Can you help me understand why you did that?" Then make a plan together. Ask, "What do you think we should do?" and "How can we help each other?"
- Family members who are struggling with misusing technology usually already know that what they are doing is wrong. When they reach out for help, they need to feel compassion, support, and love, not shame or guilt. React calmly, and always seek the Spirit's guidance.
- Family members should work together to agree on ways to support each other. If you find that your habits are slipping, talk with a family member to make a new plan, set additional safeguards, and to evaluate any circumstances that you should change to help you stay focused on your goals.

## **What Should I Do If I'm Feeling Vulnerable or Susceptible?**

*Be aware and acknowledge your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.*

- Be aware of when you are feeling something that can make you more vulnerable to misusing technology. For example, being bored, lonely, angry, anxious, afraid, stressed, hungry, or tired can make it more difficult to use technology wisely. Admit to yourself what you are feeling and determine if there is a specific event or circumstance that you may be reacting to.
- Honestly acknowledge feelings of vulnerability in order to help yourself choose a better response and overcome temptation.
- Be open with family members so they can help you be aware of what you are feeling and support you.
- In your prayers, be open with Heavenly Father about what you are feeling so He can help you and give you strength to overcome temptation through Christ's Atonement.

*Choose to act in righteous, productive ways to what you are feeling.*

- Once you are aware that you are feeling vulnerable or that you are not following one of the safeguards, decide what you will do to follow the safeguard, and then choose to act on that plan.
- Pray for strength and protection against temptation. Tell Heavenly Father how you feel.
- Share, explain, and talk through your feelings with a family member.
- Get up and move. Go for a walk or go exercise.
- Recite a scripture or sing a hymn that will help you focus on the Savior.
- Evaluate your physical state. Do you need water, a snack, or some rest? Address your needs.

*Learn from your experiences and improve.*

- As you work to follow the safeguards, learn from your experience. To learn and improve is to repent, which brings you closer to Christ as you apply His Atonement. As you turn to Him, He will help you improve.
- When you find yourself being tempted to misuse technology, you can learn from your experience by paying attention to the choices you make and the results that come from them.
- Learn to recognize patterns in your thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that make it difficult for you to use technology righteously. You can avoid temptation by avoiding these patterns. For example, you may find yourself more likely to get distracted on your device when you don't have meaningful and specific plans for the day. By choosing to always plan meaningful activities, you are less likely to be distracted on your device.
- Your family will also help you learn and improve. While the adversary uses secrecy and isolation to lead people into darkness, the Lord encourages us to seek light through honesty and truth. Building strong, righteous relationships with your family is one of your best protections and allows you to form a culture of righteous and purposeful behavior.

Learning to live the safeguards is not as simple as saying you will do it; it requires effort and practice. Even after the safeguards have become a natural part of how you think and act, you will have times when you may feel vulnerable or susceptible. Remember that you do not have to overcome challenges on your own. Rely on the strength that comes through Christ's Atonement as you strive to live the safeguards and overcome personal weakness.