

Navigating the Digital Jungle

Where tech meets family life

SEASON 3

EP 05: STEM, Coding, Creativity, and Cyber Safety: The New Education Frontier

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, author of Navigating the Digital Jungle Scripts to Start Family Tech Conversations about Smartphones, AI, Online Safety, and Other Essential Topics.

And I'm your guide on this journey today, and I'm here with Angeline Corvaglia, creator of Data Girl and Friends, empowering young minds with online safety and AI literacy, videos, games, and educational materials. And we're joined today also by Caroline Allams, the co-founder of Natterhub, a fun and secure online safety learning platform for 5 to 11 year olds that empowers children to become digitally savvy.

So, today we're looking at encouraging children to engage in STEM education while staying safe online. That's combining education, creativity, and safety, and unlocking future skills for tomorrow. So, let's start by looking at and exploring the world of STEM, which is science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and coding for children.

Because as the digital landscape continually evolves, these skills have become essential for future success. So, we're going to break down what STEM is and coding really means. They're going to be loads of information on the show notes for you to have a read of and have a look at as well. So, Angeline, what is STEM?

Angeline: Well, as you said, it stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. And it's much more than just the science that you might think of because it's really interdisciplinary, encouraging critical thinking, problem solving. I think we'll see later on with the guests, what really this, this all encompasses.

And of course, it's important because our surrounded with technology more and more every day, having knowledge in STEM really helps them know how to manage that technology, how to do it creatively and be curious, how to solve problems. So, it's really much more than just, you know, it's just your science class or your technology class.

It's, it's more well-rounded in terms of understanding technology.

Sue: It's not just for future scientists and engineers, is it, although we're very keen to get women into STEM, I am anyway, and young people, but it is about equipping them with skills that they need to navigate and thrive in this really rapidly changing world.

When we look at coding as well, I mean, I want to talk a little bit about that because that's such an interesting area. That's where you write instructions that a computer can understand. So, that's how websites and apps and games are created. And so, learning to code is like learning a new language. And it's a language, I think, that can shape the world.

And I think it's important, again, we've talked about logical thinking and problem-solving skills. It's very creative. It's very innovative. It also teaches resilience and perseverance through sort of debugging. And I think it really prepares children to take on the future and be part of that future. And some of the jobs that will be created through these STEM and coding activities really are something you want to get your kids aware of, I think, rather than judging it and keeping away from it and being frightened of it. There are loads of coding games like Scratch and Tynker and Code.org. Enroll your kids in a coding club or workshops during the summer holidays or Easter holidays or Christmas holidays or whatever holidays they're on.

There's loads of online really great coding clubs. Even your school may well have an after-school club. But it's not just about creating apps and websites. For me, it's about teaching kids to think critically, solve problems, and be innovative. So, you need, as a parent, to start being curious.

Don't go, oh, well, I don't know. I didn't grow up with that. I don't know what that's all about. So, perhaps if you show an interest, if you sort of love gaming, introduce them to coding by showing them how games are built, or go on and find some age-appropriate resources, like Kodable, which is with a K or Bee-Bot, all of these wonderful things for older children.

They're really great to explore Python, JavaScript, robotic skills, kits, all of that sort of thing is a mindset to embracing hands on fun science and coding kind of, hobbies. I think, you know, Lego do interesting things with mind domes. And there are some challenges there and some really interesting hackathons that you can get involved in.

So, we'll put in the show notes the websites like Code.org, Scratch, MIT Education, Khan Academy. There are loads, there are loads of good books as well, like Hello Ruby, that's a wonderful series by Linda Liukas, Python for Kids by Jason Briggs. Codable is a great website, there are loads of courses, but if you go onto the website now with the show notes, we'll put a list there of key resources for you to go and explore, go and play, go and find out about.

Angeline: Yeah, there's one thing I do want to point out, before you go to these coding websites, please have a look on Common Sense Media, how they are rated, because a lot of them have exchanges and chats. between the kids and anywhere there's a chat or there's exchange, there's a risk of meeting the wrong person.

Just because I, I was personally looking into that relatively recently and I chose Code.org because it was quite good and there was good reviews from kids and parents. And so, yeah, just have a look, any app website before you go dive into it, check on Common Sense Media.



Sue: Really, really good point. Just want to point out a little bit then about Samaira Mehta. She's a creator of CoderBunnyz with an A Z. She developed a coding board game called this CoderBunnyz, and she was just eight years old when she started to learn programming in a sort of a fun and logical way. And then that started a whole coding kind of thing with her classmates and then she created a board game that became a hit.

Now, not everyone becomes famous and makes loads of money like that, but she does have now some great talks. So, if you look her up, we'll put it in the show notes. And she's even launched an initiative called "Yes, One Billion Kids Can Code". So, go and find out about that because she might inspire your kids, girls and boys around that. And that leads me in today to our guest.

So, joining us on today's episode is Caroline Allams, award winning educator, EdTech innovator, and advocate for digital literacy and online safety. And Caroline is the co-founder of NatterHub, an interactive online safety and digital citizenship platform designed to teach children how to navigate the online world responsibly. And recently, NatterHub became part of Twinkl, one of the world's leading educational resource providers, expanding its reach and impact. So, with a background in teaching, curriculum design, and creative education, Caroline is passionate about helping children develop critical digital skills, fostering creativity in STEM learning, and ensuring young people stay safe online. So, thanks for joining us today, Caroline.

Caroline: Thank you.

Sue: So, let's kick off and ask you, could you share a little bit about your journey and what led you up to co-founding natterHub?

Caroline: My background's education, as you've already given me in that wonderful intro, I think that is the nicest intro I've had ever. I started off early years, foundation stage, key stage one, eventually I taught all the way up to year eight.

And I was always super passionate about social and emotional development, and I quickly realized the importance of forging important connections with children so that their wellbeing was good at school in order to really maximize their academic potential. And that stayed with me when I set up my first business called The Pedagogues, which was all around communicating children's small achievements.

And from that point, I started to imagine how did we get to the point where we just put children online? And with every other facet of child development, where there's potential risk, we usually precede that with some kind of education or some training or lessons that allow children then to enjoy that space with less risk.

So, if we think about the, the analogies that are so often used with the online world, the swimming pool, great fun, enjoy the water when you go on holiday, but of course, a potentially very risky environment if you don't know how to swim and same as riding a bike or crossing the road. These are all stages and ages of children's development where they need to understand the risks and they need to know how to self-protect and they need to know that there's an element of learning how to thrive in that space.

Caroline: So, when I just had my second child, I thought, right now it's time for me to tackle the thing that frightens me most as both an educator and also as a parent and create this education that comes before children get their first mobile phone.

Now, of course, this was a long time ago now, this was when my son was one and he's almost 14. So, this has been in my world for a long time. And we've seen how children's use of the internet and being online has crept further and further into the early years of their life. And so, I really wanted to put together a program that allowed children to understand the risk whilst protecting their childhood and give them the soft skills that they need to be a, a really positive digital citizen. That's a very simple way of addressing what I was trying to do. Of course, I'm sure we'll come to it, but there's a lot more than just that that needs to happen.

Sue: Oh, absolutely. I mean, NatterHub is described, isn't it, as a safe social media for schools. So, how does it work and what impact has it had so far? An enormous impact, I guess.

Caroline: I'm always afraid to be satisfied with how far we've gone. Yes, yeah, well, that's the nature of always wanting to improve, I guess, and make a difference. Yes, and I think we know that the problems are getting worse.

Sue: Yes.

Caroline: The noise around online vulnerability is getting louder. We are very, very slowly waking everybody up to the fact that this is of concern. Natterhub was launched at the beginning of the first lockdown. It wasn't ready. It was horrid. It was buggy and glitchy.

And we were really afraid to release it at that point. But the pandemic was, was happening. We wanted to offer schools a safe space for children to stay connected.

Sue: Yeah.

Caroline: And so we released it and our teachers were so patient with us. And, you know, we garnered this really loyal following right from the beginning.

And the product really has grown with our users. And I'm really proud to say that we have reached over 10, 000 schools in 80 countries around the world, mainly in the UK. And so, yeah, it's creating some really nice impacts, but of course, we're talking about safeguarding, we're talking about giving children these important digital skills that will carry them far beyond their primary school. And so it's important that we reach every child really.

Sue: And by the sound of what you were saying, then. because you were sort of building it and listening. So, you were kind of making it for what people wanted as well, I guess, is that you weren't just pumping it out. You were actually asking and listening to what the teachers wanted too, were you?



Caroline: Yeah, absolutely. Whenever we think about children in a digital space, of course, that space in itself is a fast-evolving space. There's things changing all the time and that makes it in itself a very overwhelming topic for teachers to have to address, and for parents to keep their own children safe. So, we obviously knew from the beginning that we would always have to offer an agile framework, something that could respond to changes in behavior.

And we've seen that since we launched. When we first started doing research in 2016, around that point, everybody was concerned about secondary school children. Everybody was worried about sexting and sending news. And they were saying, but why aren't you doing this with secondary schools? And a secondary education is not my area of expertise, but also as an early year's teacher and key stage one, we know the value of early intervention.

So, we wanted to be that education piece before children had digital autonomy, but then what's happened, unfortunately, and this is, as you know, has been exacerbated by the pandemic. This online vulnerability that we've seen from statistics in, from reports such as those that come from the Internet Watch Foundation, an organization that we work very closely with.

We're seeing this spike of online vulnerability move really very quickly into the primary age range. And the biggest spike of that vulnerability has come from girls aged 7 to 11 who are being targeted and groomed and coerced into creating online sexual imagery. And so, we absolutely need to be very focused on that early intervention and we need to ensure that our children understand how to self-protect.

And of course the content, the knowledge side of children being online. That's changing all the time and their interests move all the time and, and what they enjoy to do one month online, that may be very different the next month. So, yes, to answer your question, we, we have, we've listened very carefully to our teachers.

We've understood that everybody is trying to embed online safety across the curriculum and a timetable. But for me, this has emerged as my challenge for 2025 because It's almost impossible to embed online safety across the curriculum and across the timetable if you don't have the right technology. in the primary classroom.

It's a bit like taking children to the dining hall in a primary school and saying, right, we're going to learn how to swim. We're going to learn all of the strokes. You will know exactly what movement to do. We're not going to go into the pool because that's just too dangerous or we, we don't have access to a pool, but don't worry.

You'll know what to do when you get in the water and of course we know that that's not going to work. Yeah. And it's been a real privilege because I think teachers are so often just given tools and schemes of work and frameworks, and they're just told to deliver it. And I never wanted to tell teachers how to teach with NatterHub.

I just wanted to give them a flexible system that gave them everything they need, but allowed them to deliver it in a way that worked for them.



Sue: But that's the secret. That's the magic of that, isn't it? And parents listening to this as well. I'm so interested because obviously I'm very interested in the parenting side of this and it's changing all the time.

That's why I started the podcast really. How do you see social media affecting children's mental health and their social skills right the way through the ages?

Caroline: Well, of course, we are also hearing some really loud opinions around, say, the extremes of digital use. And Jonathan Haidt's book, *The Anxious Generation*, has highlighted some, you know, really, alarming statistics around the decline of children's mental health, psychological issues, the loneliness in schools is a really big problem, and generally the decline of academic achievements.

We know that certain socioeconomic backgrounds are affected more than others on that one. Whilst I have many of the same concerns, and I do advocate many of his suggestions around getting devices out of bedrooms, really monitoring carefully around children's access to technology. I can't help but think that we need to make sure that we are speaking to children.

Sue: Include the young people too in this. I've noticed that seems to be left out on a lot of these platforms and a lot of these conversations, certainly on LinkedIn where I'm hanging out a lot more. And the other thing I feel quite passionate about, jumping in, sorry, is about the parenting habits as well.

And the early years, I keep now noticing more and more around the devices and babies because people are not bonding, they're on their phones when they're breastfeeding or bottle feeding or changing nappies. So, these are the conversations, because I feel it's coming down the ages, and it does start with parenting habits too, doesn't it?

Caroline: You know, a lot of work needs to be done around some statutory guidance on our digital use with our youngest children. And our children are being born into this digital landscape that they didn't ask to be born into. They're learning that games are Super exciting, and their dopamine is being triggered by every fast-paced image.

But we also, as you've alluded to, we have to also remember that our parents are very distracted. Our parents are not making the eye contact that they used to make with their children. Our parents, you know, if they're digitally distracted, are they speaking less to their children? We know that school readiness is a massive problem and it would be really interesting to know if there is any research on the decline of school readiness and digital distraction from parents.

Sue: I've actually just posted out, funny enough, before we jumped on here, talking about that very thing on LinkedIn as well. Is there a correlation? There must be. I don't want to point fingers at parents. I'm actually there to try and raise awareness for them, to pause, to ponder. It's not telling people, oh, you're a terrible parent.



We are all trying to navigate it, but definitely there must be some correlation between children. You know, the Kindred 2 research that's just come out around school readiness as well. And I just think, to try and reach the very parents, this is my challenge all the time. It's all very well talking to people who get it, and on LinkedIn it's marvelous, but we're all sort of an echo chamber around this sort of thing.

I'm always trying to get out to the parents who don't necessarily think about this stuff. They certainly don't read the research, why would they? They're busy. But how do they get to know of, like Jonathan Haidt's ability to get it out there. I mean, he's changed the direction of all the conversations. So, I'm trying to change them even further down to the younger years as well. What do you think we can do?

Caroline: Well, I know it's really difficult because of course with mass use, which we're all at the mercy of our digital device, there is no a normalized behavior. And so, it's without any reflection that, you know, a child who might be grizzly in a pram is instantly given some digital distractions.

A device and it's the same when you're going through challenges as we have done as parents. And nobody is suggesting that hefting is a breeze, potty training, being in a school assembly with an older child and the little one needs to be quiet. You know, we work so hard at quietening Children down now that I, I'm also worried that we're in danger of, you know, children losing their voice because they are repressed from a very young age.

Oh, you must keep quiet here. Just look at this. I want to talk to, or I need to work. You keep quiet. I'm a mom. I only got through lockdown and, you know, launched my business ironically and needed to. put my children on a screen so that they could do the schoolwork, keep busy. So, it doesn't come from a place of judgment, but I think having the awareness of the need to not normalize very young children be spending a long time on screens is a massive issue.

Sue: Because for me, you know, in a restaurant and in comes the toddler and they're not learning to self-regulate because as soon as they look like they might have a tantrum in Sainsbury's, you hand them a device. So, they are learning that, oh, well, if I do that, I get this. I saw a video of Hugh Grant over the weekend with smartphone free childhood saying, you know, you take them out to the park, you take them off to, you know, all sorts of wonderful places that are more interesting that are in the real world.

And, you know, after about 45 minutes, they're like, can we go home now? Because they want to get back on the device. So, it really is a challenge for all sorts of parents in all sorts of situations, isn't it?

Caroline: I also saw that webinar and, and it was interesting because it was really aimed at teachers and that I think that's the first kind of crossover that I've seen from that movement really aimed at educators. I think parents need more confidence.

Sue: Yes.



Caroline: To know that their children can squawk a bit, and squeak a bit, and make a bit that's okay. And that's okay. And that actually raising the, the potential issues around our children being on screens, right from pregnancy, I think has to help. I think that if we are really at the forefront of understanding more about language development, concentration, you know, children learn to read by persevering.

If our children don't persevere, either having to conform to different situations or they don't persevere with more analog environments that require resilience and overcoming boredom. Angeline: When I think back to my adolescence, my childhood, the times where I was bored were the most important times. I also have a daughter, she's nine, and I just make her be bored sometimes. Just sit there.

Caroline: I'm so happy to hear that because my children, and they, they will, to know, they would tell you, they would come to me, they'd say, I'm bored. And my son will say, don't tell me you're pleased. Don't tell me you're happy to hear that I'm bald.

Angeline: What am I supposed to do? Look out the window at the trees? Yes, look out the window at the trees.

Sue: As an only child, right, I was always bored. Loads and loads of times. Certainly on a Sunday afternoon, I think, to remember. But that's why I'm so creative, I think. Because you have to go in and sort of find things to do and create and draw and write or past the time.

Hobbies, I had a problem actually with hobbies, as in, for no apparent reason, you just have an offline hobby. And that seems to have sort of fallen by the wayside. The other thing I want to say is about delayed gratification. Children are not learning to wait for anything, are they?

Caroline: No, no, no, there's no waiting. I had a really interesting conversation with somebody, I grew up in East Yorkshire, up on the walls for a chunk of my childhood, and very rural, very, as, as it was then boring, my experience, not my perception now, anyone who's listening, but it was amazing going through teenage years and seeing the creativity that came out of this very small market town.

So, many musicians, so many writers. We had people who went on to be the editor of The Face. We had so many people creating amazing music and went into fashion, and I'm sure that a lot of that creativity came out of sitting in a very uninteresting place, as it was then for teenagers, and with no distraction, and, and we've seen the loss of teenagers sitting, strumming guitars and sitting on phones instead, but I think the wider boredom is, ah, I heard the other day was about schools, And we were asking around the use of digital screens in schools, and I think you were on this call, Sue.

Yeah. And we were talking about the use of YouTube in schools. In early settings as well. In early settings, yes. I'm sure you and I could talk for a long time about this, how YouTube has replaced singing songs and nursery rhymes. And we knew, as early years educators, the importance of that, physical closeness of sitting, sharing a book and, you know, as a parent as well, snuggling up, enjoying the story, enjoying the physical comfort of creating empathy for the characters in the book and following the words with your finger and understanding their journey as they, as they go through this adventure.

Caroline: And of course, the importance and the relevance of nursery rhymes for rhyming and then reading and all of those important skills. phonics, for example. Often these, these moments in school are being replaced with watch this on YouTube. And I think that what was really alarming that came out of that conversation was that one teacher said that they use YouTube to keep their children quiet when they go from the carpet to the table activity.

Now, there are so many questions there. What is wrong with children behaving like children in the supermarket, going to the park, walking the dog if they're in a pram? What is the problem that we have with children making noise?

Sue: It's almost like Victorian, we haven't moved forward from that, oh, children should be seen and not heard.

I mean, I volunteer, and I've just come back from it actually, on a Monday morning, I go in as a quorum, being stopped, reading, volunteer, not to decode and let them read. I've done all that for 25 years when I was teaching. This is about inspiring them to love a book and definitely watching the kids move around the school, hopping and skipping and nudging and messing around while they move from there to where they're supposed to go for the assembly.

But that's normal children behavior. And then when you're ready, you pull them back. You pull them into a moment of what is everybody ready. And off we go. So, I don't get that. That is very interesting point about when do we try and stop children being children and encourage them of course to self-regulate, that's all part of it too, but that balance and it's an interesting point you make.

Caroline: I think with the curriculum and accountability in schools and the extreme rigor of target , you know, got to reach target, got to reach this target, is that our education has been replaced with this inquiry led, child centered, exploratory, scenario based environment with, watch this PowerPoint, do the worksheet, watch this PowerPoint, do the work, and there's no time for questioning, or what if that happens then, or what if we change direction here?

Which moves on to the, the need for children to wonder, and they wonder when they're bored, and they think about things, and give time to their thoughts. But I think children are funneled into this sausage factory. They're rushed into having to complete a task. If they're not sitting still, then they're not concentrating.

And with everything that we know about neurodivergence and the importance of creativity, it's crazy that we are so hell bent on quietening children. And unfortunately, it's happened at a time with the influence of digital and devices. That this has been the perfect kind of sedative for our children at time when they need to produce the most.

And I think we're in grave danger of minimizing their childhood because they're not, they're not getting the chance to be children because they're either to be distracted by digital or they have to stick still. What I would say is that I'm not anti-technology. No, at all. What I'm passionate about is education.



Sue: And I think that children have a right to be taught what they need to know with the best tools possible. And I think that there's an awful lot of EdTech that is unnecessary. There's a lot of educational technology that's been created for the sake of, Oh, well, I could make a quick app here and then schools will buy it and they'll think it's really cool. And children will love it because they just like being on a screen.

Angeline: And we'll get a bunch of data from the children too.

Caroline: Yes, exactly. And we'll mine that data. But I think that the right tool for the job, I am, as you can probably tell, far more a creator than I am a techie, which seems silly really that I'm a co-founder of an edtech company. It's so much more a human tool because it's the tool that's needed so that children can understand the human aspects of their interaction, of their communication. And it protects their wellbeing. So, it's, it's much more a pastoral tool than it is a tech tool, if you know what I mean. It happens to take place on a, on a platform, but its intention is to keep children safe.

Sue: If you could change one thing about digital literacy, how it's taught at home and at school, what would it be?

Caroline: Frequency. And approach. Am I allowed to?

Sue: Yeah, go on then.

Caroline: Yeah. I mean, frequency, I think we've got to acknowledge that our children, I mean, for now, depends on how things move forward. But I do worry that the, you know, the smartphone free childhood will appeal to maybe the middle classes who can offer alternative resources to their children and those that are left without those options stay on screens.

So, I think whatever we do, it needs to be inclusive, but we need to acknowledge that our children are spending two, three, four, five hours a day on screens at the moment and therefore our education around that needs to be lifted so that we are raising more awareness of potential risks, that we are talking to our children more about talking with them, not at them.

Yes. Yes, talking with them about how to self-protect, what do red flags look like, who are your trusted adults, understanding the nuance of digital communication, how it could be read or misread, and knowing that we need to have an open minded, respectful awareness of empathy. We've got to really remember that the internet is abstract.

For, for young children in an abstract space, it's very difficult for children to perceive risk. They see what they believe to be true. So, if somebody is in on a screen in front of them, telling them with a smiley face or a smiley avatar, that they look really cute. And why don't you send me a picture?

Because it'll be funny. They perceive that to be a real and trustworthy and how we teach children to be safe and how we teach them to be safe online They're different. We teach children not to say no and in face-to-face world



Sue: That stranger danger is a bit old hat now, isn't it? Let's face it.

Caroline: We have to unpack it, we have to make things that feel tangible for our youngest users to the point where they know the, the green cross code.

And I, I know we, we mustn't responsabilize children with their own online safety, but we need to teach them how to self-protect.

Sue: Yes, and learn to self-regulate themselves as they grow mature and are able to do that.

Caroline: I mean, I think self-regulation, I would say, has to be talked about with young children.

Sue: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Caroline: But it's very abstract, that is. There are parents listening, like, oh, well, they should know how to come off their device. Parents need to be in control of that device. Right through primary school for sure.

Sue: And they need to be their children's parent not their friend, and they're gonna have a meltdown. They're gonna have a dopamine crash and call it that, oh, you've got a dopamine crash going on there with a smile that's why I've written the book and why I've got all these guides on my website around what to actually say yes parents don't know how to say start these conversations. They haven't necessarily grown up with them.

So, how do you talk about roadblocks? How do you talk about WhatsApp? How do you talk about Snapchat? And further down, I tend to be unusual because I talk about toddlers and tweens as well as teens. How to talk to your toddler about that because the habits start early, so we need that confidence as parents.

What would you like to say to parents really, because that's my angle on it, parents and teachers working hand together, what do you think they need to hear is the real message from you today?

Caroline: I think if you take one thing away, it is get devices out of bedrooms and bathrooms. I think have a permission-based access to your internet is one of the easiest routes that you can take in the same way that if you've got suites in a cupboard, children have to ask permission.

If they want to go and see their friend, two streets away, they ask if they can go, you have to ask permission to go online because what this does. It not only is a point where you can interact with your child about what they're gonna be doing, how long do they need, but it also creates that culture of the need for caution.

You have to ask permission because it's a potentially risky space, and you are embedding that awareness of the need for caution. So, again. It sounds so simple, but so much reducing online vulnerability comes from conversation, comes from dialogue, but we have to remind ourselves to talk about it. So, I would say that removing devices out of bedrooms, if they have to be in bedrooms, then the door has to be open.



Caroline: It's very difficult for children to be groomed and coerced if they are in the room with you. And you can explain to your child, it's not always going to be like this, but when you're in primary school, at least. You need to be in the, sure you can go online, bring your device with me while I'm doing XYZ.

And the other thing, so, the permission, the device is the close proximity, and the third thing is teach the power of the camera function on your device. Which is that you never send pictures and videos to anyone who asks you whether they ask you in a friendly way, in a kind way, in an angry way, in a threatening way.

If they ask you 50 times, the answer is always no. And, and I think children need to practice and they don't have to role play saying no. Because they are afraid to say no. Because the rest of their life, we're trying to get them to say yes. So there are very mixed messages, and I think children need to know.

Sue: Ask permission before you go online, because it's a privilege, it's not a right for me. And the idea also, a simple thing, is delay does not mean deny. You can have something but we're going to delay it and that's why I came back right at the beginning to sort of delayed gratification and it doesn't mean you're never going to get it but you have to earn that kind of right and we've got to have these conversations because we're your mum and dad and we're here to protect you.

And they don't always understand that, but they just need to, and have those conversations. Caroline, thank you so much for your time. It's been a joy and a privilege to chat with you, and yeah, I hope listeners find out so much. Where can they find out more about Natterhub and you?

Caroline: Yeah, come to Natterhub.com.

We do have a Natterhub Home version of our platform, which is for parents to buy for their children, if they so wish, it's got some interactive lessons on there, but just come to the website. There's lots of information. We often do parent webinars where we give really practical, healthy digital habits tips.

So, yeah, get in touch, ask us away and, and we'll do anything we can to help.

Sue: Wonderful. Thank you so much for your time today.

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.



Sue: It's like having a roadmap 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.

So, 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.

Angeline: So, that leads us to our family change idea of the week. And obviously we're talking about STEM. So, we'll talk about a family STEM challenge. We talked about earlier the issues that parents might not feel confident. There's the need to involve kids, all of that. In, in order to, to make the kids safer, so let's do a hand on STEM challenge as a whole family, so you can learn together, be creative, solve problems together, because kids are.

They know the technology, you know the world, as I always say, work together. So, pick a real-world problem to solve as a family. You can identify some kind of real-world challenge and try to solve them using STEM concepts. For example, create a water saving device for your home and you can kind of look things up on the internet. You can also use the, the AI chat bots for some advice on that and just kind of learn together and you can explore because each one will have something to, to add.

Sue: I know. And then these are the future, you know, you could make something that could really impact later on in life. something that could change the world, which I'm about.

I think that's just fantastic. You can go to NASA STEM engagement. That's a great place to start. There's something called Science Buddies, if you're looking for some ideas around that, or the STEM Institute. So, all of those sort of places have wonderful resources for you to go and play and have fun with.

Intro: Listener questions.

Sue: So, what are some simple and fun ways parents can support their kids interest in STEM and coding at home, even without technical background? That came from Rob Perkins from Norwich. Well, I think we've covered a lot of that, Rob. I hope you find support in some of these things, but go and explore coding apps, coding games.

Perhaps you could build some simple engineering projects with your kids, a marble run or something, or a catapult. That could get quite interesting if you're doing that at home. But go and explore STEM toys and kits. There are some fantastic things, robots and building blocks and circuit kits. Just go and explore them, and then you'll find what you find is interesting with your children.

Now for some top tips. So, how about starting a STEM of the week challenge? Pick a simple STEM topic each week, like gravity, or electricity, or simple machines. And go and explore it together through activities, and that could be a very simple thing like building a paper aeroplane to explore aerodynamics or creating a basic circuit with batteries.

Sue: That brings me back to when I was a teacher in year four and we made the children do that at home because I didn't fancy doing it in class. So, that kept some of the parents busy making a circuit. But make manageable and fun things that spark curiosity and create learning and make you bond up together really.

Angeline: What I like to do with my daughter is ask her what she did in science class, talk about it, and go on the, on the internet and kind of learn more about it. And that deepens their learning as well. You can ask your children, what would you like to know? My daughter's answer was, I want to know how a phone works.

I don't know how a phone works, but I, this, I figured it out. So, you know, you can, it's a screen time where they're learning how to find information responsibly.

Sue: Yes. And together.

Angeline: You can discover it together, you can talk to them about verifying information, all of that. So, it can be a screen time and a learning time as well.

Sue: Excellent. And that leads me on to script of the week. Quick scripts for parents to use with their kids to encourage an interest in STEM and coding. As you know, I tend to specialize in these scripts to get the conversations started. So, you could say something like, Hey, you know your child's name. Have you ever wondered how video games or apps are made?

And they might say, oh, I don't know how to do that. Well, guess what? We can learn to make our own games and apps. It's like solving a puzzle with a computer. And then they say, oh, that sounds cool. And then you could say, well, let's, you know, that's called coding. So, should we have a little explore of computer instruction?

So, we know what to do. Do you want to try creating a simple game together? Hopefully they don't say no, because then I don't know what you're going to do. But if they said yes. Then you could go off and explore Scratch and, you know, go and drag and drop some blocks to make your own games and stories. This is just about conversation starters to get you thinking about this and doing it as Angee says, doing it together.

So, angee, what are you working on at the moment and where can listeners find out more about you and your resources?

Angeline: Well, by the time this airs, I will be probably vacationing after doing a super big online safety conference. Beyond that big conference is SHIELD, as of course Data Girl and Friends. I'm actually working on some new online courses, some really interesting online courses in a little bit of free time I have.

Yeah, so, just go to Data Girl and Friends. There's With the hyphens between the words, yeah, data-girl-and-friends.com, or of course, on LinkedIn, if you're on LinkedIn, that's where I am.



Sue: Absolutely. So, listen, we will put some links into SHIELD because I'm speaking at your wonderful conference. It's a two-day conference on the 19th and 20th of February.

Now, you might be listening to this next year in 2026, I don't know, but wherever you're listening to it or whenever you listen to it. These wonderful talks by these wonderful experts will be available for you to watch and listen to for free evergreen. So, wonderful. And I'm working on working in a school this week, doing some parenting power hours with parents to support them on the digital journey.

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

Sue: So, thank you for joining in and tuning in to Navigating the Digital Jungle with Sue Atkins and Friends. We hope that you found our discussions insightful and empowering as you navigate the challenges of this digital world. And that's it for today's episode.

So, remember to subscribe, leave us a review, tune in next time, tell all your friends and family about us. Tell your school so they can put this link into their free newsletter because this is all a free resource. We're passionate about supporting you, so check out the show notes. And until next time, stay curious, stay informed, and stay safe.

Intro: Yeah, 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, ICT in Education Teacher Academy. Are you an early childhood educator looking to confidently integrate technology into your teaching? Join the ICT in Education Teacher Academy, where they support educators like you with step-by-step guidance, hands on examples, and a community of peers to help you succeed.

Their online workshops and resources are built to fit into your schedule, so you can learn anytime. Anywhere. Start empowering your students through tech today. Visit ictesolutions.com.au to learn more and sign up. That's www.ictesolutions.com.au.

