

CASE SCENARIO FOR PROVIDERS

SOCIAL MEDIA CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Medical Appointment with Alexander (15)

Pediatric and adolescent providers can integrate conversations about social media use into health consultations with increased confidence knowing that their acknowledgement and guidance can have a positive influence on youth and families. A healthy relationship with a trusted adult is a protective factor for youth mental health and many youth trust health care providers' expertise.¹ Talk about social media in the spirit of health and wellness, not judgment and control. Engage with youth and their caregivers by demonstrating curiosity and offering your partnership.²



TIP: Submit any questions you have to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [Center for Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health Q&A Portal](#) for a personalized and evidence-based response. Patients can also look to the portal for additional support outside of the office. The [AAP's policy statement](#) on media use offers some key recommendations for pediatricians.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a method for talking with people about change and growth to strengthen their own motivation and commitment. This process is grounded in research about what makes conversations more or less helpful, allowing others to explore change more comfortably. Relational skills include demonstrating compassion, acceptance, partnership and empowerment. Technical skills include asking open-ended questions and using reflective listening statements. Because change is a process and rarely a straight line, the discussion moves like a dance and takes into consideration the person's values, identities, beliefs, age, culture and social structures.

Alexander is 15 years old and identifies as Latino and male. He recently immigrated with his family to the U.S. from Colombia and speaks both English and Spanish fluently. He is just starting to set up social media accounts for his family so they can be more connected. They are not that familiar with the various platforms and aren't sure who or what to trust online.



Provider: It's great to meet you. I hope you feel welcome as you settle in here with your family. Tell me more about your family's use of technology and social media. (open-ended question, compassion)

Alexander: We are excited to do things we couldn't before like watch funny videos and stay connected to people back home. My dad is really smart and wants to get involved in investing, but my mom worries about that.



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Social Media and
Youth Mental Health

FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MIDDLE ADOLESCENCE

WHAT SHOULD BE ON YOUR RADAR:

- An adolescent's drive for independence becomes stronger and there may be increases in parent-teen conflict. Teens have more choices and independence around the media content they choose, which may be quite different than what they had seen as a child.
- Social media use can be a part of healthy and normal adolescent development, communication and peer relationship building. Adolescence can also be a time in which peer relationships undergo rocky times and challenging situations, some of which can be exacerbated by digital communications.
- Middle adolescence (ages 14-17) can be a time of intense pressure for conformity across some teens. This pressure, combined with the tendency of middle adolescent age youth to see themselves as unbreakable, can lead to risky behavior.



Provider: It sounds like you recognize the internet can be a useful tool! At the same time, it's hard to know what is trustworthy. (reflection, partnership)

Alexander: Yeah. My uncle was scammed out of a lot of money, which is why my mom worries. But my family wants to learn. I'm the oldest and my English is good so I'm trying to help them.



Provider: Seems like they really appreciate you, and you all want to learn from your uncle's experience. How have you gone about it so far? (reflection, open-ended question, empowerment)

Alexander: Someone who works at the community center helped me set up email and Facebook for my parents. They also gave me a paper about internet safety written in Spanish to show them. I like watching videos so I might get on TikTok next.



Provider: Great to hear about the community center. They are a wonderful partner to us. I'm interested to know, what have you heard about TikTok? (open-ended question, acceptance)

Alexander: Everyone at school has TikTok so of course I've seen videos. But I don't really know how it works and I don't want to sound dumb asking. I really hope I can get my own phone soon. When people ask why I do not have one, I just say mine is broken.



Provider: It's normal to want to fit in and not sound dumb. I get it! In fact, you're not the only young person I see who pretends their phone is broken. It seems like everyone has a phone these days, and it can be hard to feel different if you don't have one. I've also heard from some teens who pretend their phone is broken because they don't want to be on social media. (partnership, compassion)

Alexander: No way. That's kinda funny.



Provider: You're really putting in the effort to learn and be helpful to your family. I appreciate you trusting me with your story. If you're interested, we have a [video with tips for healthy social media use](#), as well as some resources in English and in Spanish that explain the various social media apps and how to set up a Family Media Plan that you can also share with your family. (acceptance, partnership, empowerment)



Self-reflection questions:

1. How did the provider build partnership?
2. What can empowerment look like between a provider and a youth client?
3. Where is there room for acceptance and choice in conversations like these?
4. What cues from this client gave you the sense he was engaged?
5. What would you do differently in this interaction to support growth and change?



RESOURCES FOR PROVIDERS

Visit the [AAP Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#) and check out the following resources for more information and tools:

- [Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers \(MINT\)](#)
- [HealthyChildren.org: Family Media Plan](#)
- [Common Sense Media: Hispanic Parenting in the Digital Age](#)



These resources have information you can share directly with parents and youth:

- **American Academy of Pediatrics: Family Tip Sheet – [Building Healthy Digital Media Habits \(English\)](#) | [\(Spanish\)](#)**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics: [Social Media: Enjoy the Upsides and Avoid the Downsides](#)**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics: [Social Media Tips for Teens Video](#)**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics: [5Cs of Media Use](#)**
- **Common Sense Media: Parents' Ultimate Guide to [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), [TikTok](#)**

REFERENCES

1. Snell, A. & Kline, J. (2022, July-October). Findings from an online assessment of youth ages 13-18 years old [Unpublished internal document]. Commissioned from Lake Research Partners by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.
2. Moreno, M.A., Klein, J.D, Kaseeska, K., Gorzkowski, J., Harris, D., Davis, J., Gotlieb, E., & Wasserman, R. (2023, August 12). A cluster randomized controlled trial of a primary care provider-delivered social media counseling intervention. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.06.007>.

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