

## Family Online Safety Contracts

As my book, *The New Age of Sex Education, how to talk to your teen about cybersex and pornography*, is nearing completion, I am researching resources for parents. One of these resources is the Family Online Safety Institute. This is a very helpful and informative site.

What I love most about the site are the online safety contracts I found there. These contracts not only provide boundaries and guidelines for the child, but also the parent. Here are a few tidbits from the parent contract:

1. Parents will get to know the services and websites their child uses.

By doing this, the parent agrees to get informed and stay informed. This is critical to responsible digital parenting.

2. I will not over react if my child tells me about something “bad” he or she finds or does on the Internet.

I LOVE THIS! If a parent can follow through on this part of the contract, they won't shame their child. It is hard to not be reactive if your child comes to you saying he or she saw pornography or were solicited on a website they should not have been on. However, if you can be calm and talk about the issue, you will go a long way to create safety and not create an aura of shame around sexuality.

3. I will frequently check to see where my kids have visited and talk to them about my concerns.

These are just a few of the 12 items on the parent contract. These rules facilitate calm and healthy communication between parents and their children.

The site also has Rule Cards specifically for: cell phone, smartphone, gaming systems, tablets and computers. These are designed for a parent to give to their child and discuss when they get a new device. A parent can write their own rules on the card based on their own beliefs and family values. There is also a parent's promise section on these cards.

Parents promise not to overreact if their child views something inappropriate. The parent also agrees to learn new things and be part of their child's digital world. Another parent promise is that they, themselves, promise to responsibly use technology. Parents need to model appropriate behaviors such as not texting while driving.

There are many sites that will provide you with resources and many are very good. I wanted to highlight this site because it does such a great job in showing us that parents need to be accountable too. Having rule sand boundaries for both parents and children creates a safe environment that fosters open and honest communication.