TECHNOLOGY

These days, the word "connected" often makes us think about technology. Like most students, you probably have a Facebook page, carry a cell phone and use computers daily for personal and academic reasons. The connections we have through technology can make us more productive, help us keep up with our friends and family, and make life easier. But it's important to make sure that technology is supporting our lives and not controlling them. And it's important that we take time to actually speak with and see the people in our lives, especially when we need support or want to help a friend.

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Digital communication is an essential part of our lives. You can stay connected through your phone and your laptop, and you’re probably receiving texts, messages and emails even while you’re sleeping. The question is — are you controlling your digital devices or are they controlling you?

Do you find yourself constantly checking your texts, emails or Facebook? Do you get anxious or upset when you can’t access your phone or computer for even a short period of time? Do you get stressed when people don’t respond to your messages or posts right away? If so, you may be experiencing technology overload. Remember, technology is supposed to make our lives easier and make us feel more connected to others. If your digital life is stressing you out and preventing you from getting things done, you may need to set some boundaries:

- Checking messages or sites during class or while spending time with friends or family.
- Waiting to check your email or social networking sites so that you don’t miss out on what’s happening around you.
- Write it on your notepad or on your wall. Try picking up the phone or messaging for a cup of coffee from time to time so you can really connect and catch up.
- If you’re spending time online or on your phone is affecting your ability to get stuff done, try limiting these activities to an hour or two so you have time to wind down and get some rest.

TECHNOLOGY AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Sometimes, written communication through texts, email or social networks is more convenient. But without body language, tone of voice and facial cues, it can be hard to understand what your friend is really saying or how they’re really doing. When you need to talk to a friend or connect with someone, take time to think about the best way to do it. Is it something simple that can be communicated with a text or should you really pick up the phone or see them in person?

Technology can pose unique challenges for romantic relationships. Many people find themselves spending too much time on Facebook or Twitter checking up on their significant others. Some couples end up arguing because of misunderstandings that happen online or through texts. If technology is complicating your relationship, be proactive and talk about it — face-to-face, not online.

If someone is messaging you too much or harassing you online, here are some tips for managing the situation:

CONNECTING TO HELP

Everyone goes through ups and downs, especially when balancing the stresses of school, work, extracurricular activities, and a social life. Sometimes we need support. Write online friends and contacts can be great for chitchat, sharing ideas, and giving off. It's also important to identify your support network and think about the best way to communicate. If you have a friend or a family member that's hard to reach, it's sometimes easier to communicate your feelings through a text or a wall post. If you really need support, it’s better to reach out directly. If you aren’t comfortable reaching out to any friends, talk to a family member or a teacher at your school’s counseling center.

Likewise, if you’re concerned about a friend because of their behavior in the real world or something you’ve seen online, you don’t have to call or visit them. It’s a friend’s home and you’re not in your privacy. If you think someone you trust or your counselor can be a good source of advice on how to help them. Sometimes, words on a screen can’t replace a face-to-face conversation.

In situations related to technology, you need to stay calm and don’t let it overwhelm you or can’t get things done. Visit our Check Yourself tool or Find Help Now.

If you are being harassed or disrespected online, visit www.chatline.org for tips on dealing with these situations.