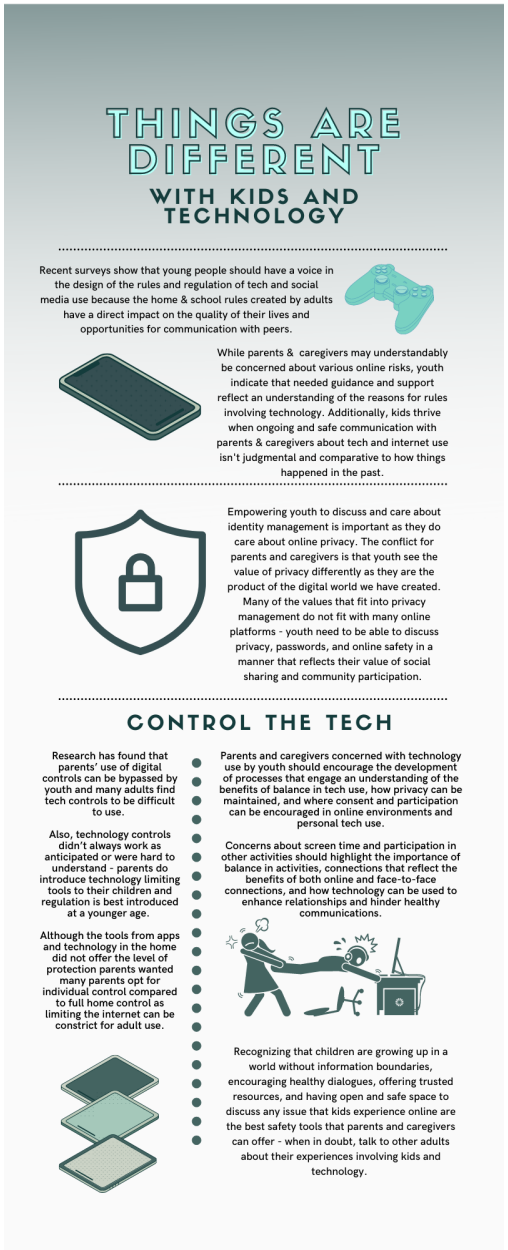

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT

Parents & caregivers need to acknowledge that youth today are growing up in a connected world and are the products of a new age where we all rely on social media, on-demand media, & digital communications to facilitate our work, our families, and our social lives. The reality for youth is that they are now a product of a world we have created where technology is interconnected in our everyday lives yet we are quick to malign how our children use or approach it. Technology use is expected for youth today, we're not going back in time.

RECOGNIZE THAT THE EXPECTATIONS ARE DIFFERENT

Youth use technology as a normal part of their home, school, and entertainment lives - what's important for parents & caregivers to understand is that an authoritarian approach to controlling how children use the internet can backfire drastically. Digital literacy supports for parents & caregivers can make the transition easier for families to open dialogues about how to use technology in the home and away - demonstrating with leadership good tech use and balance is key.

Kids regularly use technology in the classroom and that educator guided use translates to better use at home compared to previous connected generations of youth, especially as media literacy and appropriate use become more normalized from the classroom out. If families offer non-judgmental opportunities for young people to share their experiences with technology and how they interact with known and unknown persons, youth begin to recognize that the safest audience they may have to find advice about their online experiences begins at home. If we consider four main things that kids want from the Internet, entertainment, social connection, information access, and personal space - adults need to assess how they open dialogues about oversight, distraction, fears of unknown persons, and screen time regulation.

ADDRESS THE CONCERNS IN A NEW WAY

Kids today are going online at younger ages, partially because parents actively introduce forms of technology to support the raising of children – handing a child technology at an early age requires parents & caregivers to be actively involved in the digital lives and guidance of good technology habits. Some adults feel completely out touch when it comes to technology, but as a reminder, parents & caregivers have an important role to play in helping youth navigate safely sharing on social media, playing video games, and opening conversations about the negative experiences kids have online involving unknown persons, threats to safety, hyper sexualization, and cyberbullying.