

Metrolife lifestyle

● Communication is key to building trust, says psychotherapist

Kid hooked to Net? You are not alone

When it comes to online activity, parents are trying to keep control and yet let children explore

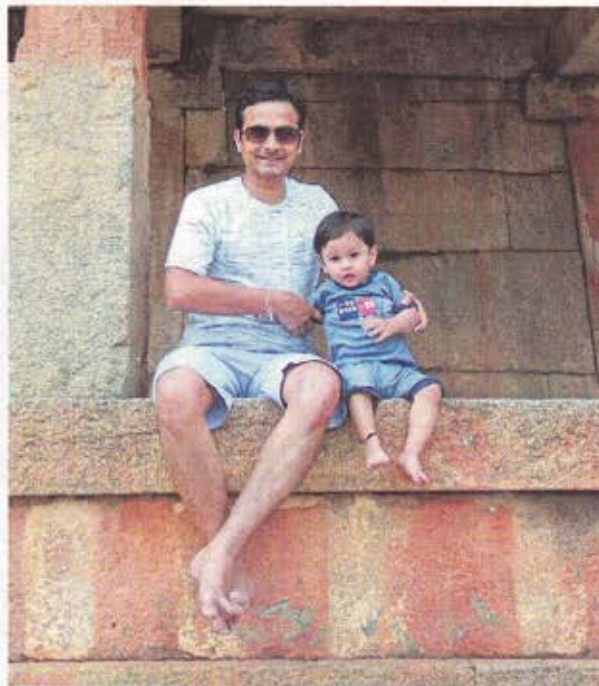
As another Father's Day dawns, let us take a moment to appreciate these hassled parents whose challenges keep growing by the day.

From sourcing the latest superhero merchandise to keeping up with the new trends in parenting ('no scolding', 'be gentle', 'let them explore but hold the reins'), these dads definitely don't have it any easier than previous generations.

A big challenge is to ensure the online safety of their children in an increasingly digitised world. Treading the fine line between too much control and too much freedom is not easy.

"It is difficult to keep a check on your teen children's online activity without antagonising them. You have to start early and educate them about the risks and dangers of being online, as well as the responsibilities that come with it," says Nazruddin, a young father.

With easy access to mobiles and tablets, children get hooked early. "My



Abhijit's son watches videos while eating.

one-and-a-half-year-old son is okay with relinquishing the mobile in the first few minutes. But once he is engrossed in something, he throws a tantrum," says Abhijit Borah, software professional at Oracle.

He uses the mobile or laptop to make the child eat. "The change in behaviour when a mobile is placed in front of him, even at this age, concerns me," says Borah.

Children form closer emotional bonds with their mothers, especially in Indian society where the father is traditionally seen as the provider who should not be burdened with domestic chores.

Though many men are trying to break out of this mould, it will take years for attitudes to change, and strong two-way communication between father and child could be a turning point.

"If the dad finds something inappropriate, the conversation has to be gentle yet firm. Don't police the child, yell at him or threaten to cut the Internet connection. Also, talk as soon as you find something wrong, and don't dilly dally," says Meera Ravi, psychotherapist.

Parents must trust their children, but also keep their eyes and ears open, she says. **Rajitha Menon**

Parenting tips for a cyber era

Here is what you can do:

- **Set a deadline:** Have clear, consistent rules about timings for online activity. When you restrict your child's digital footprint, also take a look at what model you as a parent are setting for him. Do not be glued to the television, mobile or laptop all the time when your child is around.
- Consider the unique stages of your children's growth, and select developmentally appropriate media.
- Ensure you and your partner follow a single approach when it comes to questions of Internet use.
- Just because you hear news about cyber crimes, don't make it the sole point of focus of your discussions.
- Go outdoors and make sure there is enough physical activity to engage children's brains and bodies.
- **Update yourself:** Know about the proliferation of technology to make better choices for your children. Read reviews and tips in parenting magazines and elsewhere. Talk to relatives, teachers and friends to find out which media they use and how much.
- **Get creative:** Encourage use of the Internet to create picture books, digital photo albums, home movies and so on.

Apps to help you



■ **eKavach**- a digital parenting app that tells parents what applications are being used by a child, how much time he/she spends on any particular app. It also provides information about new apps installed and allows parents to block certain content.

■ **Angel Child Monitoring**- a small and advanced child tracking device. It provides safe and stable location monitoring by combining GPS, GSM, BLE and Wi-Fi hot-spot triangulation technologies.



■ **Safe Browser**
This is a cloud-based browser that monitors more than 8 million websites and a billion web pages every day to prevent children from opening inappropriate pages. Every time a child browses the internet, this app will make sure that he/she is not able to reach the wrong places.