

## None of Their Business

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With the advent of social media, we are encouraged to share every moment of our lives online with our friends. What we're doing, what we're feeling, what we're eating, where we are, who we're with, what we think about certain issues—this is the standard content of posts on social media. Sometimes, however, in the enjoyment of communicating our daily lives, we forget that occasionally people we don't know very well are reading what we post. Depending on where we post (say, in a homeschool Facebook group), we may even be sharing with strangers.

As a friendly reminder, it is unsafe to assume that distant acquaintances and strangers online are automatically friendly to our ideas and lifestyle. For the safety of your children, it is important to remember that matters pertaining to your child's health, lifestyle and upbringing should be generally kept private online. There are many well-meaning people who will not hesitate to meddle and cause trouble for you if they believe you are making the wrong decision in one of these areas.

Following are some specific areas to be cautious about sharing with people we don't know very well online.

### ***Medical opinions***

There is a divide right now between people who favor traditional medicine and those who prefer a more natural approach. For example, vaccinations are currently a heated topic. Some people consider vaccinating to be extremely unsafe; others consider *not* vaccinating to be extremely unsafe. While it's fine for you to express your opinion online, it is not the business of friends, acquaintances, or strangers on social media what you personally have chosen to do with your own children. Your child's medical history should be private. If you really want to weigh in on the conversation, link to articles and sources that prove your point, instead of announcing which vaccines your child has or has not received. The same holds true when discussing other controversial medical topics.

### ***Medical problems***

Along these lines, your child's medical problems and course of treatment are also not matters for public discussion. Can you post a photo of your son or daughter with their ankle in a cast after a painful collision on the soccer field? Sure. But the details of the treatment and healing process are not the concern of others. Additionally, be careful of posting a photo of your child's medical condition (a burn, an infection, etc.) and asking for medical advice from people online. If you fail to follow someone's advice (however erroneous) and they believe you are not taking the problem seriously enough, they may consider reporting you to authorities. Ask questions privately of trusted friends instead of posting photos publicly for everyone to see.

### ***Lifestyle choices***

One woman I know of likes to post a photo nearly every day of her little children eating lunch. She details the menu, which is inevitably unhealthy and unbalanced, and shares the photo and the meal

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description in a Facebook group that has over 10,000 members. While everyone likes to share their occasional "Pinterest Success" meal photos on Facebook, your child's day-to-day menu is simply not the business of strangers online. If a disgruntled group member became offended with this woman and decided to make trouble, they could spread nasty rumors that she is a bad parent who feeds her children poorly and possibly even turn her in to social services. Your lifestyle is your own business. Your housekeeping practices, daily schedule, daily menu, and other areas pertaining to everyday living are not the concern of the public, so don't share them online.

### *Parenting practices*

In an effort to offer advice, parents will sometimes post about how they handle their child's shortcomings. This is not necessarily bad, but keep the details vague. Your child does not need to have all of his deficiencies aired publicly and permanently to the online world. Nor do you need to announce the details of your parenting practices to a critical public. What goes on in your house is between you and your family only. It is one thing to say that when your child was routinely procrastinating on his chores, you curtailed some privileges. It is another to recount the situation in explicit detail and open you or your child up to criticism from people who are not involved in the situation. If you really think the person you're advising would benefit from hearing more detail, send them a private message instead of posting publicly.

On the flip side, if you are the person asking for advice, ask judiciously. If you need to ask how others dealt with the habit of procrastination in their kids, that's fine. But you don't need to give several paragraphs of examples of your own child's bad behavior. Among other things, keep in mind the possibility that your children may see these posts someday and fiercely resent you airing their personal delinquencies to the public.

Sharing our lives online is fun, but it is important to be cautious when it concerns your children. When in doubt, don't post it. Your family's business is your family's business, not the business of friends, acquaintances or random strangers online!