



youth service bureau

---

## **“Don’t hate the weapon. Hate the game.”**

*By: Sarah Holmboe, M.A., YSB Parent Education Coordinator*

---

I recently read the blog post, “Is Social Media Really Destroying Our Daughters?” by Hollee Becker. There she discusses the alarming pressures girls face online when it comes to both their social and sexual lives. She says she can see “how scary it is to be a teenage girl these days.” But then she asks... **“Wasn’t it always?”**

It’s an interesting question to consider. Reflect back to when you were a teenager:

- You might not have had a cell-phone to text your friends... but you may have passed around handwritten notes.
- You might not have been cyber-bullied through Ask.fm... but you may have been bullied through a slam book.
- You might not have been called rude names on Instagram... but you may have found rude graffiti about you written on the bathroom wall.
- You might not have worried about the number of “likes” on our Instagram photo... but you may have worried about whether you were “liked” enough to be invited to a party.

As Becker put it, “Seeking validation on social media? That’s just a shift in geography.”

When we think about it, many of the issues young women (and men) are facing online today aren’t too different from what we experienced as kids. The one big difference? Social media makes these experiences much more public – which has its pros and cons.

Sure, our kids can get into tricky situations online that could lead to serious problems – cyberbullying, meeting strangers, being exposed to inappropriate content... **But, one great thing about the public nature of social media is that it gives parents the ability to monitor what’s going on online, and to talk with their kids about what they are experiencing.**

**When it comes down to it, we can’t just blame social media for existing.** Kids will experience mean comments and difficult situations whether they’re online or not. Instead of blaming the device or taking it away, we need to look at the deeper problem – how kids are treating each other (online and off), how our own kids are responding, and how we’re communicating with our kids about their social media use and experiences. As Becker put it, “Don’t hate the weapon... hate the game.”

**As a parent, you have the power to monitor your kids’ social media use and communicate with them about their experiences, positive or negative. We encourage you to be actively engaged with your kids and their online experiences. Talk to them about what they’re doing online, their social experiences, and how its making them feel. Talk about what it means to be a good digital citizen and what they should do if they’re ever bullied online. Come up with a game plan for what they should do if they come across inappropriate information online – and what they should *not* do.**

For additional tips and tools for monitoring your child’s social media use, check out [www.ysb.net/resources](http://www.ysb.net/resources).

You can read Becker’s article here (but be warned, some of the language and content is inappropriate for kids): [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hollee-becker/is-social-media-really-de\\_b\\_9486184.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hollee-becker/is-social-media-really-de_b_9486184.html)