EP 03: The Price of Protection: Snooping vs Spying: Where Should Parents Draw the Line?

Sue: Welcome back to Navigating the Digital Jungle with Sue Atkins and Friends where we help families find their way in the ever evolving landscape of technology. I'm Sue Atkins, your guide on this journey. I'm here today with Angee Corvaglia, creator of Data Girl and Friends, empowering young minds with online safety and AI literacy videos, games and educational materials.

We're here to guide you through the digital jungle. And our topic this week is looking at the price of protection. We're going to be talking about snooping, spying on our children, where should parents draw the line. We'll also be looking at privacy, because in this digital age, the balance between keeping our kids safe, and respecting their privacy can feel like walking a tightrope.

So, how do we ensure our kids are protected without overstepping the boundaries? So, today's episode will explore both sides of this delicate debate, offering insights and practical strategies for finding that balance. So let's dive in! How are you, Angee, today?

Angee: I'm doing well, thank you.

Sue: Good.. Well, you're very keen on privacy. You talk a lot about it. You do all sorts of videos behind it. You're trying to educate parents around privacy. What is your immediate take on that idea of snooping and spying on kids?

Angee: That's a very difficult one because I'm also very aware of the risks online and basically, any time you have a device where children have free reign with the internet, there's a lot of new tools out every day that parents will have no idea about, and children are just, and teens are not equipped to deal with it, especially if parents aren't aware, so there's a need to be in control.

But at the same time, children need their independence. They need to feel independent to grow and become independent people. So finding that balance is very difficult and being able to control without snooping, as you say, is a balance that each family will have to find for themselves. But, it's not easy.

Sue: So today I'm delighted to say our guest is Andy Briercliffe, international cyber safety expert for children with over 12 years of experience on online safety. And he has been an expert and a specialist in law enforcement at the National Crime Agency, focusing on harmful content, victim identification and offender tracking.

He has collaborated with global organisations, law enforcement agencies, charities, and all to address such issues such as cyber bullying, hate speech, graphic content, suicide and child sexual exploitation. And as a former child sexual employment lead at a major social media company, Andrew worked on the front lines, partnering with product and legal and policy teams to tackle safety challenges.

He has also consulted nationally and internationally across the trust and safety landscape, working with charities, tech companies and law enforcement. Without further ado, thank you for joining me today, Andy.

Andy: Thank you very much for having me, Sue. Lovely to be here and be able to chat to you.
Sue: How can parents establish a healthy balance between monitoring their child's online safety and their privacy concerns?

Andy: Well, yeah, that's obviously one of the big challenges. One thing I'd just like to say first is we have a focus on children and parents. Okay, whereas I actually think it should be children and everybody else. And the reason, and let me explain this first, it is because let's be realistic, that you could have a child, it doesn't matter what age, could be young, could be under 18.

They could go round to their, say, uncle's or auntie's house or cousin's house, who are not a parent, and go, "Ooh, uncle, auntie, can I play on your computer? Can I play on your PlayStation?" And they'll be like, "yeah, crack on". So, we have to educate everybody. So, I do think we need to extend this realisation of educating parents in relation to children.

And as you say, there's a fine balance, and I think we need to start by looking at age ranges. If anyone's ever had to. Educate a teenager on, especially social media, you're having a bit of a nightmare there. We know what teenagers are like. They like their privacy. They like, they don't want people looking at their phones or whatever, or especially even being told what to do.

So teenagers have to be looked at slightly differently to younger ones. And obviously it's having that relationship, that understanding, that open communication, but it also needs parents. I'm going to say parents now. I've just contradicted myself, but we need those people to understand actually what these children are doing as well.

The benefits of all of this, as well as the negatives. And it's all about awareness. And, what happens if things do go wrong? We don't want to necessarily shout and scream and take phones off them because that can exacerbate the situation. They need the adults need to know what to do as well.

And I think there's a lack there as well.

Sue: Yeah, there is. I mean, the role of trust, doesn't it, plays quite an important one in that parent-child teen relationship. Because, as you say, teens, we know, are all about taking risks and don't want to be kind of worried about parental controls or how can I get around those.

I started to talk about privacy settings, which sort of has a different connotation slightly. But what do you think, what's the role of trust then? In, well, for me and the podcast, mainly we're talking to parents, obviously. Of course, it can be other adults listening to it too, and teachers, and all sorts of people.

But, what do you think, what role does trust play in that?

Andy: It's huge, and I'm going to give you a, this is a true example. I've got two children, they are grown up now, but, that when they were younger, they grew up in this tech world and, they knew what I did for a living. And I spoke to them quite openly.

Well, not in depth, obviously, but about being safe online, what to do if there's a problem. And it was all about building the trust. And I, I was saying to them, look, if there's an issue, you come and see me, and we will try and figure it out. And in fact, there was a situation where my daughter was approached inappropriately online and she just came to me and said, "Dad, this has happened. Can you deal with it?" And shout. I said, "Right, let's have a look, let's go through it". But I also understood that, I could probably do a lot more than the average person, let's say, but I didn't go down that route. It was like, right, let's deal with it in a straightforward appropriate manner.

I then, I congratulated my daughter for coming to me and say, "you did the right thing. Thank you. We dealt with it". She still kept her phone. I didn't go mad with her or anything. It wasn't her fault. So it's having that trust, that they can rely on me to be able to do it. And that's to say, I didn't, go off and use work related stuff or go down that. I dealt with it as a parent.

Sue: Yeah, but what did you do? So people listening to this go, Oh God, all right, he knows what to do. But what would your advice be to a parent listening to this going, Okay, well, I won't shout and I'm delighted they've come to talk to me. But what do I actually do?

Andy: Yeah. So in this in, in this particular instance, I rest assured my daughter, she wasn't in trouble.

She had done the right thing and I thanked her. So that was the main thing. That was the first thing I did. I sat down with her and explained what this person might be trying to do. And I said, I was saying, look they're in the wrong. You've done everything right. Don't worry about it. She was in tears and I said, look, don't worry, we'll deal with it.

And to be honest I just said to her, look, I would like access to your phone and I am going to speak to this person now only because I know what I can get away with saying and how to approach it. And I just said to this person on the phone it was a message. I just said, look. By the way, this is so and so's dad what you're doing is inappropriate I suggest you stop otherwise you'll be in a lot of trouble.

And at first they didn't believe me and I said, well, you are speaking to the wrong person on this, because, trust me. And they did. And, they did shut up straight away. But I didn't then take it any further because there was an association to the school. I won't go into detail about it.

Sue: But is that okay for a parent then, to do that?

To say something or say, look, I'm her dad, I'm her mum, or does that escalate it?

Andy: Well, it's a, I think a lot of it is a choice, a personal choice, because the way I did it, again, I didn't rant and rave at this person, I did it in a very polite manner, and just gave them a warning. I have seen it where some parents go, "Oi, what the heck are you, I'm being polite with my words here."

Sue: No, I can imagine because they will be angry and furious and want to protect their child and off they go. That's why I was asking you about it.

Andy: Absolutely. No, I kept it polite. And I spoke to that individual in their language they were another under 18 year old. I spoke to them in their language and I said to them, look, you will be in a lot of trouble if you continue down this route.

I'm giving you the option to just stop it. Otherwise, this can happen.

Sue: And it did stop?

Andy: It did stop. Yes. And, , the thing is, if a parent was to take that decision and rant and rave, as you rightly say, that can escalate a situation. Oh, sure. Yeah. And in fact, that parent could in fact get in trouble now.

If they became abusive online, then now you've committed an offence.

Sue: Right. ,

Andy: or that child could suddenly turn around to that parent and say this adult's abusing me online.

Sue: Yeah, okay.

Andy: It is a difficult decision to do I wouldn't advise everybody doing it, by all accounts, but then, what is, what else can happen?

Could if they know , for instance as I say, there was an association in the school, could that parent go to the safeguarder at the school and just say, look, my son's daughter has received a message from somebody in the school, could you maybe just have an assembly about it, a safeguarding talk about it, they don't need to go into detail there are other options available.

We don't have to suddenly think, right, I'm going to report this to the police.

Sue: Yes, don't escalate it too quickly. So, that's just one practical tip. What other strategies can parents use to have these open and honest kind of communications and conversations with their kids about online behaviour, do you think?

Andy: I would say as well it's, I think we have this thing as well that parents can be the worst because parents are sitting there on their phones all the time as well. We all do it. We all do it. And it's having that discussion of yes, I understand I'm on my phone, but if a child comes to, put your phone down, have that conversation, even, it's well, show interest.
For instance.

Sue: What made me smile there, actually, when I used to write all about this stuff, for my parenting hat, I used to say, put the newspaper down and stop what you're doing and look at your child and listen to them. And there you are. I said the same thing, but of course, it's phones now, isn't it?

Everyone's on their phone. So yeah, they're taking, they've got to, it's a communication thing. We've got to think about what we're modelling as well to our kids if we're constantly on it. Sometimes also, when we've done episodes before about this, we sometimes say not all screen time is equal. If you actually say, oh, I'm doing the weekly shop at the moment on your phone, it sort of takes it away from, oh, I'm aimlessly scrolling.

It depends what you're doing on your screen too, but when kids come to you and talk with you, put it down and listen to them.

Andy: Absolutely, yeah. It's giving them the time, giving them the attention. And it's also understanding, if a child comes up to them and say. I'm just going to pick something at random here.

I've had an inappropriate message on Platform A. Whether that parent actually knows what Platform A is or not, because we do know it can change quite a lot. So take the time to go, Oh, right. Okay. Tell me about it. What's Platform A all about? Is it a game? Is it a chat? Is there even a shopping site or something like that?

They might not have heard. So show that interest. Oh, what did you, what's that all about? Tell me about it. To get them to open up. They might not, obviously, as I say about ages, but we all know teenagers are slightly different to younger kids.

But it's also parents and adults have to really know about, as you say, parental controls, safety controls, what's out there, what's available to them, there's a myriad of things, you can either put on a phone or set up tooling or something like that. So pay attention. Look what's out there, and if you feel it's appropriate, put it on. I'm going to be very cautious with this, and I'm not going to recommend any particular ones, because I don't want to seem to be in favouritism to anyone. But obviously, we know the major platforms have their family safety centres, so definitely worth take a look at them. I'll touch on something in a minute, which I know is a big conversation.

There is other apps you can put on. Which can check certain content. If your child does send an inappropriate picture, let's say it will flag to the parent's phone. Do you want to go that extreme? That's personal choice. So, there are things out there and obviously if anybody.

Does want to know a little bit more about what is available either through you or through me, more than happy to assist, and then it's individual choices and the bit I was going to mention is child friendly smartphones, they have child friendly smartphones have been out for a while, mainly in the US. There is a particularly well known brand of that, and there are in fact family child safety smartwatches as well, and other things. So again, it's personal choice. Now, are you going to buy a 15 year old child friendly smartphone?

When their best mates have an iPhone 15 or 16, it's just a tricky one. But you know, that again, these are other things that are available. Maybe they need to be promoted more and more. We've seen what's happening now in Australia. So, it might be that this needs a bigger push. But one of the things I was saying to somebody the other day, in fact, when an adult or parent goes to buy their child a phone, yes, I know you can buy them online.

And yes, I know you can go down a certain smaller shops and buy them. If you go to a mainstream mobile phone dealership, have you ever seen the posters on the wall about online safety? Do you have a leaflet given to you when you buy that phone? Is the question even asked, are you buying this for your son or daughter?

I don't think it's ever happened. There's an opportunity there that we could just give a bit of a push down that road as well.

Sue: Yeah, because of course there's so much talk, and we interviewed in another episode, smartphone free childhood. And this, and I've just written an article about the difference between smartphones, smartwatches, and social media.

They're kind of different things that social media, you can access social media, not just on your phones. So it's about thinking about that. All I'm trying to get people to do is think about what they're doing, not just automatically follow the herd. And it is personal decisions. And if you can, in my opinion, delay some of this stuff, then I do think it has a bearing on children's mental health and wellbeing.

But we all know that it is personal. I don't want to be part of the nanny state today. I'm not going to be telling people what to do. But I think we're all watching Australia to see how they now, they had quite a knee jerk reaction to banning social media. And now it's going to be quite complicated to unpick how they actually do it.

But what I think is really interesting and what's great to have you on about here talking to me about it, is that we're all having different conversations suddenly. Suddenly we're talking and what you've just said there is very interesting. I thought about that when you go to the shop to buy the phone or buy the watch or whatever.

There is nothing there to help you to decide or to actually give you some independent advice would be so helpful to parents. So that's an avenue that could perhaps be explored as well.

Andy: Yeah. I will just say that Tesco in relation to a charity, I believe they're a charity have. Done some collaboration on this and if you go to a cafe within a Tesco store that there are now little things with a QR code that takes you to a safety centre, which is great.

It's another thing, but as I say, let's go back to when you actually buy the phone. Now we can't cover everything. But, there's an opportunity, there's a gap there. , I was going to say something else and I've completely forgotten what it was. But, oh yeah, that was it. It was, we have to understand now, right, that we all live in a tech facilitated world.

Now, I'm going to say something quite contentious here. Tech is good.

Sue: Oh, I am pro tech, but protect. There's this balance, isn't there, between being pro tech, which I am, but protect them sometimes when they're younger in particular, and educate them, talk with them, not at them, sort out the privacy settings together and so therefore they are empowered, not rescued, or you're not building a brick, a wall between the two of you, you're building a bridge around navigating all of the jungle.

Andy: Absolutely and just to point something out, we are fully aware that there are parents and adults, who set up accounts for younger children who are way underage to be on those platforms. Now we know that for a fact. Okay. And again, that's an education. And what consequence is there for those parents who do that?

Nothing. Let's just say, argument's sake, a situation happens with a young person and it's quite a bad one. And, the safeguarding team or the police or whoever go to the house to talk to the people. Oh, how did this child have an account? Well, I set it up. Right. Okay. Slap on the wrist, you shouldn't have done that.

Now, is there a way, I'm going to, as I say, I might be a bit contentious here, could we say, right, we're going to have to fine you for that? I'm not saying a huge fine. I don't know. I'm not suggesting we necessarily do that, but there's no consequence. And again, it's back to education. Telling parents you should not be doing this. It is now, well, against the law potentially.

Sue: Well, also in Australia, it's going to be fascinating how they negotiate all of that. The thing that I'm always interested in is how do we reach parents that haven't necessarily thought about these things?

That's why I suppose I started the podcast, to try and get people thinking about it. Because most people just, follow the herd and do what everyone else does and all the rest of it. But certainly for this episode, it's very important for me to be talking about privacy. And snooping and spying because I had a client fairly recently who had worked out what her son's code was to his phone and was accessing his messages and snooping on him and spying on him.

He's 15 and that will just destroy, if he found that out, destroy the trust, destroy the conversation, and make everything much, much worse. So we had to look at ways around that when I was working with her. I mean, what is your take on how this whole digital privacy and parental monitoring will be evolving, do you think, in the next few years?

Andy: Yeah, I mean, It is a tricky one. And, as I say, there's this age thing. So let's say a 10 year old, you've bought your 10 year old a phone. I can't remember what age my two they don't, I don't think they were that young, but I remember when I first got on the phone, I said, this, I own this phone, I'm paying for it.

So whatever I want to do, I will do it. And I, I said to them, if you don't allow me to do it. I will just take your phone off you. It's as simple as that, and obviously that does cause an issue.
Sue: Yeah, no, of course, because it's what I call it, is I call it confident parenting. You see, the whole shift has gone away from saying no to our kids.

We don't say no to them at the checkout when they grab a load of sweets. We don't sometimes say no to them. It's coming up. This episode is coming up around Christmas, even if you're listening to it in the summer. The idea of being confident in sometimes saying no, putting boundaries round stuff, because we have boundaries round alcohol, we have boundaries round cigarettes and junk food and sugar and all the rest of it.

This is the new one to get some boundaries round and be confident in your decisions. If you've done a bit of reading or listening to this or looking at My Parent Hub or all the resources and blogs that we've put up there, then you should feel a little more confident to say, hey, you can have this device as long as X, Y and Z.

As they grow, mature and show responsibility, your rules start to change because they're showing responsibility and self regulation, which is what the game is all about in everything. Self regulating adults is what we're trying to raise, but we are trying to navigate the digital jungle. What's your final tips, do you reckon, Andy for parents listening to this then?

Andy: It's, every, let's be fair, every parent does something different and, some. Great at this and, we'll have the conversations. Some really couldn't give two hoots about it. Okay. And we have to realise everybody's different. There's not, as we've always said, there's not one size fits all.

And, we have to know that, but it's also, there are lots of opportunities. It doesn't have to be, when I say the parent, it's great if the parents take responsibility. But maybe the education in schools needs to be improved as well. I mean,

Sue: Yeah, it's a combination.

Andy: Yeah, the children get, what is it, one to two hours, maybe if they're lucky, a month. Even a year on this. Maybe investment into that, but let's think outside the box a little bit as well. As I say, I mentioned the mobile phone shops. There's a wide variety of stuff that could be there. And there are a myriad of resources for parents and adults, you can reach out if you don't know what's right or wrong, let's say, or you've got a question, there are a lot of professionals out there who can help you don't be afraid to reach out, even if it's I think, as you mentioned that, I think my son's doing something, do you think it's right?

I should snoop, or as you say, I have snooped, it, we should be saying to them, right, look, this is maybe the best way, but it's your choice because that we can advise you that if you're going to do that, it might exasperate it. So there might be other options to do as well. If you've, if there's that much of a concern.

Then there may be something going on that maybe a professional can help you, talk you through and maybe deal with it in a different manner.

Sue: Yeah. I mean, there's some blogs I've written all around this, actually, that you can go and have a look at if you're listening to this. Andy, thank you so much for your time.

Thank you for giving us some expert advice. Where can people find out more about you?

Andy: Well, to be honest, I spend most of my time on LinkedIn, which I do appreciate is not everyone's cup of tea, but obviously they could contact me through you. By all means, please reach out to Sue, just say, Oh, I've heard the podcast by Andy and we can get in touch like that.

I don't have a website for various reasons, but that's not me hiding away. But yeah. Please feel free to get in touch via Sue and I'm more than happy to speak or chat to anybody and I can also help with if you think your school needs a bit more of a chat in a particular subject, I'm very much in that space as well, so we can sort something out, I can get someone in.

Sue: Right, well we'll put links into the shownotes as well so people can find you, but thank you very much for your time today.

Andy: My pleasure. Thank you very much for having me.

Sue: I'd like to tell you a bit more about my new book. As a parent myself, I know firsthand how overwhelming it can feel to keep up with the digital world our kids are growing up in. That's why I wrote Navigating the Digital Jungle Essential Scripts for starting meaningful conversations with toddlers, tweens and teens about smartphones or social media, AI, cyber safety and much, much more.

My book is bursting with ready to use conversation starters that make it easier to guide your kids through everything from screen time and social media to the tricky terrain of online safety and artificial intelligence. It's like having a road map for those critical and important chats every parent needs to have.

My book of Digital Jungle Scripts is all about giving you the tools to start those difficult but important conversations, no matter your child's age. Easy, practical scripts to help you feel confident and connected. If you're ready to feel more self confident around discussing Roblox, Snapchat or WhatsApp, grab your copy of Navigating the Digital Jungle Essential Scripts and start transforming those tough tech talks into meaningful family moments.

And let's get those conversations started at navigatingthedigitaljungle.com/resources. So now it's time for our family change segment, where we challenge you to engage in conversation in meaningful conversations about privacy and trust with your children. So grab your digital machetes and let's tackle this one together. So this week's family change I want you to sit down with your family and discuss what privacy means to each of you.

What boundaries would everyone like to set? And how can you respect each other's wishes while ensuring safety? I want you to chat about this whole conversation. It can take privacy offline, it can do privacy online, but it's a really important conversation. What do you think, Angee, about having a chat with kids about privacy? Where would you start?

Angee: Well, I think that's a good question. Where do you start? I mean, probably there's been discussions about some kind of parental tools that are implemented into the devices that your kids had. So just starting with talking about each one's opinion of parental tools, parental controls might be a good start.

Sue: I think privacy is very important and children don't always see the dangers of what they're doing and this is very important that I think using the word, "Safety settings". I've written an article about it, we'll put it in the shownotes. I've written a couple of articles. Just that slight change in language can make teens not feel quite well they've got to get round that if she's calling it, parental controls, because that's exactly what kids want to do.

They want to get round you, they're kind of challenging in those years of teenagers. So I think privacy settings is a better one. And then talking with them. In fact, we go to the hub, on the Navigating the Digital Jungle resources. There's all sorts of things there. There's technical contracts that you can use.

There's all sorts of ways to talk about privacy with kids because they don't always see the dangers in WhatsApp or Snapchat. And yet we know that they are dangerous because anyone can join in and talk. And the a big conversation is to have about not sharing your information and where you are and how old you are and where you live.

And we think that's obvious because we're in this kind of world now, a lot talking about it. But most parents and most kids don't even think about that. They just want to get stuck into the conversations. So I think it's very important, really, about that.

Angee: Kids often think they know better.

Sue: Oh! Oh, really?

Angee: Because they're the digital, yeah. No, but they're actually digital natives, so they actually do know a lot more about the technical world. Yes. And in the moment, just to remind them, you do know more about the technical world. But, the safety is kind of the same problem online and offline, and we've all been living for a lot longer than them.

Just to point out, you do know the online world, I know. From the offline world, what kind of people are on the other side of the online world? Just to say, yes, but my input is just as valid and much more experienced, that we know the risks, stranger danger is stranger danger online and offline.

Sue: But you've got to be careful how you come across, because as soon as you get heavy handed, and I wrote an article about why Stranger Danger isn't really working online, because Stranger Danger was back in the 80s, and it was be careful of strangers, they might offer you a suite, and say come and look for my puppets.

Well, it's very different now. And of course, people that want to get hold of you are very manipulative and very good at drawing you in. And they play the long game as well, for paedophiles or sextortion and all these terrible things. And that, the whole point of the podcast is not to be doom and gloom and scary, but it is to raise your awareness and to get you involved as parents in understanding some of this.

So do go and explore the hub because we've got all sorts of resources there to help you. Just get a handle on some aspect. Don't get overwhelmed by it. Maybe you just Read and download the, WhatsApp guide around privacy or something. Or I've written just recently now, I'm doing an e course I'm writing, all around how to set some of those safety settings up so that you just have that extra protection.

But I think the main thing here with all of this is how you talk with your kids. Don't talk at them. Don't come at them aggressively or, oh, what, you're nagging them all the time. Talk about it together, navigate it together, and those conversations keep your children safer, which is much, much better in the long term.

Angee: Yeah, that's really important, yeah. Talk with them.

Intro: Listener questions.

Angee: We've received some fantastic questions from our listeners, so let's dive in and provide some answers. Sue, let me do this because I'm so passionate about privacy, and these are questions about privacy. Absolutely. So the first one is, what's the best way to monitor my child's online activity without invading their privacy?

That's obviously a difficult one, but parental control apps, the well known ones, that you can look for reviews on the different types of apps that you're considering, they do promote transparency without being overly spying, so to speak. A lot of good ones will look for trigger words, for example, where the kids are writing, so you won't see everything that they're doing, but you can see some kind of trigger words.

And that's something that I've also seen implemented in some schools, and that's where I've seen some feedback from the kids themselves, where they actually, Could be slightly annoyed when there's a false positive, but at the same time, they do, I've seen multiple kids say, yeah, they like that there's some kind of trigger there, some kind of control there just making it clear that certain things you need to know, you need to have a trigger, you need to be able to step in as a parent, as your responsibility, And just to find the ones that are also reviewed by kids, maybe, and not only by the parents, that might help.

Sue: There are lots of apps, aren't there, like Bark. Actually, I was chatting to the guy that is the creator of Pinwheel smartphones this week, and they are launching in the UK, because those smartphones are absolutely guided by parental controls, and it really is a, communication between parent and child.

And it's very safe. And it's in the United States and it's in Canada. So I've just noticed, and he was saying they're launching in the UK. So it is about exploring them. There is a list that we can put in the show notes about ones. I'm not affiliated to any of them, so please research them yourself, but to give you a bit of a guide, and on the resource page or on my blog, I do talk about some of these parental safety apps.

But it's best to research them, but I know that, people go, well, where do I start? So we can kick start you, but the responsibility is always over to you. What's the next question? We had a lot of questions in about this, didn't we, Angee?

Angee: Yeah, exactly. And this is a hot topic for everyone around. The second one is how do I bring up the topic of online safety without sounding like I don't trust them?

Obviously a lot of kids will think in the first moment that you don't trust them anyway, but you know, that's okay. And you don't! But don't tell them! Why don't you trust me? Well, I was I used to like you once I was that age, but we talked about it a little bit before, so if you frame it as a partnership, it's not you against them.

I also feel very strongly about pointing out that each one has their own strengths and knowledge going into the conversation of online safety. We should acknowledge they are the digital natives, though. No technology better than us, probably from the second day that they used the technology. So just saying, yeah, I know you know it better, but I know other things better, and we need to work together on this, and it's not about not trusting you.

It's about letting you loose. We've said obviously, previously in this podcast, putting a person online is giving them access to the whole world, and the whole world access to them, and things to understand that is not something that a teenager or a young preteen can't handle on their own, and this is to say respectfully, we need to do this together. It's not about you.

Sue: My analogy, it's I have a 4x4 outside, and it's like giving the keys to the 4x4 to a child, and saying, there you go, fill your boots, off you go. Well, they're going to crash that if they haven't passed their test and they're only nine or ten years old or they're 13. They think they know everything, of course they do, but they don't really know how to navigate that safely.

The analogy of thinking about, oh, the four by four, here's the keys, you wouldn't do that. I think the same principle applies. Just have that in your head when they're online because we tend to, as I've said many times, we tend to over protect them in the real world and under protect them when they're online.

So we do need to be careful. They aren't the be all and end all these safety settings, but they are certainly a barrier to it. And then it's talking and teaching them sort of critical thinking, media literacy. All of these are extra buffers around them. The schools will be doing the same sort of thing.

They'll think you're an old fuddy duddy no matter what, but your job is to be an old fuddy duddy sometimes, and not their friend. But it's how you say it. It's your tone of voice, it's your body language, and that's, very important really, I think. And my advice is to just stay involved. Stay involved with the apps they're interested in.

If you go to the blog on Navigating the Digital Jungle, I'm a bit prolific and a bit overwhelming to some people, I know. But there's so many blogs on there that I've written around all sorts of these topics. And you just have to kind of go through it. Stay aware of the platforms and the apps that they use.

And when they ask for an app, don't automatically just download it. How about getting them to pitch to you like they used to on The Apprentice or whatever it might be. They have to pitch why they want it and then you can talk about it together. It gets conversations going in a kind of more light hearted way and then you can see whether it's appropriate for their age and what the content might be.

Play, you've often said it many times, play their favourite games or explore the apps together because then you understand them better and then you can, say, oh, let's do it together sometimes. Although they don't want to do it all the time with you, of course not. But encourage them to show you what they're doing and why they like certain things because that keeps the conversations going and it helps keep them safer. That's all, really, I think.

Intro: Now for some top tips.

Sue: Well, this is the segment where we share some bite sized ideas and nuggets of wisdom, hopefully, to help you navigate the digital jungle safely and more effectively. My tip today is to create, A Family Tech Agreement. Now I've created one of those in the resources page of Navigating the Digital Jungle.

It's a simple document that outlines the acceptive online behaviour and it has privacy expectations, it has consequences for breaches, and it ensures that everyone has input in it. You can download it quickly and simply and easily, but then you know where you are. I always think if we have clarity around certain things, then people know where the boundaries are, and then you talk about it if they break those boundaries.

So you can download Navigate in the Digital Jungle family technology contract with scripts, because as I specialise in how you say stuff. It's about helping you have conversations. Some of the Scripts, depending on what they're about, are for toddlers, for tweens, and for teens. So I go through all the different ages about how to have these conversation starters, because I think it's important that you feel confident when you're starting to introduce this stuff with your kids. So go and check that out.

Angee: What are your quick tips for this week? So my quick tip regarding privacy is really look with your child, with your teen and how other people are respecting their own or their kids privacy because there's enough examples as soon as you're on social media, you can see people who are sharing, pictures of their kids or they can schools also share pictures of this students in.

Sue: You have to get permission to do that though. When I go in to do workshops in schools, when I first did it, I used to go, oh, here are all the kids in the assembly, isn't that lovely? You have to get written permission though, don't you, to have all of that?

Angee: Definitely. I think it's just some of them will hide the faces and some of them will show the faces.

Just to have the conversation. Even be willing to hear from your child that maybe they would like you to treat their privacy differently, the way you present the family online or something, just to have those kind of conversations based on real people's actions and your own action and their actions.

This is my quick tip. Build a relationship in terms of privacy discussions and each one's opinions. Kind of building on what we said before. But I think it can be quite powerful to take concrete examples of how other people are doing it.

Sue: Well, I often work with parents and say, don't share all these lovely pictures of your child, young just willy nilly out there.

I mean, of course, if it's a private Facebook group and grandma lives in Australia, then of course she wants to see things, but people forget that and they put them everywhere. They put them on Instagram and let's face it, AI is taking those images because they belong to META. Once you put them out there, they're gone.

And they are doing terrible things to them, I don't want to be frightening about it, but some of the stuff I read about what's happening to images, and again, there's this video that, was done around an advert that showed how they took a young child's face and added to it, and added to it, and added to it, and it wasn't very nice the way it went, so I just want you to pause to ponder some of these things, when, like first day at school, I know that time has passed, because it's usually in September, but up go all these images of kids, and that's when it becomes difficult.

Then you've lost control of some of those images, and you didn't even know. You were just sharing them to say, oh look, doesn't he look lovely in his new uniform? And oh my god, she's got new shoes, doesn't she look sweet? But that's not really what happens, and there are some bad actors out there that take those images.

And don't do very nice things with them. So for me, it is about regular check ins as well with your kids. Schedule some weekly family meet ups to talk about their online experiences perhaps for that week. I don't know if you happen to sit down and have Sunday lunch or something and go, Oh! Oh, it's Sunday lunch.

Let's chat about how's it gone this week online. I know it sounds unusual, do it any day, but try and get into the habit of checking in because it keeps the communication open and I think it keeps everybody kind of aware a bit more. And spend time, as I've said, learning digital safety together because that's empowering your own children.

You're not coming at them, you're trying to empower them so they self regulate and understand what's happening and what could happen to them. So yeah, that's my sort of quick tip for this week.

Sue: So now we come to script of the week. I'm always on about my quick scripts to start those important conversations with children.

So here's one that might help you and then you can go and download and have a look at some of the others. And I'm currently writing a book called Digital Jungle Scripts that will be available soon. So you could start off by saying, "Hey, I wanted to chat with you about staying safe online. It's really important to me that you feel comfortable with your privacy, and instead of focusing on parental controls, I think it would be great for us to explore privacy settings together on your social media accounts. This way, you can have more control over what you share and who sees it. How does that sound?"

So there you go, that's the sort of script for this week to kind of get those conversations around privacy started. As I say, there's loads more of those types of scripts on the Hub, Navigating the Digital Jungle Resources.

Angee: I like that script because I've obviously read a lot about how these parental controls can be easily changed by kids, and the empowerment of saying, look it's up to you, yeah, I can put my parental controls in, I know that you have sometimes the possibility to change it, the platforms set that up and you explain, it's up to you, we'll do this together, make sure you know how to do it, and it's, Yeah, that's a good one. I like it.

Sue: Thank you. It's about incrementally letting them go, isn't it? Because when they start, you've got to protect them, like crossing the road. You hold their hand, you make sure they're safe. You don't just say, off you go. It's incremental. And as they grow and mature, you empower them, you teach them, and then they can ride off into the sunset on their own, hopefully. So what are you working on at the moment, Angee?

Angee: I'm working on a SHIELD Online Global Safety Conference at the end of February 2025. Just to set up, the topics and the structure and just getting all the, everything together. It's a very exciting thing and all these topics that you've obviously discussing are global.

And we need to get us together. Absolutely. People together globally to make real change and motivate each other. So that's the main thing I'm working on. And also an information campaign about EdTech to help parents ask the right questions and assess. Especially privacy, because I'm working with some privacy people on that. Those are the main things that I'm doing right now. Well, it's keeping you out of trouble.

Sue: It sounds like an awful lot of work to me. I'm looking forward to hearing more about it.

Angee: I'm looking forward to Christmas already, so I can sleep.

Intro: Navigating the Digital Jungle with Sue Atkins and Friends.

Sue: That's it for today. In today's episode of Navigating the Digital Jungle with Sue Atkins and Friends, remember to subscribe, leave us a review and send in your questions. We love hearing from you. Share the episode with friends and family and schools and teachers. It's a free resource. for everyone to get the conversations started, to give each other some helping hands with ideas.

Sue: If you've got a question that you do need a specialist to answer, we've got loads of guests coming on. So do email us at info@navigatingthedigitaljungle.com and don't forget to share, as I say, with all sorts of people and the hashtag is digital jungle. So that's it. Thank you for listening. Find each episode on iTunes all across all the platforms, whether it's Spotify or wherever you like to listen to your favourite one. So until then, stay safe and keep exploring.

Intro: It's a jungle out there.

Time for a word from our sponsor.

Sue: I'd like to tell you a bit about this episode's sponsor, Gigabit IQ. At GigabitIQ, they're redefining your internet experience with blazing fast Gigabit speeds and award winning online safety. Discover how their Family Guard Plus and Cyber Guard Plus are safety features that keep your home and your loved ones protected from digital threats.

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